



Spotlight #8

Podcast Transcript

Key:

I = Interviewer – Introduction

I2 = Interviewer – Michelle Phillips

R = Respondent – Dr Emma Katz

s.l. = sounds like

I: Welcome to Spotlights, the podcast for the domestic abuse sector. Dr Emma Katz of Liverpool Hope University researches the impact of domestic violence and abuse on children and young people. Her work explores coercive control, agency, resistance, recovery and another child's supportiveness in domestic abuse context. In this podcast she meets with head of practice Michelle Phillips to discuss her work and the significance of the relationship between non-abusive parents and their children for social care interventions.

I2: Emma can you say a bit about your background and your current research focus please?

R: Yes, so I'm a senior lecturer at Liverpool Hope University and I research how domestic abuse affects children and young people. I'm particularly interested in how children and young people and their parent who is experiencing domestic abuse, experience coercive control and the agency that they have, the way that they actively respond to the situation rather than just being passive and the ways that they resist and also the ways that they recover from the situation once they've managed to break free and also looking at how mums and children, assuming the mum is the parent who experienced the abuse, looking at how mums and children support each other in domestic abuse contexts. So this is based on my research that I did with mums and children who'd been through this and I was privileged enough to be able to interview some mums and children who've been through this and hear their experiences and views and stories.

I2: Your research talks about recovery. Can you describe what recovery looks like for adults and children who have experienced domestic abuse?

R: Yes. So I think that firstly it's really important to realise what it is they're recovering from because they're not just recovering from living with someone who has used physical violence towards them. It's much more than that. They're likely to be recovering from what's known as coercive control. So I find it useful to explain coercive control with a bit of a metaphor. So imagine that life is like driving a car and you want to be in the driving seat of your own life and choose which paths to go down, which roads to take and when we look for a romantic partner we're looking for someone to share the drive with us. So perhaps they get into our car and we take turns driving and we don't go down any roads that the other person doesn't want to go down. We make those joint equal decisions about which paths to take as a couple. But a perpetrator of domestic abuse, a perpetrator of coercive control has no interest in sharing the drive with their partner, instead they get into their partner's car and everything seems really lovely because they seem attentive and caring and protective, but then

slowly over time what starts to happen is they start to persuade you that actually you're not very good at driving your own car. You're not very good at being in charge of your own life because you get things wrong and they'd be so much better at it than you. So they start to prise you out of the driving seat and put you in the back seat and then as the control increases and increases you find that you're not even in the back seat anymore. They've taken you out of that back seat and put you in the boot. So there you are in the boot of the car of your life and the perpetrator has driven off with it taking you in directions that you do not want to go down and they're making all the decisions for you and all you can do is just think what can I do today that won't upset my partner and you're restraining and monitoring all your own behaviour and your partner is insisting that you do that in order to keep pleasing them and to not upset them and to not trigger the negative reaction from them.

So when you're talking about recovery you're talking about the adult victim getting out of that boot and getting back into the driving seat of their own life and feeling confident enough to do that. So that involves a couple of things. First of all the perpetrator needs to be got out of the vehicle, got out of that driving seat, which obviously they won't do voluntarily, they're very unlikely to do voluntarily, they're going to have to be prised out and kept out. So it's about making that driving seat available again and supporting the victim so that the driving seat becomes available to them again and then it's also about helping them to have the confidence again to realise actually I am a good driver, I can do this, I can drive my car safely, I can take charge of my life, I can make decisions and I'll be good enough at that. I'll be pretty good at that and that's what I need to do.

So that's kind of the basis of recovery and there's a really nice framework for recovery that I came across in the work of someone else and I thought it just made perfect sense for how domestic abuse survivors experience recovery. It's called the CHIME Framework. So like how wind chimes chime and CHIME stands for connectedness, hope and optimism about the future, identity, meaning in life and empowerment and I thought that that really describes what recovery is about. Because if you've been stuck in that boot for a long time you'll have lost a lot of your connections to the people around you and so reconnecting is a really important part of recovery and hope and optimism about the future, again it's that feeling that you can be in charge of your life. You can drive your life in really promising directions, life can be good again. Your identity feeling that you are worthwhile, you are important, you have positive qualities, feeling that life is meaningful and feeling empowered, feeling that you can make decisions for yourself, you can stand up to people and that's okay and that's appropriate and you can feel strong in doing that. So I think that CHIME thing really touches on a lot of what's important about recovery and also for the children who've experienced domestic abuse, they've experienced something very similar to the mum. I'm assuming that it's mum who is the parent who has been the victim of abuse and the survivor of abuse, but of course it could be dad. It's statistically less likely to be dad but it could be dad. But I'll be saying mum sort of as the default just because that is statistically far more likely to be the case, but please don't think I'm ignoring the dads out there who are recovering as well, because they're equally as valid and important and this would apply to them as well.

