Research Briefing

Increasing safety for those experiencing family and intimate relationship harm within black and minority ethnic communities by responding to those who harm: Survey findings

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While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this draft report is accurate and up-to-date, the authors cannot accept legal responsibility or liability for any actions taken by readers as a result of any errors or omissions.

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[1] https://www.uos.ac.uk/content/suffolk-institute-for-social-economic-research

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1.Introduction

This rapid research is a collaboration between the University of Suffolk and H.O.P.E. Training and Consultancy (also known as H.O.P.E.) to explore family and intimate relationship harm within black and minority ethnic communities and how we might best respond to the issue.

The briefing is based on research findings from a survey of students, academic, activists, and professionals from black and ethnic minority communities as well as from those supporting black and ethnic minority communities.

The briefing includes a set of recommendations including a call for an inclusive national government perpetrator strategy as well as investing in a diverse perpetrator research agenda, co-produced with those from black and ethnic minority communities.

The UK evidence base on programmes for people who use harmful behaviours is incomplete as the available research, albeit sparse, has typically been undertaken with predominantly white samples. For instance, a recent rapid review on programmes aimed at those who use abusive behaviours in the UK[2] commissioned by Respect and Women's Aid does not include any programme aimed at black and brown people.

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[2] Jane Callaghan, David Morran, Joanne Alexander, Laura Bellussi, Tanya Beetham and Jade Hooper (2020). Make a Change: An evaluation of the implementation of an early response intervention for those who have used abusive behaviours in their intimate relationships

Organisations like Drive and Respect aim to change this dearth in diverse research on perpetrator programmes, and both Dr Olumide Adisa and Dr Katherine Allen (Centre for Abuse Research and Domestic Abuse Research Network) as well as Meena Kumari (H.O.P.E.) support this inclusive agenda. To formulate an informed and effective perpetrator strategy that will deliver equal protection for all victims, targeted participatory research with black and minoritised communities and a family-focused approach is needed. We hope that this briefing will begin to spark action to diversify the evidence base in this area of work.

2. Methodology

Data was gathered via an accessible five question Slido poll eliciting both open-ended and multiple-choice responses (3 multiple choice; 2 multiple answer, 1 single answer. 2 open text). Slido is a global 'Q&A and polling platform' used by trainers, presenters and researchers to engage participants and solicit feedback (Slido, 2020) [3]. The survey link was active between 10 July to 25 July 2020. During this period, 139 participants from the black and ethnic minority community as well as from those supporting black and ethnic minority communities submitted responses.

Structured surveys which incorporate open text questions provide a simple, accessible research design which enables social researchers to investigate the variation in views and experiences within a group of respondents, rapidly identifying salient differences and regularities. Open-ended questions allow researchers 'to solicit additional comments not confined by predetermined categories, and to expose the unexpected, including responses that might challenge the assumptions upon which the structure of the survey is based'[4] (Etz et al, 2018: 1).

Multiple choice answers were subjected to simple descriptive analysis to determine the distribution of responses (see Figures 1 and 3), while open text responses were manually coded and analysed for emerging themes and outliers. In order to create a detailed visual mapping of the open-text responses, the research team used codes to create word clouds, with word size corresponding to frequency.

On 24 July, the research team attended an online knowledge sharing event held by H.O.P.E., designed to shed light on how community-based programmes for people using harmful behaviour currently work, and inspire insights on what could work better, particularly in relation to removing barriers to access and representing and engaging people from all communities. The event attracted 111 attendees from a wide range of professional and experiential backgrounds. The research team reviewed the meeting minutes, and the chat transcript for further views from

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[3] https://www.sli.do/about

[4] Etz, R.S., Gonzalez, M. M., Eden, A. R. & Winship, J. (2018) 'Rapid Sense Making: A Feasible, Efficient Approach for Analysing Large Data Sets of Open-Ended Comments', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 17. Pp. 1-10. DOI: https://doi-org.uos.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1609406918765509

participants as well as a presentation reflecting on the themes that emerged during the discussion (provided by Meena Kumari).

