

## Into the Foreground: an Evaluation of the Jacana Parenting Programme

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## INTRODUCTION

The Jacana<sup>1</sup> Parenting Service was a pilot programme developed and delivered in partnership between the nia project and Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP) to support parents affected by current and historic domestic violence (DV) in Hackney. The programme offered separate interventions for men as perpetrators and support to women as victim-survivors, using individual and group work, and was funded by the Parenting Fund.

The programme emerged out of the relative neglect of the mother-child<sup>2</sup>/father-child relationship within much existing direct work with victim-survivors<sup>3</sup> and perpetrators, although these themes have been addressed in social research. Lessons from the pilot were to be integrated into specialised DV support and intervention, and hopefully extend into wide parenting programmes where DV is often not addressed explicitly.

Specifically, the aims were to:

- develop a model that synthesises international best practice to address parenting in the context of abusive relationships;
- improve the parenting skills of women and men involved in abusive relationships;
- enable parents to understand violence/abuse from the child's perspective and to minimise its impacts;
- work with mothers/carers and children to create safety plans;
- risk assess abusive fathers to better enable practitioners to minimise and manage risks;
- share best practice with practitioners.

The programme for women victim-survivors was based on the twin pillars of safety and the impact of domestic violence on mothering. Work with men aimed to extend current models of perpetrator programmes to deepen the content on fathering, although the aim to change men's abusive behaviours is not explicitly stated. Success criteria were articulated by both developers and deliverers as: increased safety of women and children; enhanced relationships between mothers and children and fathers and children; enhanced capacity to parent in a child-centred way. In short, addressing the relational legacies of domestic violence.

This evaluation was commissioned by the nia project to explore both processes and outcomes of the pilot programme. While data for the latter is limited and outcomes in themselves not straightforward to establish, the experiences of women and men who

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<sup>1</sup> The name Jacana was selected for the programme as it is the name of a bird that shares parenting between females and males. This reflects the programme aim to raise the profile of men as fathers.

<sup>2</sup> Some refuges and specialised community based violence against women organisations do undertake this kind of work, although there is very little funding available for it.

<sup>3</sup> We use this term to recognise both the victimisation that women have experienced and their agency in seeking to end violence, seek redress and/or deal with its impacts and consequences.

participated in the programme are drawn on to illustrate how Jacana enabled change and new beginnings. A key part of the evaluation was assessing the process of implementing the programme, and what lessons can be gleaned about development, delivery, practice, and negotiating multi-agency responses.

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## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The first section of this report is an overview of research findings about how domestic violence has an impact on mothering and fathering, to locate the Jacana programme approach in the current evidence base. The second section details the methodology for the evaluation, while the third documents the development of the Jacana programme. The fourth and fifth sections discuss the women and men's programmes respectively, including the perspectives of participants. Section six presents analysis of the multi-agency context in which Jacana was located and feedback from referral agencies. The final section draws the findings together and presents key lessons and recommendations.

Recent years have witnessed the increased provision of both generic parenting programmes and perpetrator programmes for abusive men. Both can be viewed as responses to the priority given to safeguarding children and anti-social behaviour. In practice, there is considerable diversity in provision and providers. Indeed, despite a recent positive evaluation of the Parenting Early Intervention Programme funded by the Department for Education, for instance, domestic violence remains inadequately addressed (Lindsay & Cullen, 2011). Within many perpetrator programmes attention given to children and men's parenting within a context of domestic violence has been widely recognised by practitioners to be limited. Parallel to the development of the Jacana programme, an increasing number of perpetrator programmes now have specific modules devoted to this work, but their content and depth has not had the same attention as other topics covered.

That living with domestic violence has an impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of children and the relationship between them and their mothers has been acknowledged for some time (Humphreys et al, 2006; Mullender et al, 2002; Morris, 2009; Radford & Hester, 2006). It has also been estimated that in up to half of cases the perpetrator is also physically or sexually abusing at least one of the children (Humphreys & Thiara, 2002). Of particular note is the consistent finding in various research is that many violent men manipulate the relationship between mothers and children (Mullender et al, 2002; Humphreys et al, 2006; Morris, 2009) and that this forms part of the perpetrators' tactics of 'coercive control' (Stark, 2007). There has been some discussion of how using violence against a partner impacts on men's ability to parent their children (Harne, 2003). Research shows that in most cases women are aware that living with domestic violence affects their ability to mother; including living with a sense of ongoing anxiety and fear and minimising the risk of violence to themselves and protecting the children whilst attempting to negotiate the day to day routines of parenting. For instance, women may be compelled to limit the activities of the children in order to prevent negative responses to them by the perpetrator and he may also insist that his emotional and physical needs take priority over those of the children (Mullender et al, 2002; Radford & Hester, 2006).

A particularly damaging strategy identified in research is the way in which perpetrators deliberately undermine the trust and emotional relationship between woman and child. A range of tactics are used, including degrading women in front of the children, involving children in the abuse of the woman, undercutting her control over children and her ability as a mother (Mullender et al, 2002; Thiara et al, 2006). The outcome can be a 'conspiracy of silence' wherein mothers and children rarely talk about what is happening, a distancing of mothers from their children and a sense that she is failing as a mother. Whilst many children attempt to support and protect their mothers (Mullender et al, 2002) some may blame her for the violence or her inability to prevent it, seeing her as weak. This results in what Anne Morris (2009) refers to as 'maternal alienation', a process through which children are systematically alienated and separated from alliances with their mothers - which many professionals fail to recognise as a consequence of intentional actions by the perpetrator.



Efforts to protect children can also have unintended consequences, especially where the disjunction between what children know and what their mothers believed they knew is uncovered once they have escaped from the violence. Given the lack of communication between mothers and children about the abuse, this gap in understanding can lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication and for some mothers, self-blame as they comprehend the limits of the protection they thought they had provided (Radford & Hester, 2006). These issues continue in the aftermath of domestic violence and have implications for the relationship between mothers and their children as they attempt to rebuild their lives (Humphreys et al, 2006).

Partly as a response to the focus in social policy promoting separated fathers having a relationship with their children and how this plays out in family courts, how and if abusive men can parent has become the subject of recent research. These studies indicate that some fathers are less engaged with their children, disregard children when being abusive, provide inconsistent physical care and can be more authoritarian and more volatile than fathers who are not domestic violence perpetrators (Harne, 2003). Men may also manipulate children in the post-separation period, especially if there are issues of child contact, continuing to undermine women's mothering and their relationship with their children (Edleson et al, 2003; Harne, 2003; Thiara & Gill, 2011).

Qualitative research on violent fathers reveals that in denying or minimising their violence, very few fathers defined violence against mothers as emotionally abusive of their children, even when they recruited children into the abuse of the mother (Harne, 2003; 2011). In presenting themselves as 'real' victims, Harne (2003) found that: some men justified their violence/coercive control on the basis of their partner's poor standards or disinclination for housework/childcare. Explanations for violence during pregnancy included claims that men had not wanted the child. Men generally brought children into their accounts only when making claims to being a 'good father'. In their discussions of violence, there was a failure to see children as human beings in their own right, and some regarded even very young children as provoking the abuse, with violent/controlling acts presented as indications of how much they 'loved' their children. Claims that their children preferred them over their mothers and that they were better parents were not uncommon (see also Morris, 2009). These findings support those which found that fathers' declarations of love and pride in children were not necessarily expressions of a commitment to the child's well-being, but rather viewing children as possessions/objects that fulfilled the fathers' needs: a form of 'emotional property' existing for their benefit (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002).

The construction of fathers as non-violent in the context of separation has potentially dangerous consequences for the safety of women, children and children's welfare (Eriksson & Hester, 2001), which feeds into the enduring dichotomy in legal and social work thinking between violent men yet good fathers (Hester & Harne, 1996). In relation to perpetrator programmes, Harne (2011: 168) claims that 'fathers have diverse responses to the content'. In particular, she questions how far the programmes were able to fully address harmful/abusive/neglectful parenting by abusive men and that the:

*perpetrator's sense of entitlement to having their own needs met often extended to their own children. Both were integral to inform their parenting practices, which included using the children as objects to get back at the mothers (2011: 168).*

The use of children as means to harass, intimidate and diminish women is one of the segments of the domestic violence Power and Control Wheel<sup>4</sup>.

Research findings on perpetrators, therefore, point to a need for the parenting of violent fathers to form a part of rigorous risk assessment whether the perpetrator is still living with his children or caring for them following separation (Radford et al, 2006; Thiara, 2010). Research which has focused on social work theory and practice in general, and with respect to domestic violence in particular, has for more than two decades noted how men/fathers are invisible, rarely spoken to alone, let alone targeted for interventions (see Stanley et al, 2011; Radford and Hester, 2006). As a direct consequence much 'parenting work' is in fact work with mothers; it is they who are the focus of social work and they who are required to protect children (Westmarland & Kelly, forthcoming)

## WIDER CONTEXT

Whilst specialised support services for women with children who are living with or have recently escaped from domestic violence have developed work which support mothers and children to re-establish fractured relationships, much of this work is aimed at children rather than women. The limits of existing provision to provide effective joint work with children and mothers has been highlighted by research, alongside the importance of moving beyond parenting programmes to a focus on strengthening women's mothering ability and mother-child relationships in the aftermath of domestic violence (Morris, 2009; Humphreys et al, 2010).

One initiative targeting men, 'Caring Dads', developed in Canada, is increasingly being offered as a 'stand-alone' alternative to perpetrator programmes in the UK (Respect, n.d.). Whilst it fills a valuable role in addressing child-centred fathering, Respect<sup>5</sup> argue that it fails to adequately address men's use of violence and should be offered only after men have attended a specialised perpetrator programme. At the same time, the fact that the majority of those attending Caring Dads are domestic violence perpetrators (ibid) demonstrates a gap in provision.

It is precisely this gap which the Jacana Parenting Programme aims to fill, enabling both victim-survivors and perpetrators to explore parenting in the context of abusive relationships, whilst ensuring the safety of women and children. It can be seen as a bridge, traversing boundaries between sectors of the domestic violence arena (Seith, 2003) that have different roles and responsibilities, and ways of working and understandings of domestic violence (Hester, 2011).

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<sup>4</sup>See <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/pdf/PowerandControl.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Respect is the membership association for community based domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services. See <http://www.respect.uk.net/>

## NEGOTIATING PLANETS AND ARENAS

The different spaces that mothers experiencing domestic violence move between are conceptualised by Marianne Hester (2004, 2011) as ‘three planets’: domestic violence; child protection; child contact. Each is rooted in policy and practice histories and discourses that shape the responses to women and children. According to Hester:

- on the ‘domestic violence’ planet there is an explicit gender analysis which recognises and names abusive men while providing woman and child centred support provision;
- on planet ‘child protection’, the approach is gender neutral and framed as a family problem, with an emphasis on women’s responsibility to protect children;
- on the final planet , child contact, the primary discourse is ‘good enough fathering’; here men’s violence is often severed from their ability to be a good parent, with an accompanying pressure on women to ensure access to, and contact with, children.

Whilst extremely useful in illustrating the potential conflict in approaches, the model has been criticised as being rather static, not allowing for changes in perspective, national and local variations. For this reason we are drawing on the work of Corinna Seith (2003) who introduced the concept of a ‘domestic violence arena’ – the constellation of agencies which respond, and the laws and frameworks they draw on doing so. This is different from the more operational multi-agency fora, in that it offers the possibility for exploring the extent to which agencies do work together and how different institutional cultures and requirements facilitate or impede joint working. How arenas are constituted is not fixed, and they should be expected to change over time. Jacana workers were required to constantly negotiate ways of not just traversing, but *being* in practice, in the local domestic violence arena, and as they did so aspects of the divergences in approach identified by Hester (2010) were evident.

One objective of the Jacana pilot project was to provide a referral pathway for Social Services, to divert women from mandatory engagement with child protection towards the woman-centred principles of empowerment and enabling that are the hallmark of specialised domestic violence provision. It has long been argued, but rarely recognised by statutory agencies, that enabling women to be safe is often the most effective form of child protection (Kelly, 1996). Some of the challenges encountered at the interface between domestic violence and child protection experienced by Jacana workers are discussed in section five. Interactions with child contact were less prominent, for reasons explored throughout the report. We explore the potential of Jacana in making men as perpetrators visible across a local domestic violence arena and defining what ‘good enough fathering’ looks like.

The following section turns to the methodology of the evaluation.