But yes, so thinking about the children they've been through something really similar to the mum because they've not been able to make their own choices. They're ordinary, everyday freedoms have been taken away and they probably had to spend a lot of their time, just like the mum has, trying to please the perpetrator and do what the perpetrator wants and not trigger off a negative reaction. So for the children it's also about realising that that's not the right way to live and that the children should have some say over what their everyday life should look like and they should be able to make those ordinary, everyday decisions that everyone should be able to make. Like what do I want to do? What do I like doing? What will make me happy? And being able to do those some of those things. So a lot of the recovery for the children is also about finding that empowerment, finding that sense of autonomy. We're not really used to thinking about that in children, we're used to just thinking about children as doing what they're told. But actually obviously children are in the process of growing up, they're in the process of becoming adults, so it's really important for them to have some increasing autonomy and independence and decision making. Perpetrators of coercive control squash all of that and make that really difficult for children, so that's part of children's recoveries as well as adults.

I2: Okay, thanks Emma. So on that we often hear the term failure to protect and a lot of emphasis is placed on protection being characterised as the non-abusive parent separating from an abusive partner. Your research invites us to look more deeply at the parent/child relationship and the many ways in which parents support their child's recovery. Can you say more about what you've found?

R: Absolutely and I think that's such an important question. So I think that firstly it's important to say that it's really only the perpetrator or only by dealing with the perpetrator that we can make the children safe, because the non-abusive parent could go to the absolute ends of the earth to try and make those children safe. They could move to the other side of the country, change their name, uproot their lives, uproot the children's lives, they could go to the most extreme lengths to try and make the children safe and yet the children and the mum are still worried that the perpetrator is going to be popping up on their street one day, outside of their house one day and the perpetrator may indeed be actively looking for them and determined to make that happen and they're still living their lives in the shadow of that fear. So really it is only by dealing with the perpetrator that we can actually make children safe. It's just not possible to say to the adult victim, "You can make the child safe", they're a victim too and I think we need to do a lot more to tackle the danger that is coming from the perpetrator and neutralise that for the sake of the adult and the child victims. But thinking about the ways that the adult victim who would usually be mum is trying to protect the children and doing the best job that they can with that, even though there's always going to be limits to how much they can do that. But they're doing the very best job they possibly can with it and often being really successful with it.

Thinking about how they do that I think before they've separated from the perpetrator when they're still in that relationship with the perpetrator. What the mum will often do is firstly she'll be trying to protect the children from getting physically hurt, so trying to protect them from seeing any physical violence, trying to protect them from being hurt by the perpetrator themselves, trying to stop their dad lashing out at them and hurting them and she'll also be doing a hundred little everyday things to try and give them as normal a life as possible. So whenever it's within her power to give the children a bit of normality, a bit of stability, a bit of routine, a bit of fun, a bit of positivity my research suggested that that's what she'll be trying to do and that is enormously protective. Because that is the only thing that's giving the children that little bit of normal home life that they desperately need and mums are often very successful at giving the children that little bit of normal home life to stop their home life from just being completely 100 per cent miserable and controlled by the perpetrator. Mum is often very successful at doing that and then when mums have separated from perpetrators they'll often do a great deal to try and repair any of the harms that the domestic abuse has caused.

So what I found was that mums were supporting their children by reassuring them that nothing had been their fault, they were giving the children a sense that they were there for them and providing this sort of everyday emotional security for them. You know, you can come and talk to me about any problems that you're having, I'm here for you. They were making the children feel that they were connected and supported and part of a loving family and that was really crucial to the children's recovery and it was really protective behaviour from mum and it was doing a great deal to help the children. So I thought that that was amazing stuff that mums were doing.

I2: So the converse side to that we know that sometimes an abusive parent will actively disrupt that relationship between their child and the non-abusive parent. What do we know about the types of tactics used and what can be the impact?