3. Who responded?

Job Role	Number of participants	% participants
Professionals/Practitioners	81	58%
Student	13	9%
Policy	2	1%
Activist	2	1%
Academic	9	6%
Other	32	23%

Table 1: 'What is your job role?'
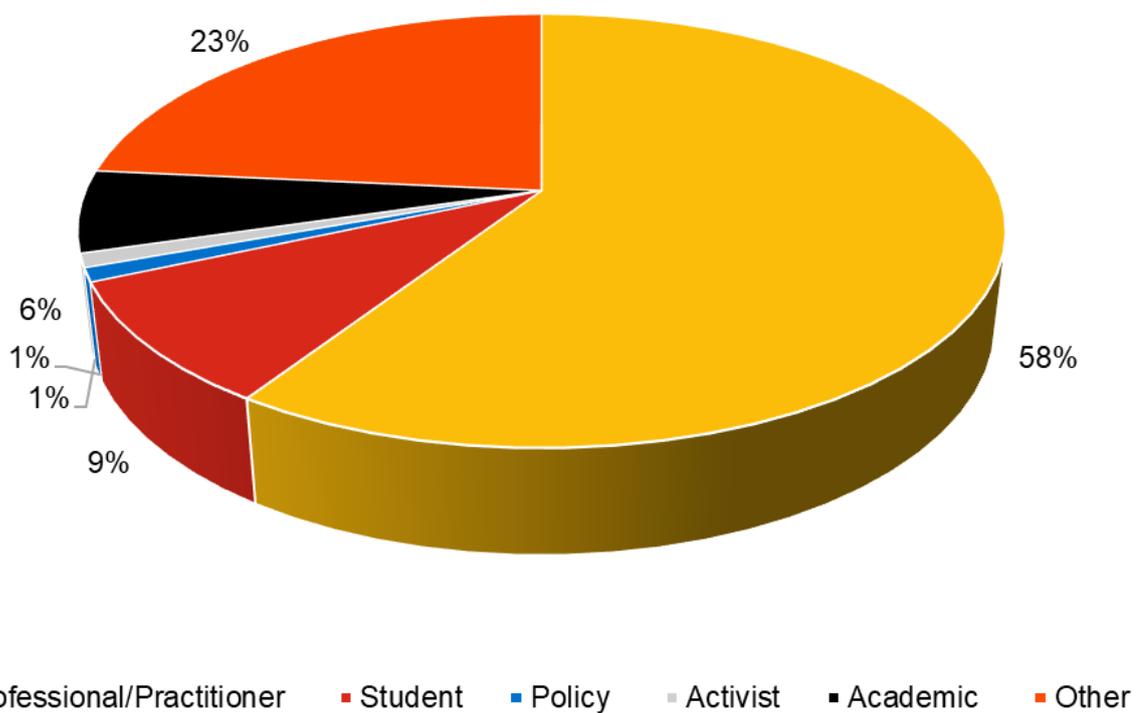
Figure 1: Breakdown of those that responded by job role

The majority of participants (58%) identified themselves as professionals or practitioners, while the next largest subset (23%) self-defined as 'Other'. Students (9%) and academics (6%) made up a further sixth of respondents, while activists and people from a policy background collectively comprised 2% of participants. This range of occupational backgrounds affords a spectrum of practical, experiential and research knowledge, with possible limitations as far as capturing the breadth of views held by people in policy and activism roles (although it seems likely that those in the 2% group may have identified as professionals/practitioners).

3.2   What are your views regarding the terminology "perpetrator" to describe those who use harmful behaviours in families and intimate partner relationships?

