Title: An investigation of perceptions of individual and group support provided for young people who have witnessed domestic abuse. A particular focus on a new intervention: LIX, developing guidelines for practice.

Declaration:

Submitted by Eleanor Rose Ley to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in Education, Child and Community Psychology. The month and year of submission was May 2011.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the aware of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature:
Overview

Support provided for adolescents who have witnessed domestic abuse is under developed, with little research exploring its effectiveness. This research has explored different individual experiences of support (for both group and individual interventions). The views were explored within the interpretivist paradigm to create an in depth understanding of the individual experience within this relatively under researched area. Information was collected using semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, observations and a focus group to develop a model that could be used for practice.

**Paper 1** focused on young people’s view of conflict, their experiences of group and individual support and professionals’ views on support, to consider implications for the implementation of any new support interventions within this particular local authority. The common themes included: the role of physical activity during support sessions, the importance of facilitator qualities, possibly challenging young people’s views of violence, the role of individual work and how it should be used in conjunction with any group work and the importance of systemic factors.

**Paper 2** focused on a new group intervention called ‘LINX’ looking at the experiences of individuals involved with the project using a case study methodology. This research has identified that there were varied views on group projects such as LINX. Some of the positives were the identification of a greater range of behavioural coping strategies and improved relationships; though it was debated by some participants whether this would be long lasting. Some identified negatives of this form of group work were the lack of systemic support and a desire for ongoing work. Paper 2 built on paper 1, identifying many themes’ were reflected in this new intervention and I have begun to develop the first steps of a model to guide practice in this area.

Clear implications for policymakers were also identified including the role of Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) to highlight domestic abuse. This could then be followed up with a coordinated system with clearly designated roles to enable support to be better understood, and possibly
facilitated. Clear implications for professional practice include: involvement of educational psychologists’ in awareness raising, by training staff within schools about key issues around domestic abuse, possibly helping to develop a selection programme for support workers based on key characteristics.

Future research could consider new support interventions in light of the guiding principles for practice developed through this research. Ongoing longitudinal work exploring individuals’ views and thoughts about whether support is beneficial would also be of value.

Theoretical perspectives such as attachment theory, social learning theory and systems theory have all been useful in helping to explain the themes identified in this research.

To conclude this piece of research has investigated views on support provided both individually and through group work (paper 1) attempting to create principles which could be shared with local authorities for consideration in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions supporting adolescents who have witnessed domestic abuse (paper 2).
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