R: Yes, this is such an important one because I was thinking about why it was that perpetrators do that and I was reading this book by Judith Herman called 'Trauma and Recovery' and what Herman said was that as long as the victim maintains any other human connection with anyone else except their abuser then the abuser's power is limited. So the victim having any other human connection will limit the perpetrator's power and I think that's often a big part of why the perpetrator targets their partner's relationship with the kids because it's a source of power for that partner. It's keeping them connected to another human being and that is dangerous to the perpetrator and it does it stops the

perpetrator from gaining that absolute control over their partner that they're seeking to gain. So they'll attack that mother/ child relationship.

So in terms of what kind of tactics the perpetrators are using there's a lot of research into this not just my own, there's been many studies on this and it's well known the kind of things perpetrators are doing. So they can insult and abuse the mum in front of the children by saying things like, "Mummy is silly, mummy doesn't really know what she's doing, mummy is not very good at that" or more bluntly they can say really abusive things, really overtly abusive things like, "Mummy is a waste of space, mummy doesn't have a brain". It can be really insulting and just convincing the children that mummy is useless and not worth their time. Speaking of time the perpetrators often prevent mums and children from spending positive time together and that positive fun time together is like the life blood of good relationships. That is what makes the relationship strong and positive. So by taking that time away it's a really effective way of perpetrators disrupting the relationship. So whenever mum is trying to spend time with the kids the perpetrator can stop her and insist that she comes and pays attention to him instead or insists that the children go and do something else just disrupting all the time their attempt to spend time together, stopping mum from the children in a good routine. Again, coming in and disrupting that so like say mum was trying to get the children to eat a healthy dinner at a reasonable time the perpetrator might come in and say, "Eat these sweets, eat this ice-cream, you don't need to have your dinner" and then the children of course they'll be thinking, "Wow dad's the most fun parent ever giving us sweets instead of our dinner" and the children don't realise how unhealthy that is and what the dad is really trying to do and they can start to even think of mum as like the baddie or the boring one because she's just trying to keep them in this healthy routine. That's really harmful for children because then children start to see unhealthy parenting behaviour as healthy and they start to see healthy parenting behaviour as boring and that can have real negative implications for their whole upbringing and their whole upbringing and their whole life. So that behaviour from perpetrators is really toxic.

Perpetrators can claim that the mum has bad parenting skills, "You're a terrible mum, these kids won't listen to you" and mum might believe that they're not listening to me because I'm a terrible mum and not realise that the problem is all the things the perpetrator is doing to undermine that relationship it's actually nothing to do with her parenting skills at all. They're fine but her ability to use those parenting skills is being undermined and then the perpetrator can harm the children to upset the mum and threaten the children to gain the mum's compliance and can really manipulate the children into blaming the mum for his abusive behaviour, so making the children think if your mum just shut up and did as she was told then everything in the family would be okay. Then the children start to think yes that's what mum should do, mum should just shut up and do as she's told and then everything in the family would be okay. Obviously not all children will think that, some of them might be able to turn around and say, "Hold on a minute that is nonsense, it's not mum it's you". But some children won't be able to think that, it really depends on the circumstances and some children really will end up blaming their mum for their dad's abusive behaviour or vice versa if dad was the victim.

Those tactics can be so harmful and you can end up with situations where the children they greatly prefer the abusive parent over their non-abusive parent and that's really harmful for their well-being because that abusive parent does not have their best interests at heart and their non-abusive parent does and is doing their best and the children end up in a situation where they can't recognise that. If that carries on and that carries on into their adolescence and into their early adulthood that will just have profoundly negative implications for their life. So it's a really serious issue and I think everyone needs to be more aware of perpetrators doing that and there needs to be far more interventions and help for the non-abusive parent and far more done to hold the abusive parent accountable for that behaviour.

I2: In your work you talk about the agency of children and how they actively try to keep themselves safe. This isn't something that's talked about a lot. What do we know about the strategies children use and why is it important that we recognise that agency?

R: When we say the word agency that's like a word that comes from sociology and it means to be active in your own life rather than being just passive and pushed around by events, to have some say over the direction of your life, that's what that word means. It's not an agency in the sense of like an organisation. Everyone always finds that word dead confusing. It's a strange word, but yes it means being active in your life and children are active in their own lives. Anyone who is the parent of a child knows that children are pretty active in their own lives and in saying what they want and of course that's a good thing because they are an independent human being, although it can be very irritating at times. But it is a good thing because they are an independent human being. They're in the process of growing up into an adult who will need to have lots of agency. So it's good that they're flexing their agentic muscles, as irritating as it can be.