## METHODOLOGY

The aims of the evaluation were agreed by the nia project and the research team when the evaluation was commissioned:

- to provide a picture of the context in which the Jacana programme operated, including its location in multi-agency settings, and assess the extent to which the project offered 'added value';
- to document the implementation of the pilot, including the opportunities and challenges for meeting its aims;
- to assess the immediate and wider impact of the project.

The evaluation used a bespoke multi-methodological approach. There were six strands of data collection: pre and post programme questionnaires for women and men; focus groups with women and men towards the end of the programme; questionnaires to referral agencies; interviews with developers and deliverers of the materials at the beginning and end of the programme; non-participant observation of group sessions; and analysis of data supplied by the nia project and DVIP on referrals. Individual telephone interviews with programme participants were subsequently added, as questionnaires and focus groups yielded low responses.

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### PRE AND POST PROGRAMME QUESTIONNAIRES

Feedback from the women and men that participated in the programme was at the core of the evaluation. Questionnaires were developed to gather baseline data at the beginning of engagement with Jacana, including: demographic data; relationship status; brief details on history of violence, including impacts on children; relationships with children; contact arrangements; help-seeking with respect to violence and/or parenting; routes to finding Jacana; current safety concerns; scales to rate themselves as 'good' mothers/fathers. Nine women and four men completed pre-programme questionnaires, which were distributed by nia/DVIP workers and returned to the research team in self-addressed envelopes.

Follow-up questionnaires, distributed near the end of the programme, asked about changes in: relationships status and experiences of violence; contact arrangements; relationships with children; responses to children's behaviour; support with respect to violence and/or parenting; safety concerns; scales of 'good' mothering/fathering; top three gains from participation in the programme. Six women and four men returned post-programme questionnaires. Despite attempts to complete more questionnaires over the telephone and explore in more detail their experiences/reflections of the programme, it did not prove possible to reach any participants through this route. Completed questionnaires were entered into SPSS, but the small numbers precluded any detailed analysis.

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### TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN AND MEN

These interviews were undertaken at the end of the programme as questionnaire responses were low. Women and men were contacted by the nia project/DVIP staff and gave permission for their contact details to be passed to the research team. Interviews explored

the same questions as the focus groups; notes were transcribed and analysed thematically. One woman and one man were interviewed, as despite multiple attempts other participants who agreed to speak to the research team could not be located.

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## FOCUS GROUPS

Workers from the nia project and DVIP arranged separate focus groups for women and men in the weekly time slots reserved for group sessions. For the men, this took place before their group meeting, for the women, afterwards. Two of the three men remaining on the programme attended the session and spoke to researchers; similarly two attended the women's session, a lower number than expected. Themes covered here were: how participants had come to attend Jacana; overall views of the programme; most and least useful aspects; changes in relationships with children; support from workers; any difficult aspects; any suggestions for improvements or changes. The discussions were digitally recorded (with permission from participants), transcribed and analysed thematically.

Through these three routes, 37 per cent of women (n=10) and 80 per cent of men (n=8) provided information about their experiences of engagement with the programme to the research team. Whilst the numbers are small, the percentage of participation compares favourably to other similar evaluations.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE TO REFERRAL AGENCIES

Questionnaires were emailed to practitioners who had made referrals to Jacana, asking about: referral processes; assessments of need for the programme; outcomes; how it fits into existing provision; any identified gaps. Despite reminders sent by the research team and the nia project/DVIP, only six questionnaires were returned, five from Social Services Children's and Young Peoples' Services and one from a Children's Centre. This disappointing response rate might well reflect the timing of the evaluation, at the end of a financial year when local government and voluntary sector agencies were facing heavy budget cuts and uncertain futures. Responding to requests from researchers can hardly be a priority when workers are unsure about the security of their jobs.

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## INTERVIEWS WITH DEVELOPERS AND DELIVERERS

The developers of the Jacana manual were interviewed at the beginning of the programme, exploring: the rationale behind the programme; to what extent Jacana brought something new to existing provision, including that of DVIP/the nia project; aims and success criteria; parenting in the context of domestic violence, including how risk and safety were factored into the work with women and men.

Deliverers were interviewed by telephone at the midway point of the evaluation and together as a group after the final session. Here the focus was on experience of the programme in practice, including: relationships with other agencies; skills and training; challenges and difficulties; planning and preparation. Managers from both the nia project and DVIP, and two members of the advisory group, one from Children's Social Care and one with a different role in DVIP were also interviewed for their perspectives on the development and delivery of the programme.

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## NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

An original intention of the evaluation was for the evaluation team to observe sessions with women in order to enhance understanding of programme practices. Both the developers and deliverers of the programme were uncomfortable with subjecting women to further scrutiny in the groupwork setting, and the possibility of altering group dynamics. Ultimately the nia project decided that it would not be appropriate. This means our ability to assess programme content and practice and women's engagement with workers is more limited than originally envisaged. A sample of three sessions from the group work with men, with men's consent were provided on DVD, and analysed for what they revealed in terms of programme practice and processes of change.

It is the whole of this dataset, from a variety of perspectives, which is drawn on in the rest of the report and informs our conclusions.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE JACANA PROGRAMME

*It was a project that was most definitely needed in terms of it being a specific project around parenting, and with domestic violence being a core element of that work which is able to address the issues of men and their violence, to hold them accountable (Manager, DVIP).*

The idea for the Jacana programme had been 'in the air' for some time. The nia project found women had difficulties accessing parenting provision in the borough due to a combination of factors – anxiety, low confidence and self-esteem, not knowing services, language barriers, and fear of statutory services. After meetings between the nia project and social care managers, two gaps were identified: firstly, a scarcity of services for mothers who were still in abusive relationships and secondly, a total absence of provision for violent fathers. This converged with DVIP noting the absence of perpetrator work in Hackney. Children's Social Services were also interested to explore approaches which shifted the focus and pressure away from mothers - especially where they did not wish to separate - to looking at fathers and their responsibilities. This conjunction led to the development of an outline for a programme specifically addressing both mothering and fathering within domestic violence.

Through a competitive tendering process, consultants with long histories of work with perpetrators and victim-survivors were recruited to develop the programme materials, train workers, and provide guidance throughout the life of the pilot.

## PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE NIA PROJECT AND DVIP

The Jacana programme was enriched by the perspectives and experiences of two prominent organisations. For DVIP, Jacana provided a route to deepen parenting and perpetrator work; while fathering is addressed in a specific module in their current programmes, interlacing this with exploring safety and power and control with specific reference to children had become a priority.

The nia project has a track record of searching for, and developing, innovative ways to address violence against women, particularly to reach women and children through diverse routes. Jacana offered them a way to bridge the historically divided strands of work with women and men. Despite decades of experience and expertise in work with women and children, involvement in a project working with men was seen to be a change of emphasis offering challenges and opportunities, not to be undertaken lightly.

*it's been a very new way of working for us and initially it took a bit of getting used to in terms of how we're going to work successfully together (Manager, the nia project).*

For DVIP, however, working with women alongside perpetrator programmes is core to their practice. In this sense, working with both men and women in distinct yet linked services was a continuation of existing practices, lent new features and depth by the focus on parenting.

Given the new partnership and its associated challenges, communication between the two organisations/workers had to be prioritised. To facilitate joint work, it was considered vital to build in joint structured time between the women's and men's workers. The first stage of this was during the development of the project, where it was necessary to develop shared paperwork and procedures. Some more practical difficulties arose with respect to the incompatibility of IT systems. Once the pilot was underway, ongoing shared time was spent: holding case management meetings; regular project meetings with other staff from the nia project and DVIP; providing reflective practice space; and regular line management supervision where cases were individually discussed.

A multi-agency advisory group was set up to oversee the pilot, including representatives from DVIP, the nia project, social services, health, education, and the Parenting Fund.

Finally, before Jacana was launched, the developers delivered nine days training: three days for staff from the two organisations on the aims and remit of the programme; three days on work with men and three with women, attended by both sets of workers to enhance their knowledge and understanding of their counterparts'.

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#### INCLUSION CRITERIA

The criteria for referrals were broad, encompassing those for whom there is a gap in existing provision:

- women with children who were victim-survivors of current or historic domestic violence, whether or not the children were living with them at the time of referral;
- men with children who had been violent to a current or previous partner, whether or not the children were living with them at the time of referral;

in addition

- men had to not be currently involved in any criminal proceedings related to domestic violence offences;
- all women and men required a 'group manageable' level of English, given the difficulties of using interpreters to explore and address the issues at stake.

All partners of the men who were referred to the programme were to be contacted and offered support from the women's workers, in line with international best practice and guidelines for the accreditation of perpetrator programmes (Respect, 2008). So while it was anticipated that some referrals would be for men and women who were in, or had been, an intimate relationship, in practice only three of the 'couple referrals' translated into both woman and perpetrator participating in the programme, and for one couple their engagement with was very brief. The majority were, therefore, attending as the only parent in contact with the project.



Jacana was viewed by children's social care as an early intervention/prevention service rather than a Tier three<sup>6</sup> service although in practice most of the referrals received by Jacana were actually Tier three: children were either on child protection plans or there was long standing domestic violence. Engaging men as fathers where the children are deemed to be at Tier two was recognised as difficult, given the limited levers that can be applied. It is unclear whether social workers worked with an implicit threshold of Tier three cases, since they perceived this as more secure ground for themselves.

In the initial stages of developing the programme, identifying appropriate venues which could accommodate evening work and the specific requirements of the sessions proved to be a time consuming process. While ultimately the sessions with women took place in a family centre and Children's Centres, several that were approached would not accommodate older children. The men's group was held in the Bridge Academy School in the evenings and individual work in a substance use agency. Whether environment affects the efficacy of the work is an under-explored question; it is possible that a classroom setting may evoke negative memories of school and it has also been recognised in a general sense that getting a programme to 'fit in' with available facilities rather than making a space for it as a priority may affect delivery (Dane & Schneider, 1998).

#### DEVELOPING REFERRAL PATHWAYS: REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

*Regardless of what people say the demand is, the reality on the ground is always slow to trickle through and that's really informed by the relationship that people start having with people. Once they've made a referral and you deal with it they'll tend to refer more, tell their colleagues... so I'm seeing a slow trickle through (Men's worker).*

New initiatives inevitably take time to embed themselves in agencies' inventory of available local provision, requiring extensive development to publicise remits and establish referral processes/pathways (Coy & Kelly, 2011). Following the successful recruitment of project workers, Jacana was officially launched at a conference in April 2010, attended by around 80 professionals. The programme developers also delivered training for between 45-50 practitioners from a range of local agencies (health visitors, social workers, children's centres workers), as a means of raising awareness about both the impacts of domestic violence on parenting and the inception of the Jacana programme. Subsequently, both the nia project and DVIP engaged in intense 'pavement pounding' and dissemination of posters and leaflets to secure sufficient referrals for direct work to begin in the early autumn. An issue to emerge in the course of this outreach was the difficulty that some agencies had with the feminist approach underpinning the programme (see also Coy, Thiara & Kelly [2011] for similar resistance to prevention work with young people in schools).

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<sup>6</sup> The Common Assessment Framework is a shared assessment and planning framework for use across all children's services in England. It aims to enable early identification of children's additional needs and promote co-ordinated service provision to meet them. Assessments are carried out locally under the CAF to determine the level of risk/need for children. Tier three refers to children on either child protection plans or identified as 'in need', whereas children at Tier two would be deemed to require early intervention to prevent them from progressing onto higher levels of need/protection.

The project development work included liaison, presentations, and meetings with individual teams within children's social services (who became the main source of referrals), health professionals, children centres, education, domestic violence services, police, CAMHS teams, housing and solicitors as well as a wide range of other organisations. With hindsight, the drafting of leaflets could have begun earlier, as the different processes in each organisation for developing and signing off text led to considerable delays. Workers also suggested that some of the liaison and networking to generate referrals could have taken place before they began in post, although resources may not have permitted this.

That the focus of domestic violence intervention is almost exclusively women reverberated in the referral process, as workers noted that agencies were more used to making referrals for women than men:

*They are really used to referring women and even though there's a gap for dads and they know there is a need for services for dad, that's not their immediate response (Men's worker).*

The first referrals were received in June 2010, with group work beginning for women in July 2010 and for men in October 2010. In general, agencies were reported to have recognised a gap in services for men/fathers and were positive about the possibility of having somewhere to refer men to. Yet referrals for men were significantly slower than those for women, leading to the widening of the men's work to other boroughs, after negotiation with funders.

