

ADOLESCENT TO PARENT VIOLENCE AND ABUSE (APVA)

Background: APVA has no agreed definition. Depending on a child's age, it may fall under the official definition of Domestic Abuse. Paterson et al (2002) define APVA as 'behaviour considered to be violent if others in the family feel threatened, intimidated or controlled by it & believe that they must adjust their own behaviour to accommodate threats or anticipated violence'. It often involves a pattern of behaviour and occurs irrespective of race, age, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability or education level. APVA is not just against parents/carers, it can also be against siblings.

Why it matters: Research & practice information on APVA is limited. It is the most misunderstood and hidden form of DA & less attention is given to its impact on families. This makes it hard for parents to recognise their adolescent's behaviour as violent and to seek out services that can support them. Although mostly son to mother, reported cases do include violence from daughters and often very severe physical violence from sons to fathers. Most young people as APVA instigators are between 13 and 15.

Questions to consider: How do you support families & children to discuss any issues in an open & honest environment to improve/rebuild respectful communication? How can you support parents/carers to establish boundaries with young people? Are you professionally curious and trauma-informed in considering the reasons for the behaviour? Although no single cause of APVA has been identified, families have identified substance use, mental health problems, learning difficulties or a history of DA or self-harm. Do you consider these factors with families you are working with where APVA may occur?

What to do: Be open to the possibility of this form of family violence in assessments to break the silence around this issue. Consider wider patterns of abuse. Use terminology carefully as most parents do not recognise their experiences as domestic abuse and do not want to perceive their child as an instigator. Consider the boundaries and complexities of normal family relationships and acknowledge the limits of parental boundaries and control. Contact Children & Families Hub for support.



Parents/carers are often reluctant to report because of feelings of isolation, guilt and shame and may fear approaching services, often thinking they will not be believed, or will be blamed and that their parenting skills will be questioned. No robust prevalence data has been collected in the UK and any instances are likely to be under-reported due to the reluctance of parents to report.

Information: Most adolescents will 'act out' in some way at some time during adolescence as they test boundaries. However, when this behaviour is controlling, threatening or intimidating, it can be a sign of distress. This is a complex issue, particularly when adolescents have experienced trauma, for example domestic abuse, grief or loss, or have an illness or disability. These issues will mean adolescents and their families need support. Violence and abuse within families should always be named and addressed in a restorative way.

Indicators: **Physical** - spitting, hitting, throwing or breaking things, bullying/physical violence to siblings; cruelty to pets, any action/behaviour that threatens someone's sense of well-being/safety. **Emotional** - verbal abuse, humiliation, emotional/psychological intimidation, mind games, making threats to hurt/kill themselves or run away to control parent/family, social media threats. **Financial** - intimidating parents/carers or other family members in order to get things that they want or perceive they need (or are being exploited for), including money or possessions, incurring debt that the parent/ carer is responsible for. This list is not exhaustive.