

WCCSJ Thirteenth Annual  
Conference  
2024

## The Necessity & Importance of Whole Family Approaches to Domestic Abuse

Ph.D. Researcher  
Diana Fologea

University of  
South Wales  
Prifysgol  
De Cymru



- Background
- Rationale
- Methods & Analysis
- Preliminary Findings
- Next Steps
- References



## BACKGROUND

- **Living with and/or experiencing domestic abuse (DA) within a family context has a profound and intergenerational impact on all members of the family, especially on children (Buckley et al., 2007; UNICEF, 2017; Wagner et al., 2019; NSPCC, 2021).**
- **Support for domestic abuse centres on women as victims and their children, typically involving shelter placement (Stanley and Humphreys, 2017).**
- **A consistent theme from multi-agency Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) is insufficient or ineffective multi-agency working (Dheensa and Fede, 2022).**
- **For families who are not in a position to separate, those who wish to reconcile and those whose contact will still continue post-separation, it appears that little support is currently available (Stanley and Humphreys, 2017; Spratt et al., 2022).**

support programmes, Humphreys and Stanley (2017) have noted that although various initiatives aimed at benefiting entire families have been initiated, these programmes are still in the early stages of development. This observation highlights a critical area in the literature where more comprehensive evaluations are required. Such research would help understand how these interventions affect families and could potentially lead to improvements in the design and implementation of future programmes. Further study is essential to enhance the knowledge base, ensuring that these interventions can be effectively tailored and scaled to meet the diverse needs of families more effectively.



RATIONALE



What are effective whole-family approaches to domestic abuse in the Welsh context?



Conduct an independent process and outcome evaluation of the Inspiring Families (IF) programme.

*'The IF Programme is an innovative 10-week intervention and assessment of families where domestic abuse is an identified component, and the families have chosen to stay together. The programme is designed to be an accessible tool that will provide professionals with the evidence they need to make an assessment of the family and to identify the type and level of further intervention required.'* (Rock Pool Life, 2024, p.1)

**Convergent parallel mixed methods design coupled with a follow-up study.**

**Qualitative data will be analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), adopting an inductive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2022).**

**Quantitative data will be entered into SPSS Statistics. This system will be used to conduct the analyses, which will include descriptive statistics.**

**After the first-level analysis, Triangulation will be undertaken by building a meta-matrix based on Wendler's (2000) study.**

### Example of a Meta-Matrix

Research Question/s	Service User Quantitative data	Service User Qual data	Professionals Qual data	Other Comments	Reflective Response

**Findings will be discussed by applying Bowen's theory of natural systems (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988), also known as Bowen's Family Systems Theory (BFST) (MacKay, 2012).**

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

### Programme Nature

- IF primarily appears to function as an extensive assessment and educational tool on domestic abuse rather than a direct intervention.

### Children's Voices

- CYP component is vital for gauging abuse levels, providing children with a platform to express their perspectives and reveal true family dynamics, which in turn aid professionals to provide families with the support needed.

### Group vs. Individual Formats

- Group sessions seem to work better for survivors
- While perpetrator sessions seem to work better in an individual format, although IF is designed to be delivered in groups.

### Age-Specific Suitability

- CYP work does not appear uniformly applicable across different age groups, but it seems more tailored to support younger children. Improvement of the CYP element of IF is slow. Work is being carried out to produce an updated manual that will provide professionals with different tools to work with children of different age groups.

### Inconsistent Social Services Relations

- The relationship with social services workers seems to be inconsistent across the South Wales areas, with some areas having stronger links than others.