Having to establish a brand new service in a year and demonstrate its success, pressure of time was a factor from the outset. This was especially acute for the work with men, as there was no perpetrator programme in Hackney, and thus the very concept of intervention with men was new as well as the Jacana pilot itself, alongside the new terrain it sought to open up.

Although in the original proposal the intention was to deliver the programme twice, in practice the flow of referrals and differing engagement by women and men shaped the way in which the work was undertaken, resulting in one run.

*We were never going to be able to do this as its set out in the time and resources that we had. Effectively, in what's been a year we had to set up the service, do all the marketing and getting referrals in before we were even looking at delivery (Women's worker).*

The pressure of completing the pilot within the timeline also meant that the nia project and DVIP attempted to run the programme over the summer holiday period, but this proved unrealistic for a range of reasons.

## PROGRAMME CONTENT

The developers produced one manual for work with men and one for women which laid out a sequence of sessions in a combination of didactic input and more participatory exercises, covering the themes laid out below. Note that whilst some themes are common, many are differentiated, in contrast to most parenting programmes.

### *Safety work (women)*

#### *Group*

Relationship with children  
Defining and naming violence  
Impacts of domestic violence on children  
Family power structures  
Power and control  
Consistency and boundaries  
Techniques for managing children's behaviour  
Exploring love and intimacy  
Self-blame  
Sexual coercion/consent  
Conflict resolution

#### *Individual*

Risk assessment and safety planning  
Goal setting  
Self care  
Parenting challenges

### *Perpetrator work (men)*

#### *Group*

Relationship with children  
Defining and naming violence  
Disciplining children  
Denial/minimisation  
Power and control  
Impacts of domestic violence on women and children  
Empathy  
Expressing and responding to anger  
Techniques for managing children's behaviour  
Emotional abuse  
Sexual coercion/consent  
Jealousy  
Secrecy

#### *Individual*

Risk assessment and safety planning  
Goal setting  
Accountability

The women's programme (WP) was organised with four individual sessions before the group work began, with weekly individual sessions following group work thereafter. In total, the programme manual for women included 14 group work sessions and 16 individual sessions. The group work for men also included four individual sessions before group work commenced with six individual sessions peppered throughout the 20 week group work programme, with the fifth individual session taking place at week five of the group programme. That a greater emphasis was placed on groupwork for perpetrators is rooted in the accountability to other group members that should develop in such settings (Gondolf, 2002; Adams, 2003; Babcock et al. 2004).

Individual sessions with men were undertaken by one female member of staff, who commenced in post in January 2010. She worked with a male co-facilitator already employed by DVIP for the group sessions. Work with women was shared between a full-time and a part-time nia project staff member, who started in February 2010 and July 2010 respectively. Recruiting skilled and experienced staff took two rounds of advertising, which in turn led to inevitable delays in the early stages of programme development. This obstacle to establishing new forms of provision is rarely factored into funding grants, yet in pilot projects such as Jacana poses additional pressures (see also Coy & Kelly, 2011).

Overall, the manual provided a framework or toolkit for the individual and group work with women and with men, but adapting to the needs of service users required considerable skill and experience from facilitators. There was an explicit intention for workers to be flexible with the structure and reflect throughout on how and why this had been necessary.

Adjustments to materials were to be documented, in order that the lessons from the pilot were incorporated into subsequent revisions.

That referrals did not flow in the way originally anticipated required Jacana workers to make adaptations; workers spoke of being aware from the outset that the programme would be adapted in terms of what was covered in individual and group sessions.

*We thought we'd have 30 referrals and 20 of those would start... around a week or two apart from each other and that's just not how it has worked. So we've had to work with what we've got and do as much work at the start as quickly with who we've got (Women's worker).*

Low numbers – typically just two or three men – was an issue apparent in analysis of the men's groupwork sessions which also presented difficulties in terms of delivering the programme as intended. Whilst workers were clear that programme variation was both acceptable and anticipated, and were experienced enough to negotiate this satisfactorily, it appeared that much of the variation was due to insufficient numbers of participants rather than as proactive responses to issues presented by the men.

However, given the pilot nature of the programme it was thought inevitable that the first implementation would be different to subsequent delivery, as such a key part was embedding the service and establishing clear referral pathways.

*Had we been able to continue and go on... you would have been able to deliver it in a completely different way than we've been able to on the first run... you have to expect that its not going to work out that way at the beginning (Men's worker).*

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#### ADDRESSING RISK AND SAFETY

All women referred to Jacana were risk assessed using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-Based Violence (DASH) tool developed by CAADA. With women this assessment and subsequent safety planning, regarded as 'essential for all cases', was often completed in the second or third session, since the first was often taken up with explaining the remit of the programme and developing rapport. Gauging the urgency of a risk assessment was based on women's current circumstances as well as awareness that it takes time to build trust that enables frank disclosure around some recognised risk factors (see also Coy & Kelly, 2011).

*It's been interesting trying to figure out how important it is to do that [risk assessment] early on... if they're in a refuge and they've been working with nia for months, that doesn't feel like the most important thing to do right now... it's very different with somebody who's a social services referral... I've been trying to do it on what the woman's current risk situation is, because that feels like it makes the most sense, but it means that a lot of those questions don't feel very relevant. And also I guess if you're doing it early on, how much are they willing to disclose? (Women's worker).*

Risk with men was assessed using DVIP's well established procedures that draw on the same risk indicators as DASH, although this process was described as more organic as workers drew on extensive experience and accumulated skills to gather information and safety plan

rather than a specific tool (see also Coy & Kelly, 2011 with respect to Independent Domestic Violence Advisors). Professional judgement is a vital component of the risk assessment process since 'complex lives and dangerous situations cannot simply be reduced to a tick box form... that can be completed by anyone with access to victims of domestic abuse' (Robinson, 2007: 4). The importance of agreeing a contract early on with men was emphasised; in particular being clear about limited confidentiality and requiring the details of partners and ex-partners. Given that the majority of male and female participants were not in relationships with each other, and the requirement that the Jacana women's worker also contact men's partners, this was a critical first step.

While risk assessments were intended to be 'dovetailed' into a joint assessment where both women and men were involved in the programme, that so few couples ultimately engaged means it is not possible to form any conclusions about how this worked in practice.

A high proportion of the referrals involved women and men with drug and/or alcohol issues, neither of which are covered in the individual or group work, yet these were often the cases where Social Services was placing the most pressure on Jacana in terms of measurable change. Any revisions will need to trial structured work on these themes.

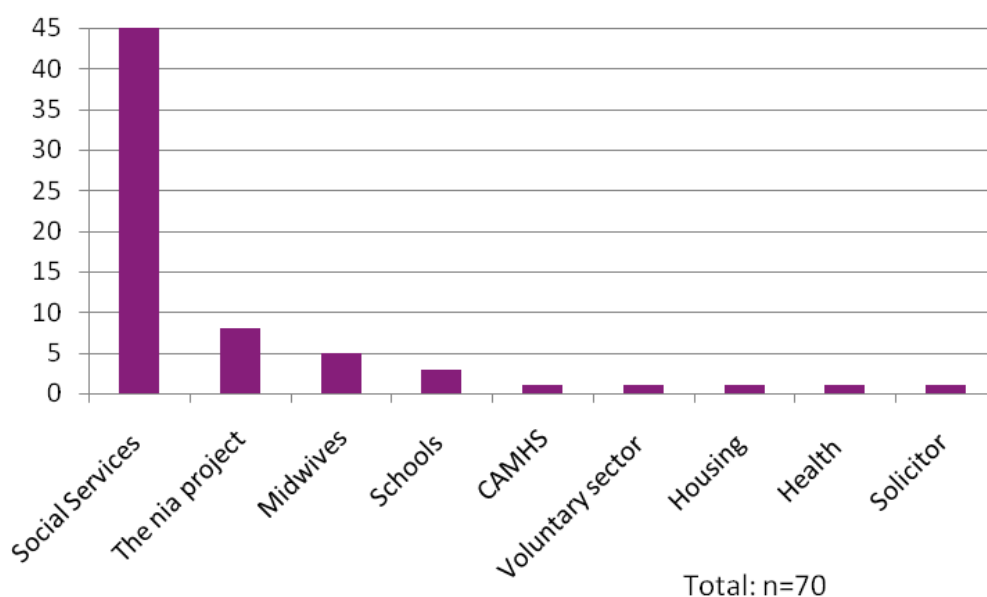
## ENGAGEMENT WITH JACANA

The programme planned to work with 24 women and 24 men during the pilot; a target that was exceeded for women but not reached for men. This section presents data on the referrals and explores issues about enabling women and men to participate.

### WOMEN

The Jacana programme for women received a total of 70 referrals. The majority were from Social Services (n=45); the remaining third from a range of other services – the nia project (n=8); midwifery (n=5); health visitors (n=4); schools (n=3); and one each from CAMHS, Family Action, housing worker, PCT and solicitor. Figure one shows the distribution of referral sources.

Figure 1: Referral sources to Jacana - women



With respect to referrals from Social Services, information provided for referrals varied considerably and was often inconsistent – *‘some of the referrals were quite comprehensive and had quite a lot of background. For some we literally had a sort of statement of “there has been violence”’*. Thus Jacana workers frequently had to follow up professionals for information about referrals, adding to their work load. Additional information was either obtained from agencies/professionals or from women themselves during the first part of the process since, as noted, a great emphasis was placed on conducting risk assessments and safety planning with all women at an early stage.

However, women were often fearful and uncertain at the point of first contact with Jacana. Some had been repeatedly signposted to domestic violence services and reported feeling swamped by professional involvement that meant they were ambivalent about engaging with another agency. This also had time implications as many women needed to build trust before they were willing to reveal their fears and concerns about the charged issue of mothering. Great sensitivity was required here to build trust and confidentiality.

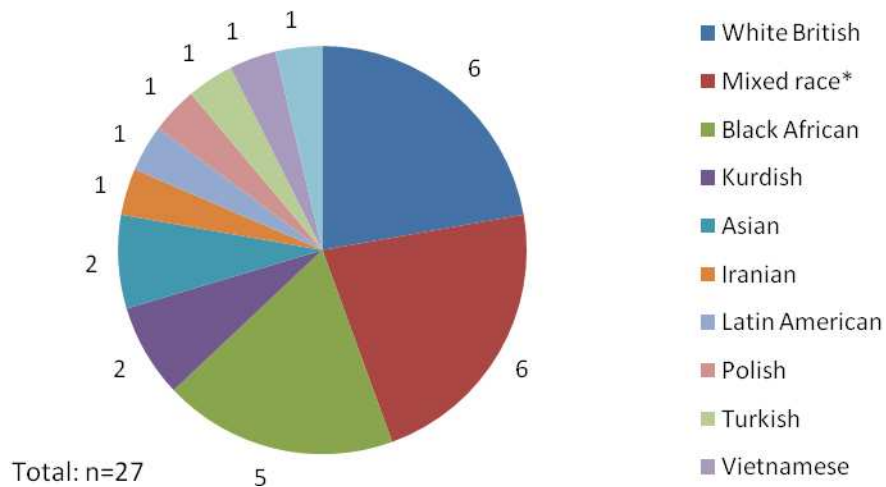
*It seems to take a long time for trusting relationships to be built or for mothers to trust the parenting workers and begin to feel comfortable to talk about their experiences, the impact on children, and work through the content of the sessions (Women's worker).*

Referrals from the nia project enabled the work to begin from a different starting point, as the organisation had already built a level of trust with women.

## PARTICIPATION

Of the 70 referrals, 27 women participated in the programme, through a total of 87 one-to-one sessions and 24 group sessions. The diversity of women who participated was evident; with just over a fifth white British (see figure two). This reflects both the local population that the nia project is situated within, and the organisation's long-standing commitment to developing and delivering services that meet the needs of women from minority communities. However, work with women was reported to be more complex and time consuming where there were additional cultural issues that were unfamiliar to Jacana workers.

Figure 2: Women's ethnicity



\*3 white and Caribbean; 2 white and African; 1 Irish, Romanian and Caribbean

Women's engagement varied in terms of aspects of the programme:

- telephone support only was provided to two women;
- individual and telephone support was provided to 12 women;
- one-to-one, telephone and group support was provided to 13 women.

Individual sessions prepared some women for joining the group, and enabled workers to undertake the risk assessment and safety planning work that was more 'contained' when addressed on a one-to-one basis. Some women chose not to participate in group sessions at all – *'it's a much bigger step than coming to see one person'*. Whilst group work was a preferred strands of the Jacana programme for women, it was not a requirement, and multiple routes were provided into support.