But children living with domestic abuse are no exception, they're in more extreme circumstances but they're still active in their own lives. So what they might be doing is they might be using all sorts of different strategies to protect themselves and to try and keep themselves safe. They might be getting themselves out of the way of the perpetrator, particularly at times where they think that the perpetrator is particularly dangerous to them. They might be finding places to hide, they might be doing things to self-soothe and to stop themselves from feeling too panicked. So that might be listening to music, reading, all sorts of different escape strategies, you know mental escape strategies just to give themselves something else to focus on. They might be helping their parent who is feeling abused. They might be doing things in an everyday way to support their mum to keep her morale up to let her know that she is loved and she is valued by them. Sometimes they might, if there's physical violence, they might intervene and try and protect mum. They might be the ones calling the police. So they're doing all sorts of things. Sometimes the things they're doing may not look like an active strategy because it might involve doing nothing, it might involve freezing, but even that is an active strategy because they are doing that because their brain has calculated that is the best way to stay safe.

So even when it looks like they're being passive it's actually an active choice to appear passive to protect themselves and it's important to recognise this. Because if we just think of children as these passive victims we miss the fact that they did have strategies and they did have strengths and they deployed these to try and keep themselves safe and sometimes to try and keep their siblings safe or to keep their parent who is being abused safe and it's really important to recognise that children do have these strengths and these strategies because we need to give them credit for that and say, "Well done" for it and to realise that actually they were strong. That will help them moving forward because it will help their recoveries to know that they were strong even in these extreme circumstances and what does that say about them. You know it says that they're amazing and it says that they have a lot of power and internal resources moving forward that they can draw on in their eyes.

But at the same time saying that children were active doesn't mean that they don't need help just like saying that the adult victim was active and used strategies to try and resist and to protect themselves, to protect their children. That doesn't mean that the adult victim doesn't need help either. So it's this balance of recognising that they were active but also recognising that they needed help and often it's the children who seem like they're okay that they then don't get our attention and they don't get the help that they need. So some children who are victims of abuse the way they respond to the abuse is they become people pleasers and they become the child who excels at school and gets fantastic grades and they're polite and they're easy to talk to and you feel good after you've talked to them and you think what a great child that is and aren't they doing well.

But inside they're scared and they feel that things aren't okay. They lack internal reassurance and they're doing all these things to try and feel better but it's not really making them feel better and those children often slip through the net because they're not super withdrawn and they're not aggressive and they seem like they're doing really well. But they need help as well. They are often the ones who slip through the net particularly if they're doing really well at school. So it's like there's no cause for concern. But actually if a child has been through domestic abuse it is going to have taken a toll on them in some way or another and we do need to dig a little bit deeper and find out how they're feeling underneath that surface level appearance of being good and doing really well.

So I would always urge people to look into the situation of those kids as well as the kids who seem aggressive or who seem withdrawn.

I2: Going off piste a little bit do those strategies ever involve collusion with the perpetrator?

R: In some circumstances children will keep themselves safe by aligning with the perpetrator because they've realised that the perpetrator is the one with all the power in the family and the perpetrator is dominating the home and they realise that if they align with the perpetrator and please the perpetrator then they won't be targeted for the worst of the abuse and that's a heart breaking situation for a child to have to do that and that merely suggests that service responses have really let that child down if the child has ended up feeling like they have to do that. Yes and then the child can convince themselves that that is what they wanted to do. They can rationalise it, they can say, "Well my dad isn't abusive, my dad's great and my mum's useless" and they can have all these rationalisations for why they've ended up behaving this way and really come to believe their own narrative and yes that can be super destructive and really hurtful for the adult victim and really damaging for that child's own health and well-being and again how they'll be as an adolescent and a young adult. If they've had to start thinking that way, that's going to affect them as a young person and into their own adulthood. So yes sometimes colluding with the perpetrator is a child's strategy for keeping safe and that's a really heart breaking one.

I2: So what kind of environments do mums and children need to recover?