- Appropriate term
- Useful and less useful aspects of the label
- Prefer alternative term
- Unsure
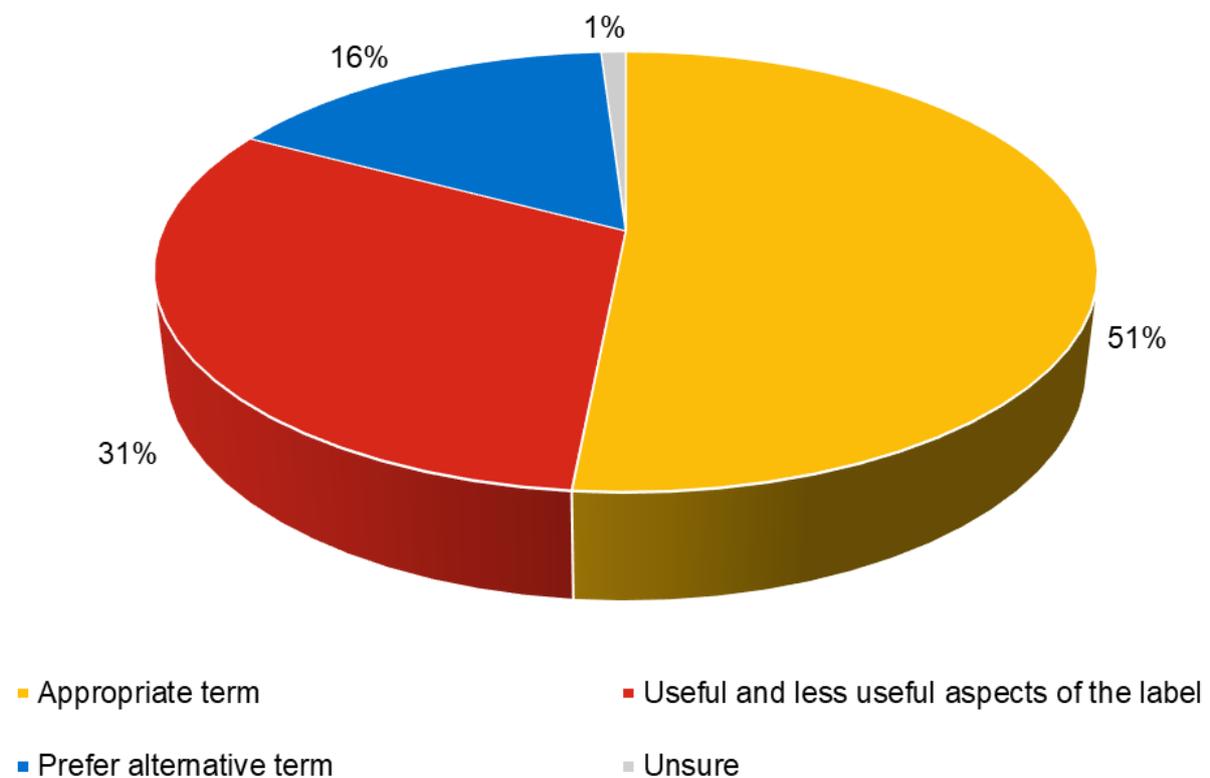
Figure 2: 'What are your views regarding the terminology 'perpetrator' to describe those who use harmful behaviours in families and intimate partner relationships?'

The 93 responses to this question were categorised under 4 overarching codes corresponding to participants' expressed views on the appropriateness of the term 'perpetrator':

- Appropriate term (n= 47) - participants who view 'perpetrator' as the most useful and apt term available to describe people who use harmful behaviours.

- Prefer alternative term (n=15) - participants who reject the term or have a marked preference for an alternative term

- Useful and less useful aspects of the label (n=29): participants who are ambivalent or undecided about the term, describing both positive and negative aspects of its connotations and use, or viewing it as useful in some contexts and counter-productive or inappropriate in others.

- Unsure (n=1): one participant stated that they did not understand the question.

The open-ended responses to this question captured a more diverse and nuanced range of views than this overarching classification suggests. For example, among the first category of participants, one respondent felt that the term was 'problematic' but that there was no 'alternative label that honors the survivors experience and labels the behavior'. Another participant from this group felt that the term was entirely appropriate 'IF it is proven that the individual is a person who carries out harmful acts on the other in intimate relationships. It is what it is. S/he is a perpetrator'. Others strongly felt that perpetrator is simply 'a fitting term', or that it was the most straightforward or accurate way to describe the actions of someone using harmful behaviours: 'It describes someone causing harm and instigating harm, so if this is the case then the terminology is ok'.

The second group of participants rejected the term for a variety of reasons. Several responses cited its strongly negative connotations, suggesting that these act both to stigmatise the person engaging in harmful behaviours and elide the possibility of change: 'It's very negative, I have used it myself sometimes because it's been the 'norm' but find it uncomfortable, I think not labelling is important to give them hope of positive change being possible'.