*The thinking was that we could start them all off with the one to one sessions at about the same time and then they would all move in to group four weeks later... actually the reality was that the referrals dripped in and so some women had no one to one sessions before they started group work, some women chose not to have any one to one sessions and wanted to come directly to group, some women either initially or never wanted to access the group programme so only got individual sessions (Women's worker).*

As noted earlier, this variability of need and preference required workers to be flexible and responsive to maximise engagement. Several important issues were raised by workers about the process of adapting the manual/programme structure in light of lower referral rates and women's own choices.

- The four individual sessions prior to group work were reported to include a lot of material – *'probably at least double the amount of work that we could realistically do'* - in practice more time was necessary if this content was to be covered. It was suggested that more (possibly eight) individual sessions could ensure that the programme is tailored to women's different circumstances – *'we adapted it to make that initial period very flexible so that we could either distil it and we could do the very basics or we could draw it out and do a much more in-depth assessment period at the start'*.
- Constraints of childcare meant that workers could only do one hour at a time with women (while sessions for men were longer).
- When women attended sessions sporadically rather than consecutively, it was harder to stay focussed on the parenting material as time with workers was dominated by 'catch-ups' that were mostly related to coping with violence, its legacies and practical challenges in women's lives.
- Although choice of how to participate was considered important for women, the impact of the work was thought to be greater where women had accessed both individual and group work – *'it's definitely worked best when they've been able to do the two... there's definitely something that they've got from group that is very different to what they've got from the one to one'*. In particular, those who chose not attend the group were seen to miss out on *'the wealth of experiences of other women and support and reinforcement and encouragement and the sharing of experiences'*.

Women's perspectives on the benefits of group/individual sessions are discussed in section four.

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## RISK AND SAFETY

Risk assessment data for all women who participated in the programme was not supplied to the evaluation team. The discussion here is therefore based on the multiple interviews with women's programme workers.



Whilst many of the referrals received for women were high risk, some were reported to not have been formally risk assessed or referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) prior to referral to Jacana. Women assessed as sufficiently high risk to meet the threshold for a referral to MARAC should, in accordance with local protocols, be automatically referred to the independent domestic violence advocacy (IDVA) scheme at the nia project. This led to joint working with the IDVA service and Jacana workers, which the latter perceived as invaluable since the immediate safety work was undertaken by IDVAs, freeing Jacana to focus specifically on parenting. Without this co-location of specialised support, programme delivery would have been diluted by the need to prioritise safety planning.

One very positive outcome is that women who were deemed high risk and had had multiple referrals to different agencies, yet not taken up support, developed trusting and productive relationships with the Jacana programme. This suggests that programmes focussing on mothering may be a route into specialised support for women with complex needs.

At the same time, having a 'wraparound' range of services with which to complement the parenting work was necessary. For those who were already accessing support, it was more possible to undertake focussed work on mothering. More complicated combinations of support were required for women accessing services for the first time, or for whom Jacana was a place where trust with agencies developed.

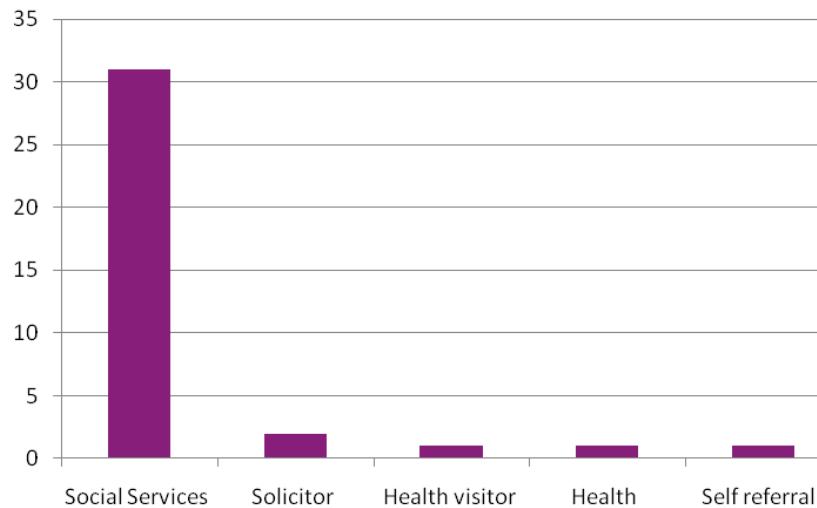
## MEN

*We had to work really hard to get ourselves noticed and heard and seen. It took a long time for the referrals to come through and the referrals for mums came much quicker and faster than they did for dads (Men's worker).*

## PARTICIPATION

Jacana received a total of 36 referrals for men/fathers. The majority were from Social Services (n=31) with the remainder from solicitors (n=2), the PCT (n=1), a health visitor (n=1) and one was a self referral (see figure three). Of these initial referrals, seven fell outside of inclusion criteria as criminal justice proceedings were underway at the time, leaving 29 potential programme participants.

Figure 3: Referral sources to Jacana – men



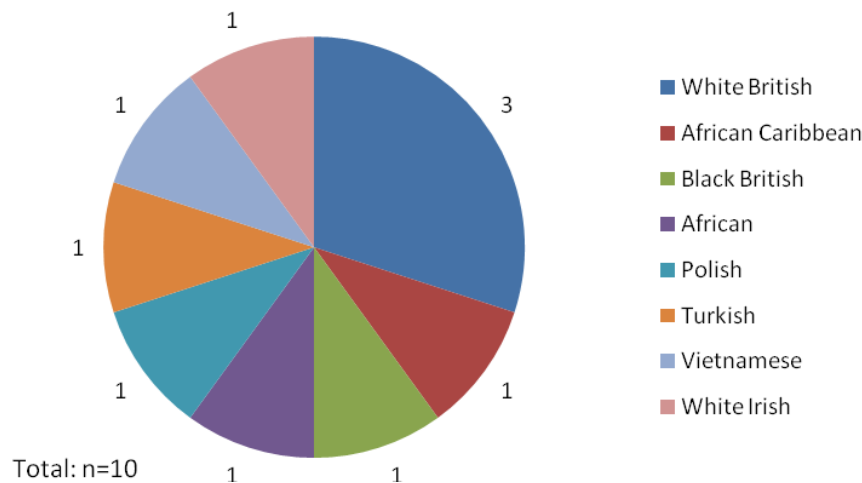
To ensure a common understanding of the work and what would be required of the men, Jacana workers held three-way meetings with each social worker and potential service user. This was time-consuming, and for some the referral did not translate into engagement with the programme. Men’s motivation to change their abusive behaviour through engagement with specialist programmes is a significant challenge (Silvergleid & Mankowski 2006; Saunders, 2008). How referral agencies and professionals can enable men’s participation, including using any available levers to enhance their motivation, is an important issue for programme implementation.

A barrier to local ‘buy in’ for work with perpetrators was that the men’s worker was refused permission to represent Jacana at the MARAC in Hackney, on the grounds that she worked with abusive men. This is at odds with CAADA guidance, which recommends the involvement of community-based perpetrator programme (CAADA, 2010). If MARACs do not include interventions with men, they are excluding perspectives and information which might make them more effective. In addition, MARACs can function as referral pathways to specialised domestic violence perpetrator programmes (Blacklock & Debonnaire, 2011).

It is notable that the high number of police notifications to Social Services locally following domestic violence incidents were not translating into referrals to Jacana. This echoes recent research findings that only a minority of new notifications to child protection services result in support/intervention (Stanley et al, 2011). There are important questions here about the efficacy of automatic notifications systems where so few lead to women and children receiving additional support (Humphreys, 2008; Stanley et al, 2011). The issue of how much social services will push men towards interventions was also raised as a possible explanation – they are regarded as ‘a must’ for women and as ‘if you want’ for men.

Ultimately ten men engaged in one-to-one sessions, from similar diverse ethnic backgrounds as for women, as figure four shows. This included one Vietnamese man who did not speak English and thus could not take part in the group work – two individual sessions through an interpreter were undertaken with him. Nine men engaged with group work.

Figure 4: Men's ethnicity



The slower referral rate for men meant that the men's group did not commence until October 2010. Consequently, more individual work had to be undertaken to retain men who had been referred earlier. Inevitably, this resulted in an adaptation of the programme as work intended for the group was undertaken on a one-to-one basis. Additionally, as with women, the work intended for the initial four individual sessions took longer to cover than laid out in the manual.

At the same time and in contrast to the individual work with women, the stipulated four individual sessions with men were seen as a 'luxury' and something that could be reduced to two. Some of the work included in the individual sessions was considered better done in group, such as timelines and goal setting, as it enabled focus on some positives and for group cohesion.

*All the nice stuff gets done in private and all the really challenging stuff gets done in public and I feel that all the nice stuff would be really beneficial in terms of group dynamics, creating a more trusting, solid group (Men's worker).*

It was clear from analysis of the men's sessions on DVD that the group work required further consideration to counteract the disadvantages of low attendance. Three group work sessions were observed, each approximately a month apart, and each attended by no more than three men (although at some points five men were engaged in group sessions). This appeared to be the main factor presenting difficulties in terms of delivering programme content, with one exercise adapted by workers to compensate for the lack of participants and a further exercise postponed. It is also possible that the low numbers, as well as a lack of continuity in attendance, may have contributed to an observed lack of interaction between the men in terms of challenging each other's perceptions and positions. Low referral rates affect the efficacy of group work, by hindering the development of group accountability (Silvergleid & Mankowski, 2006).

Assessing the impact of individual sessions was also considered by workers to be difficult compared with group work. Having a group established that men could be fed into after a couple of individual sessions, was stressed, in order to enhance impact and accountability.

*Its really hard to test the impact of four one to ones or two one to ones until you've got a programme that's already up and running that you can feed men into (Men's worker).*

New men joining an established group also enabled existing participants to recognise their own progress, as they observe attitudes they no longer hold in men who are beginning the process of change (Silvergleid & Mankowski, 2006). In later sections of this report we discuss men's perspectives on the programme in more depth, including the degree to which they reflected on their own behaviour.

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#### INVOLVEMENT WITH SOCIAL SERVICES

The length of time that women required to engage meaningfully with Jacana was a potential source of tension where referral agencies, particularly Social Services, required case updates at a quicker pace than the process of building trust facilitated. Not only did women need to feel they could trust workers in order to be open about their experiences but they also needed assurances that information they gave would not be shared with other professionals, especially social services.

*That's something the women have fed back as being really important, knowing right from the start what is going to be shared and what isn't and knowing where the sort of boundaries are... there's a clear statement that we're not part of social services, we're separate, we're going to work with you in a different way (Women's worker).*

Thus, being able to distinguish themselves from social services was a key strength of the work of Jacana. These complexities of how programme traversed different arenas – specialised domestic violence and child protection – particularly in terms of confidentiality and information sharing are also explored further in section six.

#### SUMMARY

Given the population of the areas in which Jacana was implemented, it is unsurprising that there was a great deal of diversity among the referrals for both women and men. This may also link to the high attrition rate for men; there is some evidence that BME men find structured perpetrator programmes difficult to engage with (Gondolf, 2002). It is also clear that some women who participated in Jacana had previously chosen not to engage with a range of services, suggesting that the programme offered a new route into specialised support.

In terms of engagement with the programme, different issues emerge with respect to women and men. For women, developing trust through individual sessions before joining the group, and offering choices to participate in ways with which women felt most comfortable, were critical. The four sessions envisaged in the manual were therefore often

extended to create a climate of trust to enable disclosure, explore safety and open up specific issues around mothering. For men the engagement was mostly mandated by family courts or Social Services and therefore based on a less flexible structure. While the individual sessions for men were viewed as less important as the key was to engage men in group discussion as early as possible, having one-to-one sessions at the start, middle and end of the programme nonetheless offered opportunities for deeper and individual engagement. The contract with men clarifying the limitations of confidentiality and requiring contact details for partners and ex-partners was also an essential element.

## THE WOMEN'S PROGRAMME

Although the nia project provides a range of support services to women and children, Jacana has a greater focus on emotional/therapeutic support around women's relationships, their parenting and mother-child relationships in a context of domestic violence. Workers viewed the programme as a bounded space to:

*... look at you, your relationships and how you feel about that... the moving between talking about couple relationships and talking about parent-child relationships, and constantly moving between the two, feels quite unique as well... we're doing this constant juggling of keeping the child and the woman in mind and monitoring risks to both in a way that I think even within nia services there's a tendency to focus on one or the other... we've done a lot in keeping them both in mind and keep going back to a conversation that involves the two and the difficult complexities of the two (Women's worker).*

This constant focus on women and children and their relationship makes Jacana one of the few interventions that connect mother-child work. It also provides more in-depth material in relation to parenting than other parenting programmes: *'doing less of the basic of how do you manage a child's behaviour and more of the why is your child behaving like that, how can you talk to them about how they're behaving, what does it mean'*. This safe space to explore issues about their relationships in a safe way was reported by women as hugely significant.