R: Well if we're talking about recovery then obviously separation is a big part of that usually because usually the perpetrator is not going to stop their abusive behaviour. So separation is really the only option most of the time. But separation doesn't equal safety and doesn't equal recovery, because perpetrators have invested a huge amount of effort and energy into getting control of the adult victim and often the children as well and they're not going to want to relinquish that control any time soon and it's not like they've respected any of the other decisions that their adult partner has ever made so why would they respect the decision to separate from them. So very often the abuse will carry on, the perpetrator will carry on with the abusive tactics they were using before, perhaps introduce new ones, their abuse can escalate and get worse because by separating from them you've broken that control of theirs and they really need to do a lot to try and get it back. So their abusiveness can really escalate. So separation does not equal safety, does not equal recovery. So what is actually needed for recovery? I think there's three things, I kind of imagine it as the three pillars of recovery. We need an end or a huge reduction in the perpetrator's abuse. So the mum and the children need to be experiencing far, far, far less of the perpetrator's abuse, their physical violence, their emotional abusiveness, their manipulateness, their economic abuse, their use of legal institutions and organisations to try and maintain that abuse.

So far, far, far less abuse in the mum's and the children's lives in order to recover and as I say separation often doesn't achieve that. So more would need to be done to get that perpetrator to stop and that's often around legal interventions to get that perpetrator to stop. Then the second of the three pillars is an end or a huge reduction in the perpetrator parenting the children in an abusive way and undermining the relationship the children have with their non-abusive parent. Because how can the children recover if they're still experiencing the perpetrator's abusive parenting and how can the mother/child relationship recover if it's still being undermined and perpetrators will often seek child contact post-separation in order to keep doing both those things to keep parenting the children in an abusive parenting style. I mean if you look at the NSPCC's definition of emotional abuse perpetrators of domestic abuse are almost certainly qualifying for that. They're almost certainly parenting their children in an emotionally abusive way and quite likely also in a physically violent way. They might be being physically violent towards their children. Sometimes they're sexually abusing their children as well, that's more likely in perpetrators of domestic abuse than it is in the general population. So children can't still be experiencing that if they need, you know, to recover they can't still be experiencing that that needs to have either stopped or massively reduced. Then the final pillar of the three pillars is the people who are trying to recover, the parent and the children they need a safe, suitable and settled place to live and that's so important and they need enough money to live on while they're there. Because if they don't have a suitable place to live where they

feel safe and secure and settled and if they don't have enough money to live on then they're still in survival mode and they'll be massively stressed out and unsettled and you can't recover when you're in that state. You can't recover when you're still in survival mode and your whole future is completely uncertain, you need some stability in order to do the massive emotional work of recovery. Recovery takes a lot of emotional energy and if your emotional energy is still being directed at survival then there's no emotional energy free to do that work of recovery. So those three pillars I think are the environments that are needed and I think that anyone who is a professional supporting mums and children anything they can do to get those three pillars in place or at least one of those three pillars in place that should be their aim. You know a massive reduction, preferably an end to the abuse that is in their daily lives, a massive reduction in the abusive parenting and the undermining of the mother/child relationship and having a safe and secure and settled place to live and enough money to live on I think that's the crucial environment that's needed for recovery.

I2: Can you say a bit more about that? So what do those practitioners who work with victims of domestic abuse, those who work with perpetrators and with those who work with children, what do they need to consider and do to best support the recovery of the child and the non-abusive parent to address those three pillars?

R: Well I think initially it's about getting those three pillars in place and I'm sure practitioners can identify ways of moving forward with that. So if the perpetrator is still being abusive what legal measures can be taken to curb that if the perpetrator is still parenting in an abusive way what can be done to reduce the child's contact with the perpetrator you know through the family court so that they're not having the opportunities to perpetrate that abusive parenting anymore and if it's within the practitioner's power to help the mums and children to secure access to more money, to a better place to live, to a suitable place to live, housing support, support with perhaps claiming benefits or support with getting into work, all those things practitioners can look at doing depending on what their role is. But then once those environments are in place, once the three pillars are in place and we're good to go with recovery and there's been a big reduction in the everyday abuse that they're experiencing, there's been a big reduction in the abusive parenting the child is having to endure and that's mostly out of the child's life and they're in the right place with money and with housing to start to recover, they're ready to recover, then more can be done.