By labelling someone engaging in abusive behaviours as a perpetrator, 'it almost denotes that there is no hope for change for them', that abusiveness is a fixed property or essence rather than a set of behaviours that can be changed. Others argued that the term poses a barrier to supporting and engaging with those subjected to abusive behaviours: 'the terminology can be difficult to come to terms with as the person being described occupies a position of significance or importance in the relationship'.

One participant felt that the term was frequently used in a gendered way and obscured the commonalities between men and women who engage in abusive behaviours: 'I feel the term is outdated and gendered. When we speak about women using violence, we label them as such, it sits in a trauma informed response to abuse. When we speak about men, we more frequently use the term perpetrator. There's a connotation that men can't change'. Others felt that the term was obscure, 'outdated', 'wordy' or heavily associated with the criminal justice system and expressed the need for a more accessible and 'everyday language' term.

A significant proportion of participants took neither a straightforwardly positive nor negative stance on the term. Several felt that its use was justified and appropriate in some contexts, while unjust or unhelpful in others. 'I can understand it's a term we use when someone has been convicted of domestic abuse but when we are

trying to engage with someone using abusive behaviours at an earlier stage, it's tends to be a barrier to them reaching out or engaging with support'; 'People will find it a strong word but it depends on the context.

From a victim perspective, it is completely appropriate but from a criminal justice perspective if someone has not been found guilty of a crime it is not fair to call someone a perp'.

Others argued that the term can be applied too broadly across a wide spectrum of behaviours, flattening significant differences in experience and intention: 'I feel that when we use the word perpetrator in the context of domestic abuse we need to be clear we are referring to someone who systematically uses coercive control', rather than as a blanket term for anyone who has ever used controlling or verbally abusive behaviours.

Several participants raised specific concerns regarding the terms' use in relation to, or in communication with, black and minoritised people: '***The only issue that I have with the term is that I know crime is racialised, so as a black man when I hear the term reinforces labels given to predominantly black men as a tool for racist behaviours to be justified***'; '***I don't think this terminology is understood by black and minority ethnic communities'; 'I think the term 'perpetrator' is used widely within professional settings (police, CPS, victim support services) and it may not be seen/used within Black and minoritised communities'. Naming someone who has engaged in harmful behaviours as a 'perpetrator' may amplify destructive cultural stereotypes about race and criminality or alienate Black and minoritised people from programmes designed to engage community members in combating abuse.***

While a slim majority of participants felt that 'perpetrator' was, on balance, a useful term, insofar as it offers a succinct, descriptive and widely understood word for someone who has engaged in harmful behaviours, the concerns raised by a significant subset of respondents suggest that it can be divisive and potentially poses a barrier to engagement. This view was reflected by chat participants at the knowledge sharing event (Section 4), who felt that professional language around people using harmful behaviours lacked 'nuance'.

Figure 3: Word cloud based on open text responses to 'What are your views regarding the terminology 'perpetrator' to describe those who use harmful behaviours in families and intimate partner relationships?'

3.3   How would you describe the most harmful behaviours within family and intimate relationships?

Form of Abuse	# participants	% participants
Sexual Abuse	118	91%
Physical Abuse	116	89%
Jealous & Controlling Behaviour	97	75%
Honour Based Abuse	85	65%

Female Genital Mutilation	80	62%
Economic Abuse	51	39%
Forced Marriages	62	48%
Stalking & Harassment	54	42%
Dowry Related Abuse	28	22%
Adolescent to Parent Abuse	29	22%