*Women have talked about really valuing that safe place to explore, not just feel judged, but to have real debates and wrestle with their feelings and the choices they're making in quite a complex way. That I think sometimes they do very quickly in the course of a domestic violence intervention or in terms of social services. They're being given time to really think (Women's worker).*

In this way, Jacana was considered to give women space to think about choices according to their needs rather than having actions imposed on them. That the work is structured and focused around distinct aims and objectives was also viewed positively by workers in providing a framework that can be used flexibly to explore issues quickly or more in depth as deemed appropriate with each individual. For instance, one of the individual sessions focuses on what is often presented to women by agencies as the 'leave ultimatum' (Douglas & Walsh, 2010), but in such a way that women could discuss decision-making processes and dilemmas in a non-judgemental space.

*There's a session on staying or leaving which is a simple exercise which is basically brainstorming with a woman the costs and benefits of leaving a relationship. Having to explore both areas and the fact that those areas may contradict each other, it enables quite a reflective conversation. So it works on a practical step by step level but at the same time working on quite a deep level in terms of hidden feelings related to those choices. Allowing women that time to explore their options is only going to increase their safety (Women's worker).*

## WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES

The perspectives of the women who engaged with the Jacana programme are at the core of the evaluation. Drawing on women's experiences as means to evaluate work with perpetrators is central to assessing the impact on safety and mothering. Given that so few of the evaluation participants were in a relationship with each other, it is not possible here to link women's perspectives with either those of men or any changes in male partner's behaviour as a result of the programme. Nevertheless, women's perspectives offer the most meaningful data on outcomes.

This section presents the findings from the pre and post-programme questionnaires, focus group and telephone interviews. Although questionnaires were designed to measure the impact of participation in the programme, the small numbers preclude any meaningful analysis of trends; evidence of impact is drawn primarily from the qualitative data.

Nine women completed pre-programme questionnaires. The average age was 29 years (range 23-44 years). Two women identified as Asian, one white British, one white European, two 'British', one Nigerian and one Iranian. The perpetrator was an ex-partner for five women and husband for four. Almost all had been in the relationship for more than 4 years, with four more than 10 years.

One woman, who had not completed a pre-or post programme questionnaire, was interviewed over the telephone. Five post-programme questionnaires were returned; all had also completed pre-programme questionnaires and two of these also participated in the focus group. In total then, ten of the 27 women (37%) who participated in Jacana provided feedback in some form (see table 1). about their experiences, although only six after their involvement in the programme. Quotes here are coded to show where they are drawn from: PRE-Q (pre-questionnaire); POST-Q; FG (focus group); and TI (telephone interview).

Table 1: Women's engagement with the evaluation

	Pre-programme questionnaire	Post programme questionnaire	Focus group	Telephone interview
1	√	√	√	
2	√	√	√	
3	√	√		
4	√	√		
5	√	√		
6	√			
7	√			
8	√			
9	√			
10				√

Between them, the ten women had 19 children, ranging from five months to 14 years, with nine having residency and one with children in foster care. Contact with perpetrators ranged from none (n=4) to informal (n=3) and court ordered (n=1)<sup>7</sup>.

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#### PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRAMME CONTENT

Both women who participated in the focus group had attended previous parenting programmes, and reported these as pressured contexts in which they were bombarded with too much information. Jacana was perceived very differently; enabling women to explore the issues of mothering, anger, child development and assertiveness/confidence at their own pace, and in a connected way. Two significant findings emerge here: firstly, that how the sessions were run was as important to women as the content. The non-directive delivery style facilitated women absorbing as much information as they felt able, while also having space to process and reflect on their own experiences.

*I've benefited a lot out of the programme. I've got a lot of information that I need. And it's not too much information, either. The information isn't overwhelming me (W1, FG, one child).*

Secondly, the focus on both violence and parenting mattered. While workers considered that a future dilemma might be how to 'sell' the programme, either as about domestic violence or parenting, women were unequivocal that it was the integration of both that made it valuable and relevant to them. It was clear that part of this was how violence was reframed; that abusive behaviours were named and defined as such, but in a non-directive way that enabled women to recognise how power and control had been used by the perpetrator and thus narrowed their 'space for action' (Coy & Kelly, 2011).

*We talk about problems, and actually we didn't think about it in the normal light, it's like opened my eyes (W2, FG, three children)*

*How do you handle yourself when you have a child and you're in a violent relationship? And it [Jacana] just basically shows you the effects... how to manage the effects of being in a violent relationship with a child (W1, FG, one child)*

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#### PARTICIPATION IN JACANA

For some women, the prospect of joining a group was initially overwhelming; as noted earlier, the nia project workers were flexible about how they engaged with women and recognised anxieties about group sessions. In the focus group, women reflected on the different benefits of individual and group sessions.

*The one-to-ones are like more personal reasons, if you've got anything that's bothering you, that you don't want to share in the group, and then the group is more for experiences that you share with other women (W1, FG, one child).*

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<sup>7</sup> Two missing responses from the questionnaires.



*I think it's different, but it's more personal one by one... in the one-to-one meetings it was very helpful because [worker] always when I came with some problems, she always finds the way to resolve them, she always finds some useful numbers. She gave me some referrals and she's always doing everything she can to help me (W2, FG, three children).*

For both women, the value of Jacana was the combination of practical and emotional support, individual advocacy and group work. Advocacy, in terms of securing rights and entitlements were here primarily related to housing and negotiation with Social Services; this gave women the emotional space to talk and explore their relationships in the group. While women on the programme described this as of immeasurable value, for workers it placed additional demands on time. This key finding has implications for any future configurations of Jacana: first that the time required of workers to undertake advocacy related to practical needs is an integral part of the work and requires factoring into time management and expectations of programme capacity; secondly, this underscores the earlier observation that programmes such as Jacana provide an important and necessary addition to support options, and being embedded within a range of provision is critical to make its unique value possible in reality. Advocacy work needs to be built into the programme or co-located with it.

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#### IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE: SELF, CHILDREN AND RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

When asked about the impacts of violence, women reported emotional diminishment in terms of decreased self esteem, anxiety and depression.

*It has ruined my confidence as a person and damaged me emotionally (W1, PRE-Q, one child).*

*I can't sleep well. I hate all men. I find it difficult to trust anyone. All the time I am scared about my future. I cry often. I feel depressed (W6, PRE-Q, two children).*

In eight of the nine questionnaires, women reported that children had witnessed the violence, and in two had been directly abused, verbally and in one case physically. In one case, the perpetrator had recruited the children to participate in the abuse by encouraging them to shout at their mother. Involving children in this way is part of what has been termed an 'abusive household gender regime' (Morris, 2009), where the perpetrator creates a web-like regime of interlocking forms of abuse in order to entrap women and children both physically and emotionally.

Impacts for children reported in the questionnaires included anger, anxiety, bedwetting, behavioural problems and difficulty sleeping (see also Mullender et al, 2002). In the post-programme questionnaires, three women reported that children were on child protection plans when they first attended Jacana, but only one by the end. All five women were in contact with Social Services before Jacana, and only two by the end of the programme.

The pre-programme questionnaire asked women about their perceptions of a 'good mother' in three words or phrases. The most common themes here were:

- being loving and caring (n=7);
- protecting (n=3);
- communication (n=3);
- 'being there' (n=2).

When asked to rate themselves initially on a scale of 1-5 as 'good mothers', eight women gave scores of '4' or '5' (one gave '2'). Scores for 'ability to parent' were more mixed and averaged lower: only one woman rated this '5'; three women '4'; three women '3' and two '2'. This echoes findings from previous research which has highlighted the extent to which domestic/intimate partner violence interferes with women's capacities and abilities to mother (Mullender et al, 2002; Radford & Hester, 2006; Morris, 2009).

Over half (n=5) identified that the violence meant they had no energy to do things with children, less patience, and were unable to spend quality time with children. Four reported that they had not been able to protect their children. One woman said she was 'not able to be the role model that I wanted to be' (W5, PRE-Q, two children). Despite this, most identified qualities and actions associated with good mothering that they aspired to develop, or had managed to sustain.

Responses to the scale on how the violence affected relationships with children were also mixed: over half of women (n=5) described their current relationship with their children as 'good, but needing a little help', four that they were 'close and speak openly about everything'. A third (n=3) reported being 'close, but we do not talk about the abuse'.

In the five post-programme questionnaires, all scored themselves as 'good mothers' as at '4' or '5'. The scale for 'ability to parent' was as mixed as in the pre-programme questionnaires, with one woman '5'; two women '4'; one woman '3' and one '2'. Whilst one would expect scores here to have increased, something more complex, which has been noted in previous studies, has taken place. Women tend to underestimate children's knowledge of violence while attempting to protect them from it (Mullender et al, 2002). Learning about the impacts of violence on children, through the Jacana programme, led women to reassess their mothering whilst living with violence. All five women reported that their relationship with their children had changed positively since attending Jacana sessions; four noted ways in which they had changed responses to their children's behaviour.

*I allow her to behave/express herself (W3, POST-Q, two children).*

*I liaise with my children more, there is more confidence than before (W4, POST-Q, two children).*

Similarly women from the focus group reported being more confident in their abilities to respond to children's behaviour patiently and calmly. Learning different practical techniques, combined with enhanced space for action, led to increased ability to manage difficult situations with equanimity.

The necessity of long term support work with women is evident in that four women who completed post-programme questionnaires (all separated from their perpetrator) still reported 'having no energy to do things with children' and 'less patience', although only one that she was still unable to spend quality time with her children. That women continue to feel lacking in energy is unsurprising given the depth of emotional diminishment which living with violence for so long had wrought. Many of these women were also still in the process of rebuilding their lives and establishing safety - both processes which sap energy. The challenges of engaging reflectively with the Jacana programme were also emotionally demanding.

## HELP-SEEKING

All nine women who completed questionnaires had received support/intervention before engaging with Jacana, mostly from: a specialised DV organisation (n=8); Social Services (n=8); family and friends (n=5) and police (n=4). Five women had previously received parenting support from DV organisations and Social Services. Jacana appears therefore to enable women who have found it difficult to move on from violence and abuse to engage about parenting issues.

The two women from the focus group were very vocal about Social Services being unhelpful, reflecting themes from previous research - the lack of emotional support, coupled with fear of children being removed meant women chose not to disclose further incidents of violence (Radford & Hester, 2006). In contrast, another woman reported that engagement with Jacana had changed her views on Social Services, that she had feared their involvement but now perceived that they were 'here to help, not judge'.

Women heard about Jacana from: Social Services (n=7); the nia project (n=1); CAMHS (n=1); support worker (n=1). Reasons for wanting to take part in the Jacana programme centred on enhancing relationships with children, gaining confidence and living free from violence. Only one woman had concerns for her and her children's safety related to participation in the programme. Women were asked to identify the top three reasons for taking part in Jacana, and in the post-programme questionnaires their top three gains. Table two shows that there is considerable overlap between these two – i.e. that they gained what they had been seeking.

**Table 2: Comparison of women's reasons to take part and gains from participation**

Reasons for taking part (n=9)	N*	Gains (n=5)	N*
Live free from violence/ensure safety	4		
Space to talk/share with other women	4	Space to talk	2
Gain confidence	3	Confidence	5
Enhance relationship with children	3	Think about my and children's needs	1
Develop autonomy	2		
Understand violence	1	Stopped self-blame	1
Regain custody of children	1		
Advice	1	Advice	1
Ensure my and children's safety	1		
Share with other women	1		

Stop drinking alcohol	1	
Plan for future	1	

\* multiple responses possible

The following sections explore these themes in more depth.

## REBUILDING CONFIDENCE AND AUTONOMY

Domestic violence and coercive control narrow women’s space for action, since they continue to try to adjust their behaviour to prevent further violence. As these strategies fail, faith in their ability to exert autonomy in their lives is severely undermined. Confidence here, then, refers to important and profound changes in women’s sense of self and their right to live free from violence.

