

AVITH in Context: Towards collaborative service

Elena Campbell Q&A

Were there any findings about multicultural young people in particular? (Emerging findings in the WRAP project)

Earlier findings through the PIPA Project did not make an assessment of prevalence of AVITH within culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This was because we did not want to generalise on the basis of the limited demographic measures that are usually contained on legal and court files. Practitioners across the PIPA focus groups, however, regularly noted that AVITH was not necessarily a concept that was likely to be recognised or reported by families from recently arrived or refugee communities, in particular. This was in part because of the over-policing of some communities and resulting negative perception of authorities, including perceptions shaped by experiences in countries of origin.

The more recent WRAP Around Families project points to similar findings, but highlights specific challenges for families where a mother's experience of adult intimate partner violence has gone unaddressed or has been compounded by certain cultural expectations or structural disadvantage, including related to immigration status. This may involve additional stigma around a young person's negative behaviours, or the threats from a former or current partner that he will involve child protection or the Department of Immigration. This can increase a mother's resulting trauma, impacting her capacity to manage a young person's behaviour or wider family safety. Migration trauma can also play a part in the dynamics being experienced across a family ecosystem.

DV services responses promote family conflict resolution, parenting or FVOs as a solution to AVITH, but these solutions aren't always a good fit. How can these services be better educated to provide better alternatives as supports to parents?

Different service responses are likely to be effective for different families or in different circumstances, including a combination of parenting support, individual case management for young people and even group work in some cases. FVIOs, however, are a particularly poor fit and, in the current legislative environment, have the potential to do more harm than good except in a limited number of cases where they may facilitate short-term respite. Most important is understanding the complexity and dynamics across a family ecosystem and seeking collaborative support from a range of practitioners to identify the needs and most effective response for each family. A Framework for Collaborative Practice will be developed as part of the final stages of the WRAP Around Families project.

Does the data in the study represent the cultural diversity in Victoria? And does the study look at the cultural layer and its impact on family dynamics, including cultural & generational differences between parents and adolescents?

As above, the WRAP Around Families study is looking in a targeted way at service responses and does not aim to make any representative findings about cultural diversity. An emerging theme, however, is the compounding impact where adult family violence has not been addressed, or where cultural expectations or structural disadvantage converge to create additional barriers for families experiencing AVITH.

Many of the current FSV funded approaches seem to be being developed around constraints like lack of specialist staff. Are there things that you would see as ideal in terms of these responses?

We will be highlighting some crucial ingredients for these responses in the Collaborative Practice Framework developed in the third stage of our research. Most fundamental and non-negotiable, however, is the capacity to work with the whole family; to work over the longer term; and to work flexibly. This includes leveraging outreach and brokerage funding to identify what will be most effective for each family.

How do practitioners who are not specifically working within AVITH programs get support/information about "how to" support/engage children/young people and families where there is AVITH?

This is a great question – much more needs to be done across the human services sector to identify AVITH as an issue and to establish referral and secondary consult pathways. This could be through the Orange Door or through DFFH/FSV funded networks. We will be recommending some approaches to address this as part of the Collaborative Practice Framework which will be developed in the third phase of the research.

Given learnings from Wrap Around project so far, is there a sense of what an ideal team size would be / role of team members, brokerage available, etc? Also, would it be good for funding agreements in the future to include a need to work in partnership across different sectors?

We will workshop some of these questions with practitioners early next year to support the development of our Collaborative Practice Framework. As a foundation, however, it is definitely crucial for funding arrangements to encourage and support collaboration and partnerships across different sectors, as well as to ensure that work can occur over the longer term.

RE: "If you are working in AVITH, you are 10 years too late." Does this mean anything different for Early Intervention in Family Support, other than what we are already doing?

The refrain from the PIPA project 'If we are intervening in AVITH, we are intervening 10 years too late' reflected practitioner observations that, where AVITH arises, it is frequently the consequence of a lack of service support for families and children from an early age. This includes where children have experienced trauma and also where they have other significant learning and developmental needs.

Overall, it signals the need for a much greater emphasis on providing trauma-based recovery support to women who have experienced adult intimate partner violence with a lens on the extent to which experiences of trauma may impact a mother's relationship with her children and parenting capacity down the track. It also includes maintaining a lens on the extent to which this relationship may continue to be undermined by a former partner on the sidelines, including through family law processes. Just as importantly, it includes maintaining a lens on the impacts of trauma on children's neurodevelopment, being mindful that the use of violence at home may be one subset of a range of behaviours which children can exhibit as a result of their experience of trauma.

Can you please provide some advice on how to support a young person with ASD/trauma/ADHD who uses violence in the home and is triggered by feeling ignored by Mum. I have noticed the young person has become more risk-taking following mum ignoring her. How can I reframe support for mum to connect with her young person?

Mothers have often received conflicting advice about how to respond to their child's problem behaviours and can also be exhausted by the time they interact with the service system specifically for their child's use of AVITH. Advice regarding a specific case would more appropriately come from an experienced practitioner – I can facilitate a connection if CFECFW would like us to link me directly with the questioner.