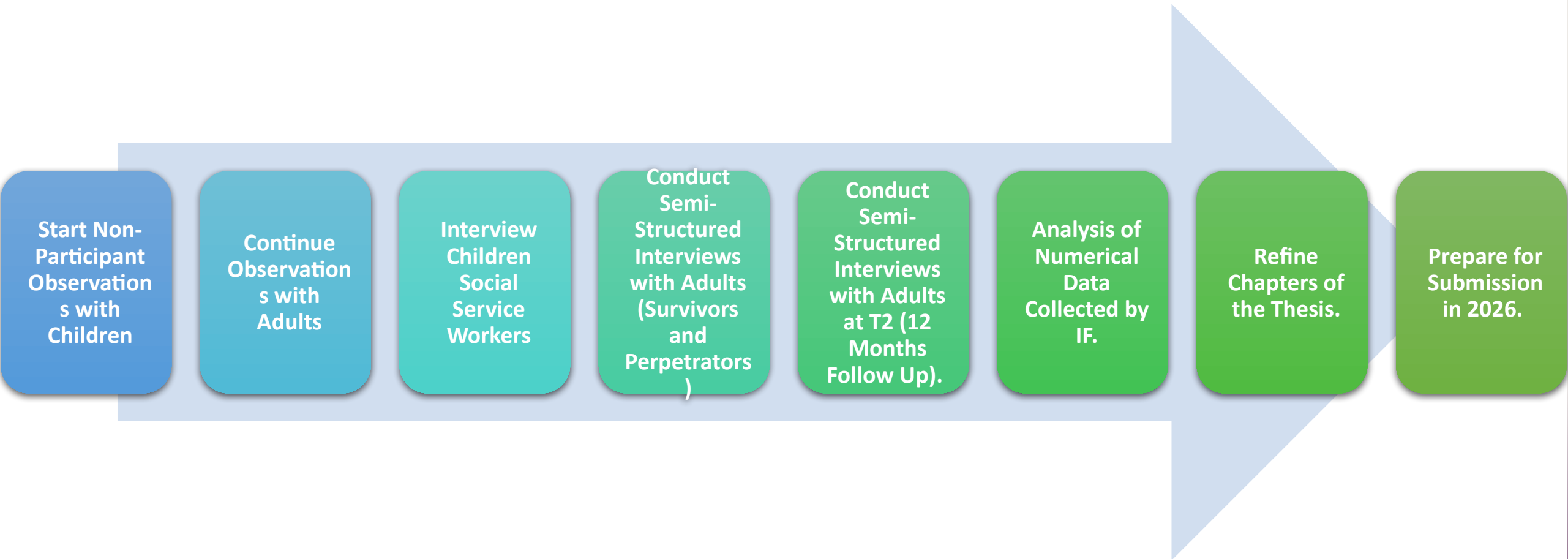
### Funding Challenges

- Short-term contracts are a challenge experienced by the IF and the third sector in general. They create insecurity within the workforce and make recruiting challenging for managers.

### Assessment Hurdles

- IF workers face significant challenges in conducting assessments when families relocate between jurisdictions, necessitating investigative efforts to compile details about previous incidents of abuse. A national database would be a valuable resource for addressing this issue.

NEXT STEPS





# Diolch!



## REFERENCES

- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qap0000196>.
- Brown, J. (1999). Bowen family systems theory and practice: Illustration and critique. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 20(2), 94–103. (1) (PDF) Trauma and Bowen Family Systems Theory: Working with Adults Who Were Abused as Children. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259426109\\_Trauma\\_and\\_Bowen\\_Family\\_Systems\\_Theory\\_Working\\_with\\_Adults\\_Who\\_were\\_Abused\\_as\\_Children](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259426109_Trauma_and_Bowen_Family_Systems_Theory_Working_with_Adults_Who_were_Abused_as_Children) [accessed Apr 2 2023].
- Buckley, H., Holt, S. and Whelan, S. (2007) Listen to Me! Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence. *Child Abuse Review*, vol. 16, pp. 296–310.
- Dheensa, S. , & Feder, G. (2022). Sharing information about domestic violence and abuse in healthcare: an analysis of English guidance and recommendations for good practice. *BMJ Open*, 12(6), 1-11. Article e057022. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-057022>.
- HMIP (2021). Domestic Abuse. [online] HM Inspectorate of Probation. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-probation/specific-sub-groups/domestic-abuse/#Partnership%20Working> [Accessed 5 Oct. 2023].
- Humphreys, C. and Stanley, N. (2017) Shifting the Focus: working differently with domestic violence in Connolly, M. (ed.) *Beyond the Risk Paradigm: current debates and new directions*. London.
- MacKay, L. (2012) Trauma and Bowen Family Systems Theory: Working with Adults Who were Abused as Children. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*.33(3):232-241. doi:10.1017/aft.2012.28.
- NSPCC (2021) *The impact of domestic abuse children and young people: voices of parents and carers insight briefing*. London: NSPCC.
- Rock Pool Life C.I.C. (2024). Evaluation of the Inspiring Families Programme. [online] Available at: <https://rockpool.life/course/the-inspiring-families-programme/>.
- Spratt, T., Swords, L., and Hanlon, H.R. (2021) Domestic Violence and Whole Family Interventions: Charting Change in the Lives of Service Users. *The British Journal of Social Work*.
- Stanley, N., Humphreys, C. (2017) Identifying the key components of a whole family intervention for families experiencing domestic violence and abuse. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, vol 1 no 1, 99–115, DOI: 10.1332/239868017X14913081639164.
- UNICEF (2017) *A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents*. [online] Available at: [https://www.unicef.org/media/48671/file/Violence\\_in\\_the\\_lives\\_of\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/48671/file/Violence_in_the_lives_of_children_and_adolescents.pdf) [Accessed 11 Oct. 2023].
- Wagner, J., Jones, S., Tsaroucha, A. and Cumbers, H. (2019). Intergenerational Transmission of Domestic Violence: Practitioners' Perceptions and Experiences of Working with Adult Victims and Perpetrators in the UK. *Child Abuse Review*, 28(1), pp.39–51. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2541>.
- Wendler, M.C. (2001) Triangulation using a meta-matrix1. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 35(4), pp.521–525. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.01869.x>.