*I lost a lot of confidence. I’ve now got my confidence back (W10, TI, one child).*

*Last week he [perpetrator] said to me, “Why, every week do you have to be going out to this parenting class,” and that was enough, that’s when I told [worker] “I’m not taking this anymore... I said, “No more. I don’t want you in my house, I’m not interested anymore.” That was it. So as from then I’m not having him talk to me like that. So coming here has really helped me to be a lot more confident, and a lot more assertive, especially the way I parent my little one, as well (W2, FG, three children).*

*I’ve become a lot more assertive now, and I’m not standing for any violence or any abuse... I see a change, I used to be a little bit of a mouse before, but now I can see that I’m opening up and saying “I’m not taking it, I’m not standing for this anymore.” But it’s only by coming to this group that I’ve been able to do that (W1, FG, one child).*

A core element of Jacana for women can be understood as repairing the ‘relational self’ (Gilligan, 1993) and rebuilding ‘relational autonomy’ (MacKenzie & Stoljar, 2000). The former refers to the way in which a sense of self is constructed and maintained through connections with others, and has been argued to have particular significance for women where intimate relationships, including those with children, are often so central to identity (Gilligan, 1993). Mothering creates an intrinsically relational self. Yet violence, particularly that perpetrated by intimate partners, disrupts a relational sense of self in multiple ways: the damage to trust when relationships of love, sharing and care are punctuated by emotional, physical and sexual abuses; and the disintegration of a relationship which may have been an important anchor for women’s conceptions of self. Coercive control (Stark, 2007) can make it especially difficult to separate self-image from the perpetrator’s projection of what he thinks of her and says to her that she is. Where women’s identity as mothers has also been undermined by perpetrators the foundations of a sense of self embedded in successful relationships with others are severely disrupted.

The concept of relational autonomy extends understanding of how relationships, and interaction, with others shape capacity to exercise control over one’s life (MacKenzie &

Stoljar, 2000). This capacity, also termed 'space for action' (Coy & Kelly, 2011), is diminished by domestic violence, especially the 'micro-management' and surveillance that many perpetrators enact (Stark 2007). Autonomy is not simply about what individuals wish and choose to do, and be, but constrained or expanded by the actions of others. Arguably a 'healthy relationship' is one in which one's space for action is expanded, as recognition, support and confidence are enhanced.

It is here that for some women Jacana played a crucial role. Social support is therefore crucial to enable violence, particularly coercive control, to be named and defined (Coy & Kelly, 2011). Part of the task for Jacana workers was to enable women to recognise that while autonomy was embedded in – and perhaps limited by - a mothering relationship, it could be disentangled from perpetrator's control and bolstered by identifying women's own strengths and capabilities. The opportunity to form trusting relationships with others can be a powerful means of re-establishing the sense of self and relational autonomy that are described here by women as 'confidence'. One woman explicitly identified this through her engagement with Jacana workers.

*I just couldn't change it, I just couldn't do anything, and so it started to be normal for me. And after I just need the time, I just need somebody to be with me, somebody to talk with me, somebody to turn me against him in a good way. And I find I'm stronger. So that that's why I change now (W2, FG, three children).*

That women report increased confidence and autonomy as a result of participation in Jacana has several positive implications for living free from violence and abuse.

- It is the foundation of enabling women to be safe as a principle of effective child protection (Kelly, 1996).
- It demonstrates that women are rebuilding a sense of self that is rooted in enhanced autonomy, yet is also relational in that constructive relationships with others have led to this boosted selfhood and autonomy.
- As many women had ongoing involvement with other agencies, confidence enhances ability to identify and assert their needs. Women were less sure about this aspect, and as this woman illustrates, their responses here were based on anxiety that thresholds of risk may rule them out of support.

*I feel more confident to approach places, but I'd be a bit concerned that they might not see my case as important. They might see it as just low risk, and then they'll just tell me no, they can't help me any more (W1, FG, one child).*

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#### SPACE TO TALK/SHARING WITH AND LEARNING FROM OTHER WOMEN

The opportunity to meet other mothers and a safe space to share experiences with the potential for new insights and learning was, for some women, a powerful motivator to

participate in the group sessions. That all had experience of domestic violence overrode fear of being judged or blamed.

The actual and emotional isolation of living with violence and restrictions on autonomy that mean women are often unable to choose when and where they go out, or who they spend time with, are well documented in the literature. This deprives many of the opportunity to reflect on what is happening, to develop a belief they are worth more than abuse, which has been shown to be foundation of being able to move on (Kelly, 1999). Forming connections with other women enabled Jacana service users to experience the relational self reflected through others in similar situations, thus expanding their own possibilities.

While one woman had immensely valued a sharing space, she had not remained in contact with women she met on Jacana, but felt confident enough to re-establish contact with friends that she had drifted away from while living with the perpetrator.

*I lost all my friends cos of him, so it was nice to meet other mums in the same situation... I've got numbers for a couple of women, but I haven't called them. I'm more socialising with people I used to know that I had lost touch with (W10, TI, one child).*

Sharing experiences, feeling validated and affirmed bolstered confidence and extended space for action to the extent that they were able to develop or rebuild social networks. Creating safety through connections with others is part of what enables women to 'get free' from violence and its legacies. Similarly, women reported that their children benefitted from interaction and play with other children.

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#### COMING TO AN END: REFLECTIONS ON PROGRAMME CLOSURE

Both women in the focus group expressed deep sorrow and despair at the discontinuation of Jacana, perceiving that they were losing a vital source of support. The fact there is no 'quick fix' to overcoming the legacies of domestic violence, and perhaps particularly so for disruptions to, and confidence in, mothering is confirmed here; rebuilding lives is a process that does not follow the timelines of services and programmes. This suggests the need to start preparing for ending earlier in the programme and more explicitly, so that women do not feel so lost and explore with them ways they might continue in a less structured way.

#### SUMMARY

*I just find this power in myself... I'm separated now, I just start a new life, I see my kids, they are doing better, they are happy. So I actually changed all my life. I couldn't do it before (W2, FG, three children)*

While the impact of Jacana work was not easy to establish within the evaluation timescale, it was evident that for some women simply talking about domestic violence for the first time was a powerful shift. Many women were reported by workers to be testing out if Jacana was a supportive intervention or simply another service making demands on them. Some were considered so damaged by long term and chronic abuse that it was difficult to see the

impact other than being able to take 'tiny steps'. The fact that some women who had not engaged with any services previously were reported to be participating in the programme is in itself an important outcome, raising issues about how existing services were currently ill-equipped to meet their needs.

Another positive outcome is that participation reduced women's isolation in a number of ways, as it provided: an opportunity to form relationships with other women based on recognition of similar experiences; enhanced confidence enabling re-connection with social networks; both expanded women's 'space for action'; referrals and signposting to support agencies. Isolation is part of what entraps women in violence (Stark, 2007), and lack of interaction enables the perpetrator to control women's perceptions of themselves, including as mothers. The expansion of women's space for action suggest that Jacana not only increased women's safety, but also their freedom – Evan Stark (2007) has argued that the latter has been less evident in responses' to domestic violence, as interventions have been increasingly focussed on criminal justice. The combination of enhanced safety and freedom is more likely to provide a solid foundation on which women can be the mothers they aspire to be.

## THE JACANA MEN'S PROGRAMME

The Jacana men's work was considered unique in two ways. Firstly, the one to one content makes it different from other men's perpetrator work in London and although considered a 'luxury', it *'provide[d] the space to engage the individual that you're working with in a relationship of a different kind than the one that you would develop in a group'*. Secondly, emphasis on parenting in the group work – *'this is so much richer in that respect, the impacts and the effects on children'*.

That said, the question of whether this focus means that rather than being seen as a perpetrator programme for fathers (or with parenting content), the Jacana programme for men will be seen as a parenting programme by the men themselves and other professionals. There is potential that this could result in a minimisation of violence, with men readily engaging with those aspects that position them as 'dads' and not as violent men. This potential risk underlines the importance of presenting the programme accurately as a perpetrator programme for fathers (which has to be reflected in the name), which is delivered by skilled facilitators with insight into power and control and on the connections between domestic violence and child abuse.

*We need to be clear that this is first and foremost a perpetrator programme with a larger element and content around parenting. What we wouldn't want to see is the dilution of that central perpetrator work, that has to be the bigger part... but I really welcome the increased content around their relationships with their children (Men's worker).*

Similar observations were made with respect to the women's programme:

*I wouldn't want this to become a parenting programme that's delivered in the children's centres without that connected up to the wider context of domestic violence (Women's worker).*

It was evident from the experiences of workers that some referral agencies were more willing to talk about Jacana as a parenting programme and hence reluctant to frame it as a perpetrator programme. To some extent this reflects the ways agencies/professionals approached men where they may be more comfortable presenting the programme as a source of support rather than something they require men to undertake. This raises a question whether agencies/professionals presented the programme inaccurately to men, minimising its perpetrator content, which may have affected how many referrals actually took part in the programme. This is part of much deeper issues about the reluctance of professionals, and social workers in particular, to challenge violent men, resulting in practices which focus on making women responsible for protecting children (Stanley et al, 2011). This skills and confidence gap needs to be plugged if perpetrators are to receive clear and consistent messages through the intervention chain. The training delivered by developers prior to commencement of the pilot and discussion by Jacana workers with potential referral agencies attempted to focus on this, but it is clear that more sustained and wide ranging work is needed.



## MEN'S PERSPECTIVES

Four men completed pre and post-programme questionnaires; of these, one had completed both and also participated in a focus group. A further man took part in the focus group but did not return pre or post programme questionnaires. One man who completed a post-programme questionnaire was also interviewed in more depth by telephone. Although again questionnaires were designed to track a number of variables relating to behavioural change, the small numbers preclude any meaningful analysis of trends; evidence on the impact of the programme is drawn primarily from qualitative data.

In total eight of the 10 men (80%) who participated in Jacana provided feedback in some form to the research team, although only five after their involvement in the programme. Table three shows the overlaps between men's engagement with the research team. Quotes from men are coded in the same way as for women in the previous section.

Table 3: Men's engagement with the evaluation

Men	Pre-programme questionnaire	Post programme questionnaire	Focus group	Telephone interview
1	√	√	√	
2	√			
3	√			
4		√		√
5		√		
6		√		
7	√			
8			√	

Between them, the eight men also had 19 children (ranging from one year old to six years). In six cases the children lived with their mother, in one they were in foster care, one with their father (who was still in a relationship with the mother, but did not indicate if they lived together). While it is not possible to map changes in relationship with the children's mother and contact with children, given the variation in available data, only two men reported still being in the relationship. Degrees of contact included: informal (n=3); formally structured (n=2); no contact (n=1); telephone only (n=1); living with children (n=1). Almost all men therefore, had some form of contact with their children, which presumably was part of their motivation for participating in Jacana. As noted earlier, men were not afforded the same leeway to choose the mode of engagement: attending Jacana for them required group work. This resulted in less variation in how men engaged with the programme, with nine attending group sessions and one man, because of language barriers, one-to-one sessions with an interpreter.

## HELP-SEEKING

Two men had accessed support before engaging with Jacana, one from a perpetrator programme and one from Social Services and an anger management programme. Three had reported support for parenting around issues of violence, with GPs (n=3), a perpetrator

programme (n=1) and Social Services (n=1) the most common referrers<sup>8</sup>. Again Social Services were viewed as unhelpful:

*They didn't really [help], they just removed [the children] and then after three months decided I can be trusted around them (M1, PRE-Q, two children).*

Men heard about Jacana from: Social Services (n=3); DVIP (n=1); probation (n=1)<sup>9</sup>. Motivations for taking part in the Jacana programme centred on enhancing relationships with children, gaining confidence and stopping the use of violence. Men were also asked to identify the top three reasons for taking part in Jacana, and in the post-programme questionnaires their top three gains. Table four shows these responses.

Table 4: Comparison of men's reasons to take part and gains from participation

Reasons for taking part	N*	Gains	N*
Address behaviour	3	Able to reflect	3
		More patience	2
Enhance parenting	3		
		To change	1
Be a better person	1	Learned to respect	1
Stop drinking alcohol	1	Stopped drinking	1
Control anger	1	Can control anger	1
Access support	1	Less anxious	1

\* multiple responses possible

While a big caveat is required here, as the number of respondents is very small and not all offered three reasons/gains, it appears that the match between motivation and gain is less evident than for women. It is also notable that there were few explicit references to enhanced relationships with children or improved fathering as gains. Nevertheless, the gains that men do identify demonstrate positive impacts. The necessity of acknowledging the significance of these 'small steps' is well documented in evaluations of work with perpetrators (Gondolf, 2004).