Table 2: 'How would you describe the most harmful behaviours within family and intimate relationships?'
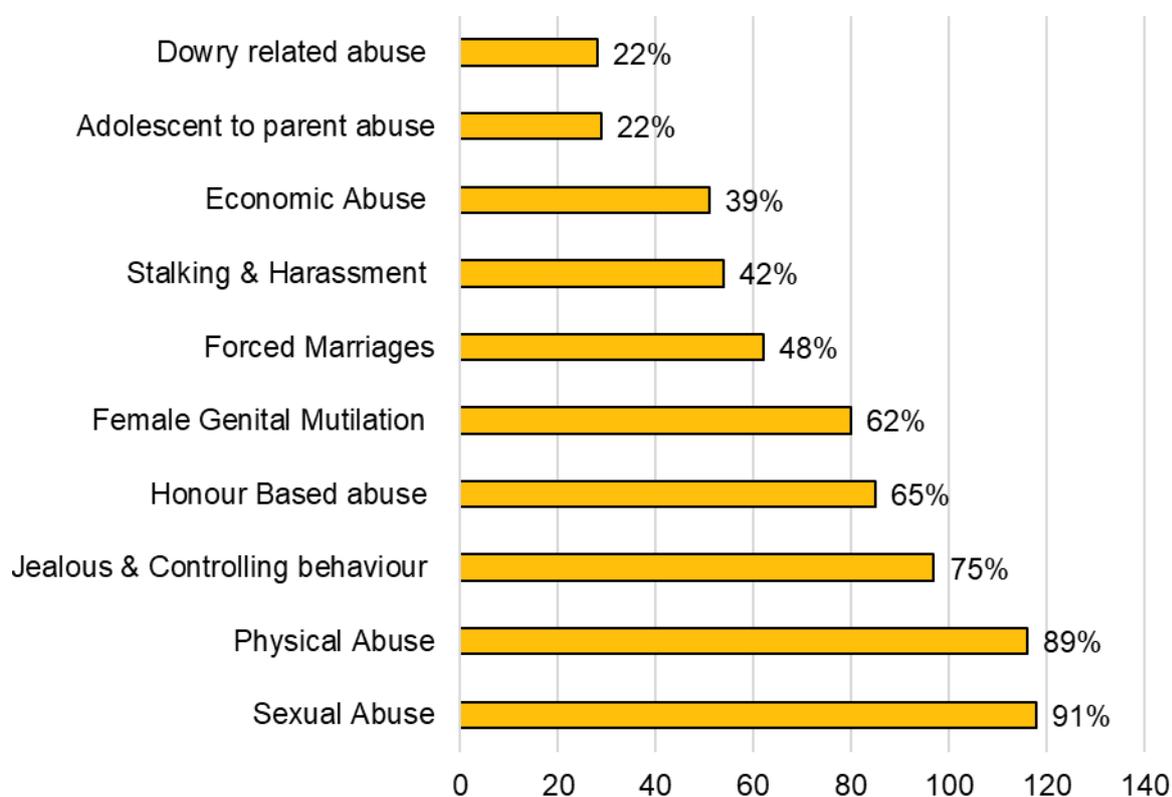
Figure 4: 'How would you describe the most harmful behaviours within family and intimate relationships?'

3.4 What is most needed for an effective community-based response from black and minority ethnic men/women using harmful behaviour?

Category	Percentage
An intersectional approach	34%
Housing Support for those using harmful behaviours	36%
Coaching & mentoring for staff	36%
Research and evaluation	39%
Sex and relationship education in schools	42%
Mutual trust with the police	48%
Encouraging helpseeking and support	51%
Training for existing staff	53%
Staff from Black & Minority Ethnic Communities facilitating this work	66%
Culturally sensitive interventions	67%
Funding to specialist organisations	69%

Figure 5: What is most needed for an effective community-based response from black and minority ethnic men/women using harmful behaviour?

3.5 What do you think will motivate black/minority ethnic men/women to engage in work that is addressing harmful behaviour in families or intimate partner relationships?

While the number and range of responses to Question 4 preclude any simple categorical breakdown, with 52 distinct codes generated from the 117 responses, some clear themes emerged in relation to:

- how participants felt *services* could change to promote accessibility and engagement; and

- The processes participants felt *minoritised people* could engage in to achieve a change in awareness.

Among the former subset of responses, building **'trust'** was the single most commonly cited factor that participants felt would motivate Black and minoritised people to engage in work to address harmful behaviour:

'Trust and belief that issues will be acknowledged and responded to effectively'; 'Trust and knowing something will be done'; 'Trust/communication'.

Although it is important to avoid over-interpreting from this finding, drawing sweeping conclusions from a relatively modest dataset, this may chime with responses to the previous question, where 48% of respondents identified 'mutual trust with police' as a necessary component for an engaged community response.