So I think from the research that I've done and from the other people's research that I'm familiar with what then needs to be done is mums and children will need some help understanding what the hell has happened to them and that they've experienced domestic abuse, that they've experienced coercive control and they've survived it which is amazing and incredible. But also that it was the perpetrator who caused all the abuse and it's the perpetrator who is responsible for it. So it was not the non-abusive parent's fault, it wasn't the child's fault. The child might think it was their fault. The child might think it was their non-abusive parent's fault. So mums and children might need help to overcome those negative ways of thinking and to realise it wasn't their fault, it was the perpetrator who caused all this problem. Then they might need help with expressing their emotions constructively, so it maybe that they've both the adult victim and the children who have bottled up their emotions because when they were around the perpetrator they had to bottle up their emotions and so it's become learnt behaviour. So they might need help to express their emotions constructively and to know when to speak up about how they're feeling and how to do that so it doesn't all come out like a big volcano every so often. They might need help with strengthening their mental health which might've been really undermined by all the abusiveness of the perpetrator so they might need to be directed towards mental health support. I know that's easier said than done because there's limited resources. But that's definitely something that could well need to be looked at and they'll probably need support with building up their confidence and their self-esteem and also about they might need help talking to each other about what happened. Because it maybe that they've experienced all this stuff but they don't really know how to talk to each other about it. They might feel really nervous or worried or reluctant to talk to each other about it. If their relationship was really undermined by the perpetrator and has ended up in this really strained place and perhaps has become very distant then they're probably going to need a lot of support to start relating to each other again in positive ways.

So these are all things that are sort of on the list of what needs to happen in order to support recovery and to enable recovery and whatever a practitioner's role is in the family that there will be elements of this that they will be able to help with. Of course each individual practitioner doesn't have to sort of help with all of those things all by themselves because that's an enormous plateful of things that need to be done, but they're all part of the puzzle. So the more they can place survivors into whole networks of support so they're getting the various different kinds of support they need from different practitioners that's a really good idea. So you may only be able to provide one piece of the puzzle but can you refer them on to other people who can help them with other pieces of that puzzle so they've got a whole network of people who are helping them. Perhaps that can't all be done all at once because it will be overwhelming, but looking at doing your piece of work with them and then passing them on to the next person who can help with the next piece of the puzzle. So just seeing there's lots of things to be done and looking at what role you can play and how you can help to ensure that other people can play the roles they need to play as well.

I2: That sounds like it's seeing the whole person and the whole picture.

R: Yes, that's a really good way of putting it, thank you. I've been going on and on about that but yes exactly seeing the whole person and the whole picture of everything that needs to be done, yes.

I2: So survivors of domestic abuse who maybe worried about their children and their resources, what resources can they access or what simple steps can they take to strengthen their relationship?

R: So there's a couple of great books which were developed by researchers about 10 years ago and they were developed with mums and children themselves who tested out the books and made sure that they were working and the books are called 'Talking to my Mum' and 'Talking about Domestic Abuse'. 'Talking to my Mum' is for mums with younger children, sort of junior school aged children and 'Talking about Domestic Abuse' for mums with secondary school aged children, teenagers and those books helped mums and children to start opening that dialogue about what happened, realising that it wasn't their fault and starting to do some of those important recovery activities that will help them to move forward. The books can be done just by mums and children by themselves. They can sit on the sofa together and work through the books or they can be done by a practitioner coming in and doing the activities with them and supporting them to work through the book. So it works either way. There's also another great book called 'When Dad hurts Mum Helping your Children to Heal the Wounds of Witnessing Abuse' and that book is by an American called Lundy Bancroft and all these books you can just get them off Amazon, they're not from obscure booksellers, they're just on Amazon. If you buy them used you can get them for like a penny, particularly 'When Dad hurts Mum'. I just had a look on Amazon this morning and it was available used for a penny. So obviously all you're paying for then is the post and packaging which is like two quid. So it should be relatively possible to get hold of them and I think those books are great and they're a great starting point and also to get in touch with local domestic abuse services which again is really easy. You could just Google domestic abuse and the name of your local area. So like I'm in Liverpool right now, so if I just Googled domestic abuse Liverpool then the names of all the various support services will come up on that first result page or that second result page and you can just get in touch with them and they may know of specific support services that are available for children and mums. Sometimes there's programmes that specifically help to rebuild the mother/child relationship and those programmes could be available in your area or there are programmes that are specific for children or there's children's workers who are available, like domestic abuse children's workers. Outreach workers who can spend some time with the child and help them. So there maybe all sorts of resources available in your area and it's just about calling up the local services and saying, "This is my situation, what resources are available?"

I2: Thanks Emma. So looking forward what do you think are the most crucial areas for future research or interventions?