The following sections explore these themes in more depth.

## REFLECTING ON BEHAVIOUR

A key theme across all responses from men was the enhanced ability to reflect on behaviour, recognise potentially abusive or destructive responses and develop alternative strategies. Whilst the numbers are small, these are outcomes programme providers would hope to see, since they form the foundation of the approach to behaviour change.

*I can see where the situations before happened, the way they arose, and I just either completely avoid them or just deal with it differently... (M1, FG, two children).*

<sup>8</sup> Multiple responses possible.

<sup>9</sup> Data only available for five men here.

In the focus group, both men felt they had learnt a lot about their own behaviour and responses, and about the situation their children had been placed in, but that it was hard to face the realities.

*The reason you're here is because of this, this is what you've done, these are the things that happen. The first few times it's quite hard to hear, you know, but there's been there's been nothing I've felt uncomfortable with in anything they've gone through (M2, FG, one child).*

Resistance to accepting that behaviour is abusive, and defensiveness when actions are unpicked to expose use of power and control, are issues familiar to workers and documented in much research literature (Silvergleid & Mankowski, 2006). When men are starting from this position, their progress and processes of change may be seen as 'small steps', but ability to critically reflect on behaviour is a crucial and significant building block.

While earlier we noted that the low numbers of men in each group session may have hindered interaction and accountability to each other, the two men in the focus group also saw benefits here, since it allowed more time for exploring each others' experience.

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#### IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON THE MOTHER/CHILD RELATIONSHIP

In the pre-programme questionnaires, men's views on how violence had affected women's relationships with children ranged across the full scale of '1' to '5', with 1 representing 'a little' and 5 'a lot'. This indicates differing levels of awareness of how living with violence diminishes women's ability to mother, which presents challenges for workers, especially where there are few individual sessions built into the programme to monitor the extent of change.

As neither man in the focus group talked about the impact of violence on the relationship between mothers and children, we are limited in what we can present in terms of outcomes here. Both, however, reported enhanced ability to empathise that had in turn improved their own relationship with ex-partners.

*A lot of what we've learnt and talked about in here, I can see in her, and I can see it happening and I avoid it, or deal with it just differently, but it's also made me a bit more sympathetic, I think to different things going on in her life... I can be sympathetic to her concerns, what she's going through. That's been good (M2, FG, one child).*

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#### ENHANCING FATHERHOOD

In terms of how the violence had affected their own relationship with their children, only three men completed the scale; responses were mixed.

Two men rated themselves '3' as a 'good father', one '2' and one '4', lower overall than mothers. As for women, the pre-programme questionnaire asked men about their perceptions of a 'good father' in three words or phrases. The most common themes were:

- Being loving and caring (n=2);

- Guidance and being a role model (n=2);
- Support and someone to talk to (n=2);
- The importance of being 'constant' (n=1).

When asked in the post-questionnaires how close men thought they were to being a 'good father', three of four men reported being 'very close'. This contrasts somewhat with women's heightened uncertainty, and raises some issues for the programme, albeit that numbers are so small that there may be some respondent bias.

The specific focus on parenting was reported as beneficial in that it enabled them to reframe their interpretations of children's behaviour as responses to witnessing, and experiencing, domestic violence.

*Because this is parenting-based as well, and my daughter has been through a lot, it's made me, just take a second look at what she's going through and process slightly differently... Whereas before... I wouldn't've seen the alternative view of why she is the way she is (M8, FG, one child).*

One man reported that attending Jacana sessions had enabled him to make his children a priority, that the programme had 'opened his eyes' and he was now more able to think clearly about his relationship with them.

*I see now that I need to get on the ball and start organising myself better for my children (M4, TI, four children).*

At the same time, this man perceived that he had been a good father before being violent to his ex-partner, and that he had done everything for his children in contrast to their mother.

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#### COMING TO AN END: REFLECTIONS ON PROGRAMME CLOSURE

Perspectives on the programme ending differed from the women; the two men in the focus group reported that while an opportunity to meet and check-in with facilitators 'once in a while' would be useful, they also recognised that it had to come to an end - 'there must be an end in sight'.

This undoubtedly reflects both that men were not isolated in same way that women were and that they persist in an ongoing masculinity stance that they did not need others/support/a reflective space. There is here a continuing challenge to work with perpetrators to expand their notions of a 'relational self' which underpins addressing how their violence has affected the women and children in their lives. While not possible to make confident conclusions from the limited data, it does seem that the men were less reflective and over-confident about their parenting. This suggests that the programme should challenge perpetrators more robustly and facilitate greater reflection, albeit that this

may have been under-developed because of the low numbers of men involved, and that the programme length was shorter than that in most perpetrator work.

## SUMMARY

The difficulties in securing adequate numbers of referrals for men reflect the invisibility of men as perpetrators of domestic violence in the social welfare field in which parenting initiatives are located (Humphreys, 2008; Westmarland & Kelly, forthcoming) especially in areas where there was not existing work with perpetrators. While the small numbers of men who participated in the programme preclude robust analysis of outcomes, it is clear from the feedback that men perceived that they had gained in terms of both parenting and reflection on their own behaviours and actions, albeit not to the same extent as the women.

Analysis of the men's sessions on DVD indicates difficulty with generating the desired group work accountability and reflection, because of the small number of participants in each session. This placed a great deal of onus on the facilitators to introduce issues and attempt to create discussion and encourage honest engagement. It was, however, notable that a marked decrease in 'blaming others' and 'self-pity' could be observed over the duration of the programme, alongside a greater degree of reflexivity and acceptance of responsibility.

## LOCATING JACANA IN MULTI-AGENCY WORK

Here we discuss the location of Jacana within the local DV arena (Seith, 2003) and how workers traversed boundaries in the process of delivering the programme. This section presents findings from the questionnaires that were distributed to referral agencies. Six were returned, five from the Social Services Children and Young People team in Hackney and one from a worker at a Children's Centre. Information from interviews with members of the advisory group who worked in children's social care, and a child protection case review audit carried out by the Local Safeguarding Board and shared with the evaluation team with permission from the Chair are also drawn on here to illustrate some of the dilemmas and complexities of multi-agency partnerships.

## REFERRAL PROCESSES: REFLECTIONS

Numbers of cases that respondents had referred to Jacana ranged from 1 (n=3); 2 (n=1); and 3 (n=2). The majority were extremely positive about the referral process.

*The workers are extremely helpful, they have come in to our unit meetings, offered advice and consultation and been extremely helpful and effective throughout the process (CYPS, Q5).*

*I received a quick response to acknowledge receipt of referral and a quick follow up to confirm who was allocated the case. I have no negative comments (CYPS, Q4).*

Two respondents had slight reservations about the process - that the Joint Allocation Resource Panel<sup>10</sup> 'at times offered Jacana to families for which it was not appropriate' (CYPS, Q1). Without further detail here, it is not possible to gauge on what grounds the respondent judged Jacana inappropriate. The other expressed concern that Jacana workers had not taken on board information about the referral that CYPS thought was relevant. Both responses indicate variation in understandings of domestic violence and effective practice responses. In the former, there appears to be little consensus about what constitutes need or suitability for a specialised parenting service, while in the latter a disjunction between perceptions of what information might be significant for assessments.

The initial referral meeting between Jacana workers and the referring agency, built into the programme to ensure clarity over the remit of Jacana, was intended to mitigate this mismatch between expectation and outcome. However the variation in understandings of domestic violence between specialised services and statutory agencies, particularly in relation to the invisibility of perpetrators, also informed responses here (see Coy & Kelly, 2011). The child protection case review, discussed in more depth later, also noted considerable disparity in levels of knowledge about domestic violence across different agencies in the borough.

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<sup>10</sup> The Joint Allocation Resource Panel is a multi-agency forum that meets weekly to co-ordinate services for families.

## HOPES AND GAINS

Respondents were asked what they hoped service users would gain from attending Jacana. Here the main themes were:

- increase confidence (n=2);
- women able to take steps to ensure their safety (n=2);
- awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children (n=2) and on women (n=1);
- meet needs of children who have experienced violence (n=1);
- meet other women in similar situations (n=1);
- increase capacity to care for children (n=1);
- gain insight into violence and abuse (n=1).

It is both notable and worrying that nowhere in these hopes and expectations are there any references to men and their responsibility for violence and abuse although some are implicitly directed at them. The invisibility of men as perpetrators in social work discourse and practice is well-documented (Kelly, 1996; Hester, 2004, 2010; Humphreys, 2007), resulting in practice which ends up becoming 'surveillance' of women's actions and decision-making (Westmarland & Kelly, forthcoming). This is evident in the responses which centre on women 'ensuring' their own safety and raises questions about whether or not agencies respond more punitively to women where they perceive that they are failing to take protective action (Douglas & Walsh, 2010). We return to this point later.

Outcomes were described as positive by the majority of respondents, with some specifically identifying enhanced communication between agencies as a beneficial impact for their service users.

## JACANA AND EXISTING PROVISION

All six respondents strongly endorsed local need for the programme, citing the lack of available specialised support to address the impacts of domestic violence on parenting.

*This provides more specialist help and the project has the time needed to spend with the service users. In addition to group work, service users have one-to-one sessions and so it caters to all. My understanding is that Jacana focuses on the impact of the DV on parenting and so not only does it provide support to mum in learning to deal with the effects of the DV on her, it also helps her to improve her parenting by understanding the impact on the child. It works with men also which I think is invaluable as all too often the emphasis is on the woman to safeguard herself and the child with no help given to the man to prevent the behaviour recurring (CYPS, Q4).*

Yet again we find a focus on women, with men almost as an afterthought. The fact that this is a perpetrator programme is not in the foreground.

While respondents acknowledged that Jacana filled a gap in provision, they were less clear about how the programme was positioned within the nia project's existing structures and wider specialised services. Three mentioned that improved communication and closer collaboration with referrers would enhance multi-agency work.

*Jacana adds value as part of a support package for families, however, more joined up working is required (CYPS, Q1).*

Below we explore the issues of multi-agency working, including information sharing, drawing on the findings from the child protection case review.

## NEGOTIATING THE ARENA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Whilst recognising that social services tended to place the emphasis on mothers to protect children from abusive men, partly because of their legislative remit, Jacana workers highlighted inconsistency in the approach of social workers. As a consequence of the uneven awareness of domestic violence, they were sometimes thought to assess risk inaccurately, and be reluctant to use all possible powers to convince men to engage.

*There are some cases where we're assessing them really high and yet there's very little pressure put on dad, sometimes even mum, to engage in anything. And then there's other cases where there's a bit of immaturity, there's difficulties in the relationships where there's massive pressures put on them so there's no consistency around the accountability (Men's worker).*

In a climate of increasingly rationalised service provision, particularly with respect to domestic violence, how agencies understand and assess levels of risk has acute implications for who is perceived in need of intervention (see Coy & Kelly, 2011). For instance, Jacana workers reported statutory agencies and the MARAC being reluctant to discuss how to provide support to women who did not want, or were not able, to access the IDVA service. Understanding the variability of women's needs and prioritising flexibility and responsiveness rather than slotting all women into the same pathway requires ensuring that there are multiple forms of support available. It is encouraging, therefore, that children's social care reported that the lack of local consistency was recognised and being addressed. Specific poor practices that were identified by Jacana workers were included blaming women, especially where men presented as charming and women were viewed as chaotic and unstable. Social services also lacked understanding of alcohol and drugs as blocking/coping behaviour on the part of women leading to negative judgements, again an issue well documented in research findings (Humphreys et al, 2005).

Agencies appeared to resist feminist oriented work, with 'how can you work with men from a feminist perspective' a common question. While supporting the idea of the Jacana programme in principle, for Children's Social Care Jacana was viewed as adding little value given the limited numbers of men worked with. Referrals for women would have been made to the nia project anyway and thus were not seen to add any value. However, this



suggests that Social Services are missing the point of the programme, to explicitly address mothering through domestic violence in ways that current nia services are not resourced for. As already noted, for women who participated in Jacana, the added value of the project precisely this dual focus. Despite the investment during the developmental stages to build awareness of the remit and aims of the programme, it does not appear to have fully permeated with local professionals. While this may be attributable to the inadequate understandings of the dynamics of domestic violence which in turn preclude acceptance of the need for programmes to repair the damage to mother/child relationships, it nevertheless underscores the need for further awareness raising with local stakeholders, on a rolling basis, and the costs of this factored into future projects. A strong emphasis here should be enabling professionals to place men and their violence into the foreground.