Further, it is consistent with the wider evidence base which shows that the 'crimmigration control system' and other forms of over-policing disproportionately affect Black and minoritized communities (Bowling & Westernra, 2017)[5], and that this differential treatment acts to 'drain trust' in the police and criminal justice system (Lammy, 2017: 17)[6].

If the criminal justice system plays a punitive or antagonistic role in people's lives, discouraging information- and help-seeking, this may impair efforts to mount an effective community response to abuse. Other responses indicate that this need for trust-building also applies to other services and community-based organisations: 'Trusting those delivering any intervention'.

The need for services that offer culturally-specific interventions and are staffed by minoritized people was another common response (7%), as was the need for empathetic 'understanding' and appreciation of people's perspective and needs (7%) – 'Greater understanding from multi agencies of the issues that affect black and ethnic minority communities affected by domestic abuse'.

The second and third most frequent responses included 'education' and 'awareness-raising' for Black and minoritised people. While related concepts, these were coded separately to reflect subtle gradations in meaning, with education referring to structured training incorporating didactic elements such as talks, case studies, definitions, myth-busting and/or statistics: 'Show them stats and facts and inform them of why this is a problem and how they can help with it'. Meanwhile, awareness-raising related to more generally increasing a person, group or community's awareness of abuse as an issue and where to go for support, for example via

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[5] Bowling, B. and Westernra, S. (2017) 'Racism, Immigration, and Policing', in Bosworth, M., Parmar, A. and Vasquez, Y. (eds.) *Race, Criminal Justice, and Migration Control: Enforcing the Boundaries of Belonging.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[6] Lammy, D. (2017) *The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System.* Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf (Accessed: 31 July 2020)

displaying posters in religious settings or 'Using local religious tv channels/radio stations to help with the engagement.'

One participant from this group felt that 'increased awareness of the impact of these behaviours on survivors is key as most don't understand the impact of their actions on their loved ones. Furthermore, making these communities understand that the interventions are objective and aimed at supporting survivors rather than their perceived view that such interventions are aimed at disrespecting their culture or religion as many see these issues as "us vs them". There also need to be increased trust and confidence in the criminal justice system including police for people to come forward to report/seek help'.

Another participant felt that radical cultural change would be needed in order to empower people to take action/prompt people using harmful behaviours to stop: 'Nothing, only when generations grown up and abandoned cultural heritage and adopted western ideas of freedom'.

In terms of more pragmatic or practical concerns, removing language barriers was cited by 3% of participants, as was adequate resourcing for specialist services.

Overall, the responses to this question accord with findings from the previous multiple-choice question, with an emphasis on services building trust with community members, representative and culturally-specific interventions and encouraging effective practice and help-seeking via training and awareness raising. However, the open text enabled a minority of responses that did not figure among the pre-specified categories, such as 'open communication' (3%), 'relationship-based practice' (3%) or 'anger management' (1%), indicating the breadth of views on the most beneficial approaches.

Table 3: 'What do you think will motivate black/minority ethnic men/women to engage in work that is addressing harmful behaviour in families or intimate partner relationships?'

Figure 6: What do you think will motivate black/minority ethnic men/women to engage in work that is addressing harmful behaviour in families or intimate partner relationships?'

4. Online knowledge exchange event

On 24 July, the research team participated in an event designed to facilitate knowledge sharing about people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities who use harmful behaviours within families and intimate partner relationships. The event attracted 111 attendees from a wide range of professional and experiential backgrounds.

Meena Kumari, the event coordinator and Chair, shared the meeting minutes with the research team. The research team reviewed these documents and conducted a rapid content analysis of the meeting chat transcript to identify any recurring or unaddressed questions that could point to gaps in the current knowledge base.

The discussion evoked a 'mainstream' policy and practice landscape where issues of racism and ethnicity too often remain marginal concerns, with predominantly White service providers and 'very little targeted service provision' for people from minoritised communities (Jo Todd, Respect).

This marginalisation is particularly problematic given that minoritised women subjected to harmful cultural practices may be more likely to experience domestic abuse: a participant with expertise in providing support to women affected by FGM[7] advised that 'in some countries a woman is 3-4x more likely to be a victim of domestic abuse' if she has undergone FGM. Another participant, who was both a professional and an expert by experience, noted that ***'Cultural conditioning can lead to violent behaviours being acceptable',*** and that challenges to harmful behaviour by 'external organisations' are less likely to be effective, due to being populated by cultural outsiders.