R: Well I think that making that shift from realising that it's not just physical violence that people have experienced, it's this regime of coercive control that they've experienced. It's this not being able to make their own everyday decisions, everyday life just being micro managed and controlled and constrained and restricted by the perpetrator that is what people have lived with and that is what people need support to recover from. Unless we get that then we're not going to be giving the support and the interventions that people really need. Also I think people often think that domestic abuse is coming from the relationship. So it's like people will explain the abuse by saying, "It's a bad relationship, it's a turbulent relationship, there's a bad dynamic between the partners". But that's not actually what's going on. The abuse is not coming from the relationship, it's coming from the perpetrator whoever that abuser is. It's most likely to be the male in the relationship but it could of course be the female, less likely but it could be. So it's coming from the perpetrator, it's coming from the perpetrator's deeply held attitudes and expectations and beliefs. That perpetrator believes that it's okay to behave in an abusive way to get what they want and they believe it's okay to impose huge amounts of control over other people's lives and those things are not okay and that is what is causing the abuse. It's the perpetrator, it's not the relationship and that perpetrator is going to carry on behaving in those ways after the relationship is over. They're almost certainly going to carry on behaving in those ways towards their ex-partner trying to control them, trying to perhaps punish them for breaking their control by separating from them in the first place, trying to regain that control. They're going to carry on believing it's okay to abuse people to get what they want, they're going to carry on believing that it's okay to upset the children and harm the children and distress the children as part of their campaign to get what they want and to have that control. So that is not going to go away at the point of separation and I think if we realise that then we realise what needs to be done post-separation. We need interventions that stop the perpetrator's abuse and often the only way to do that is to really robust, legal interventions to stop the perpetrator's abuse, far more robust interventions than usually happen right now. Because at the moment we're not realising that that perpetrator is going to carry on unless stopped, no in 100 per cent of cases but in most cases they are going to carry on unless really robust measures are put in place to stop them. Often the burden is placed on the victim to try and achieve that safety and that's so unfair.

I think you know Fiona Bruce who presented Crime Watch for many years she said that domestic abuse is the only situation where the victim is expected to go on the run rather than the perpetrator. It's the victim who is expected to do everything to achieve safety and that has got to change. It's not fair on the victim, it's not possible for many victims. So once we realised that we have to stop those perpetrators then we can shift our whole focus and do things that are more effective so that mums and children can recover. Also of course perpetrators if they do lose control, really lose control of one set of one partner and one set of children they're probably going to find a new partner and a new set of children to abuse. So without dealing with the perpetrator it's like we're on a constant treadmill trying to keep up, but the perpetrator is just reeking more and more havoc, so we have to put more focus on stopping these perpetrators. I guess ultimately that's about preventative work so that the perpetrators are never created in the first place. But dealing with the perpetrators that we currently have in our society we need to get far more robust at tackling them so that their abuse is stopped. If we realise as well that the problem is in the perpetrator that has implications for the family courts to realise that these usually fathers who are applying for child contact the problem is still within them. It is located within them. So they are probably applying for child contact as a means of carrying on that control. So it's not like the case that because the parents have split up then the abuse is all over and child contact can safely proceed. The problem is still in that perpetrator who is that parent who is seeking that child contact and it's still that threat and that danger and that harm is still so present within them.

So I think once we shift towards realising that we'll be able to put in place interventions that are far more effective and I think as a society we have so much power to do that if we chose to do that, if we chose to invest resources that way. Individual practitioners I know they're probably doing their best in a system that is quite dysfunctional, you know the whole system that we have of responding to domestic abuse is quite dysfunctional. But practitioners do have a lot of power to help the victims and survivors and the child victims and survivors just by giving them a good response, by recognising that ... I guess so many survivors they say that the practitioners who helped them the most were the ones who treated them like a human being, treated them with respect and really listened to them. Even if they couldn't do huge amounts to help just that experience of being listened to and being treated with a great deal of respect and being told, "Actually you are strong and I see your strengths and I think you're amazing and look at what you've survived, that is so

amazing". Just by practitioners saying that to them that's done huge amounts of good for their recovery. So practitioners have more power than they know to be that person who really changed lives with the way that they respond. So even I know it can be really frustrating to be part of a system that's quite dysfunctional but people do have more power than they realise just by being a really good human being to another human being. It can be really powerful and effective. So yes I guess there's lots to think about in terms of future research and interventions and I think the main thing is that shift towards realising it's not about physical violence it's about this perpetrator seeking power and control, this coercive control perpetrator, the problem lies within them. We have to tackle them.

I2: That's fascinating. Thank you so much Emma. Thank you so much for your time.