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#### MULTI-AGENCY WORKING IN PRACTICE: THEMES FROM THE CASE AUDIT

In January 2011, the Local Safeguarding Board carried out an audit of a child protection case involving domestic violence. As part of this process, each agency involved with the case was asked to provide evidence of their practice with respect to: communication; multi-agency relationships; how the woman and perpetrator engaged with services. The report from the meeting was shared with the evaluation team, with permission from the Chair. All details which might identify the case have either been deleted or adapted to preserve confidentiality.

Both woman and perpetrator were referred to Jacana in May 2010. In the previous months Social Services had been notified by police following incidents that resulted in criminal charges. A child protection plan had been implemented in April 2010, although there are references to the case having 'drifted' and that information about domestic violence not being passed on to health and education professionals. While the Jacana women's service worked closely with the mother, the perpetrator chose not to engage at all. We present key themes from the case audit below, not to draw any inference about the accuracy of claims or to comment on how the review was undertaken, but to illustrate the tensions and challenges of multi-agency working that Jacana were required to negotiate.

- *Family 'tensions'*

Within the child protection arena, viewing domestic violence as a 'problem family' issue was clearly apparent, as questions of risk within the case review were framed as whether 'the family organised itself to protect the children' and 'family tensions and behaviours'. Jacana workers were therefore locating their practice within a different framing from statutory services from the outset. Violence - who is doing what, to whom - is hidden by euphemisms in a social work perspective, which locates the key actor as 'the family', but is named and an explicit focus in the Jacana approach.

- *Making mothers' responsible for protecting children*

The case audit report contains explicit and implicit references to concerns about the woman's 'safeguarding ability' and 'finding it difficult to protect', showing the persistence of a 'failure to protect' discourse in child protection (Hester, 2004, 2010;

Humphreys, 2007). This places Jacana workers in an uneasy position of advocating for the woman in an arena where she is at best held responsible, and at worst blamed, for any harm to children. Here, 'failure' to leave the perpetrator eclipses attention to ongoing violence, described by developers as '*a judgment by default if she's in the child protection arena*'. Jacana workers raised the woman's sense of injustice at being pressured into engaging with services as part of the child protection plan while no similar pressures were placed on the man who was the creator of risks to themselves and their children. Both the surveillance of the mother and the invisibility of the perpetrator (Westmarland & Kelly, forthcoming) reflect an understanding of domestic violence as about dysfunctional families rather than gendered power relations (Hester, 2004; Douglas & Walsh, 2010). It also underpins a model of social work that has traditionally engaged with women as mothers under the guise of 'family' and 'parenting' work.

- *Engaging men*

Frustration that the perpetrator failed to engage with the Jacana programme is evident from Social Services and the woman herself (fed back to the meeting by Jacana workers). As noted in the introduction, children's Social Services in the borough were keen for local provision for perpetrators to be prioritised, but this in turn requires professionals themselves to focus on the man and use their levers of authority and responsibility to place pressure to engage.

- *Information sharing and confidentiality*

The tension between balancing confidentiality and information sharing is a well documented feature of the interface between specialised women's organisations and social work (Humphreys, 2008). The former have always sought to preserve women's autonomy and right to privacy, while many current multi-agency frameworks view information sharing as not only an intervention in and of itself but also a requirement of the partnership (Coy & Kelly, 2011). In the case review, echoing feedback from the referral agencies, Jacana workers were criticised for possibly withholding information. They were, however, adamant that it was precisely the assurance of confidentiality that enabled many women to engage, share troubling concerns and self-doubt, as noted earlier in this report.

- *Resources to participate in multi-agency fora*

Jacana workers were also criticised for not attending core group meetings, and also experienced some difficulties in obtaining clear feedback from panel meetings about their cases. As a very small team, resources meant they were having to decide whether to prioritise meetings or providing direct support to women. A two-pronged approach is necessary here: first, that time to attend meetings should be factored into capacity projections in funding bids, although this is also dependent on funders being willing to accept these costs; and second, mechanisms should be established to enable smaller, less well-resourced organisations to participate in multi-agency decision-making fora. Attempts to develop and promote multi-agency partnerships will fall short if the power imbalances between statutory and voluntary sector agencies are not acknowledged and addressed; identifying means to facilitate

meaningful two-way feedback that take resource limitations into account are central to this.

## SUMMARY

The Jacana programme was required to traverse the boundaries between the arenas of specialised domestic violence provision, child protection and child contact. Feedback from referral agencies was positive about the need for the programme and referral processes, with strong endorsement for work that addresses the impact of domestic violence on the mother/father and child(ren) relationship. However, it is notable that hopes and gains for professionals referred almost exclusively to women, continuing the thread of invisible men and holding women responsible for protecting children from men's abusive behaviours which is laced throughout the evaluation findings. These themes are also evident in the local case audit, demonstrating the complexities of reconciling approaches within the domestic violence arena, where there is no shared knowledge or practice base. Perpetrator programmes can only be effective where practitioners put men into the foreground and require them to be accountable.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Without this service, I couldn't imagine what I would be doing. I'd probably just be enclosed in my house feeling depressed. Feeling down. So I think this service is extremely important (W1, FG, one child).*

*We learn a lot more here, and we talk a lot more... Here we go into a lot more detail about different subjects and things, so it has been very helpful. I've noticed it in my normal life, how I generally feel (M2, FG, two children).*

## FILLING A GAP IN PROVISION

The Jacana parenting programme fills a gap in specialised provision by seeking to address impacts of domestic violence on mother/father-child relationships. The 'added value' in both addressing the impact of domestic violence on parenting and offering this specialised support to women *and* intervention with men was noted by programme participants and referral agencies. Jacana originated in the specialised domestic violence sector and attempted to build bridges work to child protection and contact, creating both opportunities and tensions that impacted on all stages of programme delivery. Here we draw together key lessons from the pilot project and make two sets of recommendations: one to inform the development and delivery of future versions of Jacana; and for commissioners.

Crucially, an intervention such as Jacana provides an avenue for social services to refer men to a programme so that they can be held accountable for their violence and its impact on women and children. Indeed, the importance of generating referrals from social services where men are required to attend by social workers was emphasised by all those involved in the development and delivery of the programme – '*you need social workers referring more men and enforcing the treatment with all men*'. This also enables a potential shift in practice from simply holding women responsible for protecting their children to placing the lens on fathers and their actions. As Cathy Humphreys (2007: 366) has noted, focussing on perpetrators 'help[s] to re-orientate practice in ways that rebalance investigations, assessments and case planning'. The Jacana pilot introduced the first programme for perpetrators in the borough, which may then lead to enhanced awareness and commitment to addressing men's abusive behaviour. In this sense, the programme fulfilled its aim to develop a new model drawing on best practice. Yet the challenge of making local agencies familiar with perpetrator programmes (Adams, 2003) was exacerbated by the fact that this was a pilot project, leaving very little time to embed the work into local referral pathways and provision.

## ENABLING CHANGE

Addressing mothering and fathering – we, as Jacana, choose to differentiate these positions in order to make visible who is doing what to whom - in the context of abusive relationships

is complex and Jacana required women and men to explore the protective role of parenthood with acknowledgement of how living with domestic violence affected their children and mothering/fathering relationships. Reconciling these paradoxes has been termed 'tightrope talk' (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2010). For women, the 'tightrope talk' involved wanting and needing to be a good and protective mother, but having to explore the way that the violence had undermined this. Engaging in this with other women and the Jacana workers was sometimes painful, and led to reflections on the past which required reassessing their decisions and assumptions.

The tightropes that men trod were similar, but lent an added sharpness in that they were required to face the contradictions of protective and nurturing fatherhood with their own abusive and controlling behaviours. Whilst a small sample, the extent to which they reflected back appeared less deep overall, and they took less arduous journeys than those the women took. One indication of the different engagement with the programme is that women and men responded differently to the ending of Jacana; women talked about it as a significant loss and expressed fears about lack of support, whereas men reported that the containment of a time-limited programme was useful as they felt they had the necessary insights to go forward with their lives and relationships.

Overall, the Jacana pilot did achieve the twin goals of enabling participants in the programme to understand the impacts of violence on their children and parenting, and make changes to their understandings and responses. Jacana was therefore successful in addressing the relational aspects of domestic violence, especially with women. However, that in itself raises a further question - does linking parenting with a perpetrator programme lead women to question and men to affirm their parenting abilities? We have too few men to assert this with any confidence, but ensuring this is not an unintended outcome with respect to men needs to lie at the heart of any further implementation and how the lessons are integrated into ongoing perpetrator programmes.

Nonetheless, the 'tiny steps' observable in the data on men's perspectives reflects both the low numbers of men that hindered the implementation of the programme as intended, and that changing men is difficult and demanding.

Jacana demonstrated potential to meet the six indicators of success of perpetrator programmes (and associated women's support services) devised by Westmarland et al (2010):

- improved relationships between men on programmes and their partners/ex partners;
- expanded 'space for action' for women;
- women and children to be safe and free from violence and abuse;
- safe, positive and shared parenting;
- enhanced awareness of self for men, including recognition of impacts of violence on women and children
- safer, healthier childhoods for children.

**The key recommendation from the evaluation is that programmes such as Jacana continue to be commissioned and funded, preferably at subregional level as restricting service users to one local authority may narrow the pool of potential referrals.** This should be seen as a route to further developing the model, building on the lessons from the pilot.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS AND PROGRAMME DELIVERERS

Based on findings from the evaluation, we make recommendations for future developments in programmes such as Jacana.

- Changing men’s abusive behaviour is defined as a programme aim, in order that this is explicit to referral agencies.
- Increased work on putting perpetrators into the foreground within local multi-agency settings, in order that referral pathways are developed.
- More discussion with referral agencies about confidentiality, including protocols about information sharing, which respect the right to privacy in some settings.
- Framing the work as a perpetrator rather than parenting programme.
- Explicit content around drugs and alcohol and training for workers to equip them to address these in the context of DV.
- Consideration of the issues when working with diverse populations, specifically how to engage, and retain, men from BME communities and address any cultural contexts that impact on programme delivery.

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## MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS AND COMMISSIONERS

Below we pull together key lessons that emerged from the evaluation with respect to the funding and commissioning of similar programmes. These fall under three broad headings: recognition of specialised programmes; work with perpetrators; the women’s programme.

### ***Recognition of specialised programmes***

The skills, expertise and knowledge of facilitators was immensely valued by women, men and referral agencies. Adapting content of the manual from session to session where group size varied, or where specific issues were raised that required a prompt response, was only possible because of this. Generic parenting programmes are inappropriate for women whose capacity to, and confidence in, mothering is disrupted by domestic violence. Jacana demonstrated that a different model can create a context in which women were able to discuss fears and concerns, revisit the past and imagine a new future.

### ***Recommendation***

- Locating the programme within specialised organisations with relevant expertise; it was precisely the depth of knowledge and ability to see and treat women as more than mothers which created new possibilities.

### *Work with perpetrators*

The difficulties in generating referrals for men demonstrate that there is still much work to be done in put perpetrators into the foreground in social work practice/child protection, particularly in areas where there is not an established perpetrator programme. Data from referral agencies demonstrates significant gaps in training needs with respect to: recognising perpetrators; understanding programmes which address men's abusive behaviours; requiring men to be accountable for their actions. Following this, commissioners need to ensure that referring agencies understand the necessity of being part of a multi-agency consensus in which the message that DV is unacceptable, and a matter about which they will act, is consistently communicated to perpetrators.

#### *Recommendations*

- Multi-agency networks to recognise the importance of work with perpetrators as part of a co-ordinated response to domestic violence.
- MARACs to establish clear criteria for the inclusion of specialised perpetrator programmes as core members and the development of referral pathways to such services.
- Training on domestic violence to be adjusted to put perpetrators into the foreground, including how they manipulate relationships between women and children.
- Referral agencies to use all available levers with perpetrators to require accountability and enhance engagement with programmes.
- Parenting programmes which take an undifferentiated 'family' perspective should not be commissioned for DV cases.

### *The women's programme*

The programme enabled women who had previously been referred to multiple agencies to engage with specialised support, both in relation to violence from intimate partners and the disruption this caused to the mother/child(ren) relationships.

#### *Recommendations*

- Specialised voluntary sector programmes such as Jacana offer a route into support for women and children with complex needs, and should be viewed by commissioners as a valuable component of local provision.
- For Jacana to be able to focus effectively on mothering, other specialised services (including refuges) are essential to pick up the intense advocacy and/or safety work, and need to be protected in strategic planning and funding decisions.

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