However, speakers and contributors outlined examples of innovative and culturally-informed practice, including DOPE Black Dads, a multi-national support group 'for black fathers to understand intersectionality of race, mental health [and] male parenting experience', and the HALO Project's 6-8 week community education programme for Asian women using abusive behaviours[8], which is designed to raise awareness about the harms of engaging in violent or controlling behaviour. Internationally, the recently evaluated Gandhi Nivas programme in New Zealand[9] was mentioned as providing culturally-specific early intervention, working to meet the housing and counselling needs of men who cannot return to their family homes due to Police Safety Orders (PSOs).

The questions on language, labels and the politics of naming that arose during survey design also resonated with event participants. Craig Pinkney (whose concerns about the use of the term 'perpetrator' in engaging with black men inspired the first survey question) argued that participatory, qualitative research is crucial; without adopting an intersectional lens, and recognising the racialised tropes associated with 'criminality', researchers, policy-makers and practitioners risk perpetuating damaging stereotypes and failing to meet the specific needs and interests of Black community members.

Following Craig's contribution, multiple chat participants voiced their agreement, arguing that there is a need for greater precision and care with language***: 'Language is very important as words have different meanings to different people'; 'Language/approach is so important to engage people into a conversation'; 'We have a session on our DAPP[10] where we talk about labels, language and risk and what that means. Perpetrator and risk are always the ones that the men want to talk about'; 'From a mental health perspective, terminology needs to be carefully thought through as one of the many stigmas that abounds***

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[7] Female genital mutilation
[8] https://www.haloproject.org.uk/
[9] http://www.totalhealthcare.org.nz/assets/Gandhi-Nivas-Massey-report-2020.pdf
[10] Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme

around mental health is the one that always, inevitably, equates mental ill health with violence'.

Like the survey participants who felt that 'perpetrator' can be a simplistic and over-encompassing term, applied to a range of disparate behaviours, chat participants felt that the 'nuance' can get lost when everyone engaging in harmful behaviours is slotted into the same category.

As in the survey, there was a strong emphasis on the need for education, preferably by culturally-informed and representative facilitators:

> *'It would be good to have proactive programmes for communities to educate families about healthy relationships and the impact of negative environments on children (ACEs[11]). This would be received more positively if it was from facilitators from within the communities themselves'*

> *'There is so much to do around beliefs and norms that enable unchallenged harmful behaviours and abuse.'*

Another salient contribution was the reminder that it is 'good to also ensure when we talk about diversity in the sector we mean at all levels of an organisation. When we reflect on a sector as being diverse, we have to ensure that includes diversity at senior levels.'

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[11] Adverse childhood experiences

5. Recommendations

The rapid research has helped identify some areas of improvement and further exploration. Most of these recommendations can be acted upon immediately and some may need more time.

For perpetrator services, funders, and the violence against women and girls' sector:

- Expand the Drive partnership's Call to Action perpetrator strategy[12] to specifically mention the needs of black and ethnic minority communities
- Commission research to test and evaluate culturally grounded and contextually situated interventions. This should adopt a mixed methods approach, seeking both qualitative and quantitative data to identify the impact of tailoring interventions to diverse communities including barriers and facilitators to potential engagement.
- Based on the research findings, particularly on 'language' and risk of labelling, a further examination of the nuance and depth around the use of the term 'perpetrators' in family and intimate relationships is required.
- Mainstream services should embed a bottom-up participatory approach in working with practitioners supporting families and men in black and ethnic minority communities to identify the needs and perceptions around the introduction of a tested perpetrator project tailored to the black and ethnic minority communities, providing practical and emotional support for behavioural change.
- Associated meanings for behavioural change need to be expanded to encompass the complexity around harm caused by multiple family members in ethnic minorities as well as the context within which such interventions are being implemented.
- Given the lack of an evidence base on work with those using harmful behaviours, sustainable funding should be provided to specialist organisations working to tackle the root causes of abuse and the importance of focusing on change and a family-focused approach to work with those using the harmful behaviours in family and intimate relationships in black and ethnic minority communities.

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[12] http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Call-to-Action-Final.pdf