



EARLY
INTERVENTION
FOUNDATION

Improving services for child victims of domestic abuse

Hannah Wilson



This presentation draws on work carried out by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) which looks at the existing 'what works' evidence for children who are victims of domestic abuse.

We will discuss the barriers to evidence generation and use within existing support systems and the potential policy implications of these.

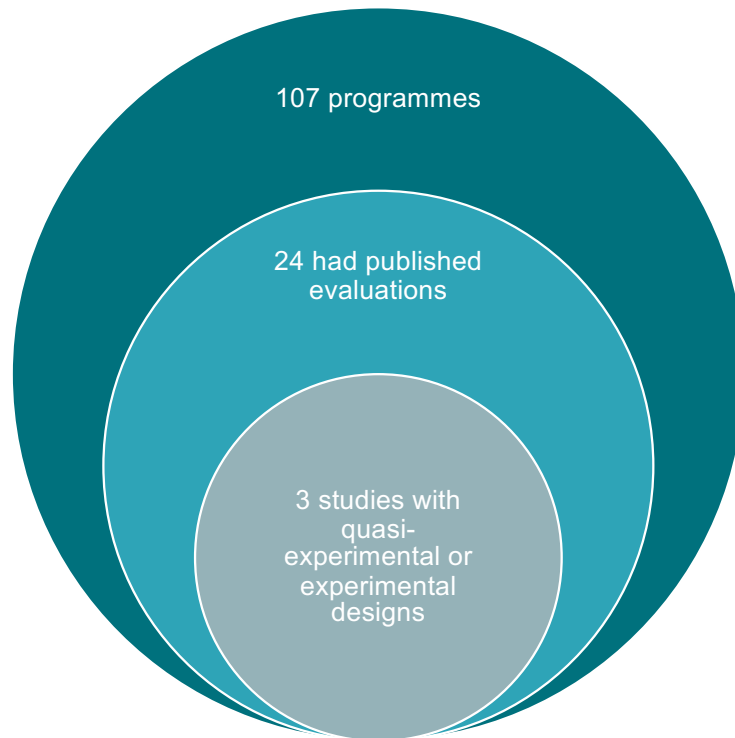
Hannah is a Senior Researcher at the Dartington Service Design Lab. She has led internal impact measurement at EIF, research into race inequalities within family support services and what works for children who are victims of domestic abuse.

Over the last nine years, Hannah has worked on theory-based mixed-method and realist evaluations, policy development and translation of evidence into practice for a wide variety of government departments, local authorities, third sector organisations and the European Commission. She is committed to research with seldom held groups and the positive impact that this can have on the design and development of services. She has a MSc in Philosophy and Public policy from the London School of Economics.

Understanding the state of play: Our methodology



Strength of Evidence (UK)



Programmes with the strongest evidence have yet to be tested in a UK context. Instead, all have been tested in the US.

Many UK programmes have yet to be evaluated. Where they have, tends to be feasibility studies.

RCTs and QEDs are limited in number within the UK context.

Evaluation commonly weakened by:

- Small sample sizes
- Reliance on qualitative data
- High attrition
- Lack of consideration of long term change.

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Challenges relating to impact evaluation

Provider concerns
over the
appropriateness of
RCTs

Cost and resource
implications of trying
to measure long-
term outcomes

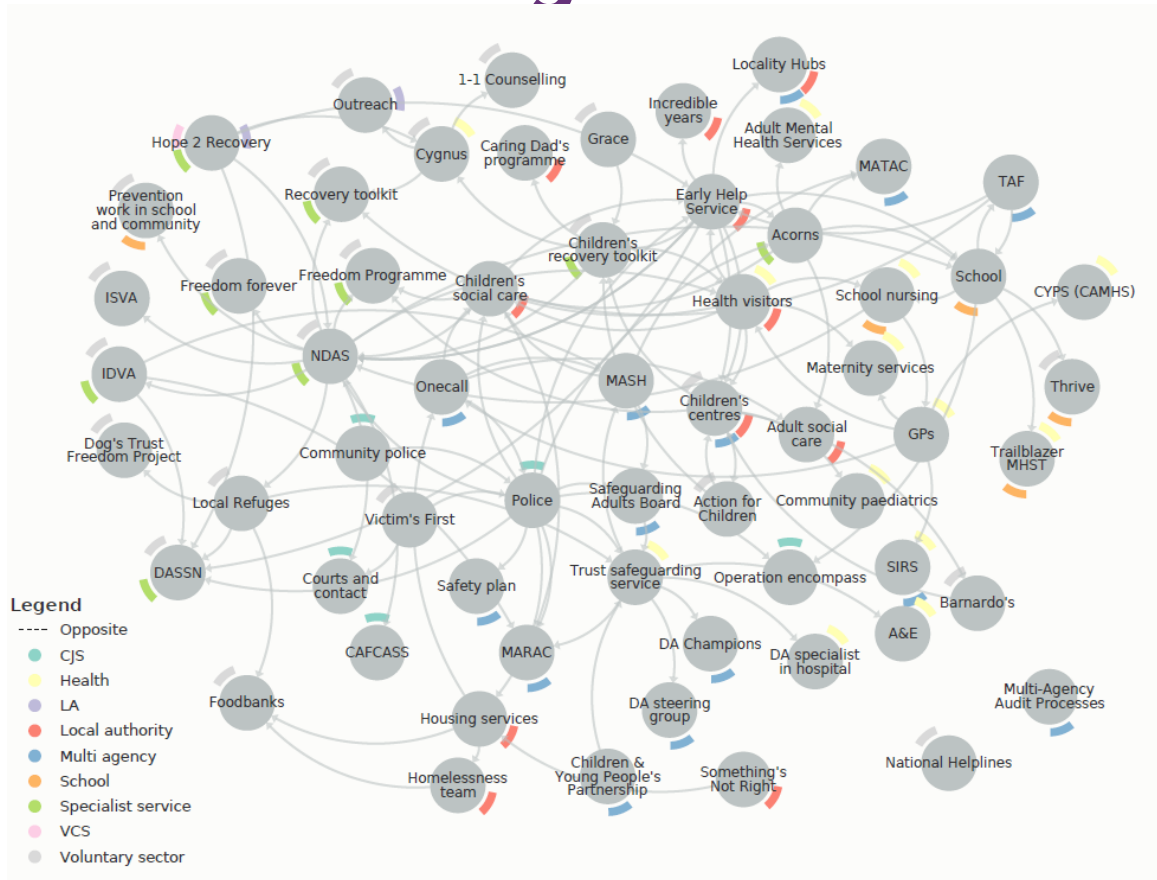
Lack of consensus
on the most relevant
and appropriate
outcomes to
measure.

Implementation
challenges

Understanding the state of play: Our methodology



Understanding the context



- Service provision is inconsistent.
- Demand for services outstrips supply
- VCS funding is precarious
- There are significant gaps in the availability of services
- Access to services for children is limited by the need for the non-abusing parent to be engaged in a service or by the need for parental consent
- Clear, long-term multi-agency strategies and shared outcomes are difficult to establish.
- Links to other services such as the police, schools and NHS (e.g. GPs) are variable. Data sharing is inconsistent, thresholds can be poorly understood.

EIF policy call

“We are calling on the government to invest through the spending review in strategic, sustained action to address the highly prevalent problem of domestic abuse and the terrible impact that it has on children.

“Developing this much-needed understanding of what works within such a complex and challenging context requires a sustained focus and national investment.



Supporting evaluation and improvement: thoughts

More work to understand values and attitudes to evidence use: Need to align evidence use and evaluation with service delivery.

Need for specification and 'visibility' of existing activity. Case study exemplification.

Supporting intervention development and strengthening implementation.

User led: Rooting this in work with communities from a position of understanding what matters to them.

In the absence of knowing what works, what do we have data, intelligence or insight on?

Supporting early-stage evaluation: using the right kinds of evaluation approaches. Avoiding the application of too demanding an evaluation model too early on.



Questions and discussion

To what extent are RCTs useful/appropriate in this space?

What role does central government have in encouraging the use of evidence for services for children who are victims of domestic abuse?

What role could/should do local authorities have?

How should the sector foster a culture of learning and improvement?



<https://www.eif.org.uk/report/improving-services-for-children-affected-by-domestic-abuse>

Strength of Evidence Criteria

- Self-designed strength of evidence criteria used.
- Loosely matched to EIF Evidence Standards

