Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships

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Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

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Introduction

Although a substantial body of UK evidence exists on adult experiences of domestic violence, including the impact on children and professional practice (Mullender et al 2002; Hester et al 2007; Radford and Hester 2007), we know very little about teenagers' own experiences of partner violence in their intimate relationships. In contrast, within the USA a significant amount of research has emerged over the past two decades on young people's experiences of partner or "dating" violence and abuse.

US research on "dating" violence

Most of the US and indeed wider international literature has adopted the term "dating" to describe this area of research. However, this terminology does not transfer well to the UK context, as young people do not use or indeed recognise this term. In addition, dating seems to imply a degree of formality that does not necessarily reflect the diverse range of young people's intimate encounters and relationships. Similarly, Brown et al (2007), argue that the term is outdated and too restrictive. The term "partner exploitation and violence" seems more appropriate (we acknowledge this also has some limitations); to aid brevity "partner violence" will be used in this report. Terminology is not simply an interesting academic exercise as, unless appropriate definitions are used by professionals, young people will not perceive any intervention as being relevant to themselves or their specific circumstances. In addition, the terms "young people", "adolescents" and "teenagers" are used interchangeably to refer to children under the age of 18.

Primarily, US research has focused on physical or sexual violence, although psychological and coercive control mechanisms have now begun to be explored. US research confirms the high prevalence of partner violence in young people's relationships and its negative impact (Jackson et al 2000; Hickman et al 2004). One of the current authors has published a detailed critique of the "dating" violence literature (Barter 2009), so we will not repeat this here in any depth. Previous research findings on teenage partner violence are included alongside our findings throughout the report.

Some findings, primarily from US survey-based studies, suggest that boys and girls use similar levels of physical and emotional violence towards their partners (Foshee 1996; Arriaga and Foshee 2004; Roberts et al 2005), resulting in propositions that teenage partner violence demonstrates a greater degree of gender symmetry compared to adult domestic violence where women are predominantly the victim. However, research also shows that girls are more likely to be the recipient of serious physical and sexual violence than are boys (Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs 1985; Roscoe and Callahan 1985; Muehlenhard and Linton 1987; Gamache 1991; Foshee 1996; Silverman et al 2001; Ackard et al 2003; Arriaga and Foshee 2004). In addition, while both boys and girls use verbal violence and control mechanisms, the impact of these on girls appears to be much greater than for boys (Lavoie et al 2000; Sears et al 2006).

What we know about teenage partner violence testifies to its serious consequences for the wellbeing of victims and their future life prospects (Tangney et al 1992; Harway and Liss 1999; Smith et al 2003). US research has also identified that teenage partner violence is associated with a range of adverse outcomes for young people, including mental health, depression and suicide (Silverman et al 2001; Collin-Vézina et al 2006). Studies indicate that adolescent partner violence is strongly associated with experiencing domestic violence in adulthood (O'Leary et al 1989; Cleveland et al 2003).

Furthermore, US research has identified a range of risk factors that may increase a teenager's susceptibility to partner violence. These risk factors include previous experiences of parental domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, and violent peer groups (Roscoe and Callahan 1985; O'Keefe et al 1986; Smith and Williams 1992; O'Keefe and Treister 1998; Wolfe et al 2001a; Simonelli et al 2002; Whitfield et al 2003). While less researched, it appears that parental neglect, especially lack of supervision and involvement/interest in their teenage children's lives, also impacts negatively on young people's vulnerability to partner violence (Lavoie et al 2002; Pflieger and Vazsonyi 2005), although what constitutes "neglect" for adolescents has still to be fully explored within the research literature (see Rees and Stein 1999).

The majority of US studies have used large-scale surveys to determine the incidence of or prevalence rates for teenage partner violence, often across different sample communities. However, this approach has meant, with a few noticeable exceptions

(see Banister et al 2003; Chung 2005; Jackson 1999; Sears et al 2006; Silverman et al 2006; Próspero 2006), that young people's own experiences, views and agency have been neglected (James et al 1998; Mullender et al 2002). Furthermore, some commentators argue that past dependence on quantitative methodologies, primarily based on measures created for adults, means that research has been unable to capture the range and complexity of this social problem (Jackson 1999; West and Rose 2000; Sears et al 2006). For example, Connolly et al (2000) and Chung (2005) both argue that research needs to reflect the fluidity of teenage relationships, producing typologies to describe different teenage intimate encounters. Researchers, therefore face considerable challenges in operationalising teen relationships in a manner that captures their variation in form and meaning. Thus, according to Hickman et al (2004), in comparison with adult studies, research involving adolescents may require a more resource-intensive methodology to capture this meaning.

UK context

Teenagers' experience of partner violence has not received the same degree of attention in the UK, either within research or practice. The small number of UK studies undertaken confirms its impact and seriousness for young people's welfare (Hird 2000). Given the critical nature of adolescence as a developmental period, it is surprising that so little attention has been given to this social problem (O'Keefe et al 1986; Williams and Martinez 1999. This is despite the fact that young people themselves have repeatedly identified peer relationships, especially those involving abuse and violence, to be among the main areas of anxiety and unhappiness in their lives (Utting 1997; Barter et al 2004).

Young people have also clearly articulated that they do not feel their views and wishes are taken seriously or acted on by professionals. Consequently, professional practice may not be responding to or reflecting young people's own concerns, fears and wishes regarding the impact of peer violence. A number of obstacles have been presented to explain this omission, including viewing behaviour as experimental, fear of stigmatisation, a mistaken view that peer abuse is less harmful than abuse by adults, the unawareness of adolescent abuse generally and low reporting levels (Hird, 2000; Barter 2009).

Professional response to teenage partner violence

Only a minority of US studies (Brown et al 2007), and it appears none within the UK, have addressed multi-agency professional practice within this area of child welfare. Intervention work on teenage partner violence has been developed in some schools – see Bell and Stanley (2006) for an evaluation of school initiatives in this area. This general disregard of the area may be due to the emphasis within child welfare research and practice on adult–child interactions, be they neglectful/abusive or in a professional context. However, recent governmental guidance in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government 2006) has, for the first time, officially recognised the need for professionals to safeguard children from harm arising from abuse or violence in their own relationships. This is, at least in part, a response to the Bichard Inquiry (Bichard 2004) into the killings in Soham of two 10-year-old girls by their school caretaker. The inquiry raised, among other things, concerns about the way that professionals dealt with previously known and alleged cases of violence and under-age sex involving the murderer.

The guidance states that, in cases involving sexually active children under the age of 13, there is a *presumption* that the case will be reported to social work services (HM Government 2006, 5.25). For young people under 16, *consideration* must be given as to whether there should be a discussion with other agencies regarding the need for a referral, including where both parties are below this age and in a consensual relationship (5.26). To assist with this assessment a risk-checklist is provided, which includes the child's living circumstances and background, age imbalance, overt aggression or power imbalances, evidence of coercion, attempts at secrecy by the partner, and denial, minimisation or acceptance of the violence by the victim (5.27). However, we have no information regarding practitioners' awareness of this guidance, how it is being interpreted and operationalised, either nationally or locally, and what multi-agency decision-making models and protocols are in place.

The need for professionals both to recognise and to respond to partner violence within young people's relationships is indisputable (Barter 2006a). This research seeks to provide evidence on which to base more effective intervention and prevention

programmes aimed at safeguarding all young people in their teenage intimate relationships.

Research aims and methodology

This remaining part of this introduction outlines the aims of the study, the methodology used, ethical issues and the sampling framework.

Young people's advisory group

First, it is important that the work of the young people's advisory group (YPAG) is acknowledged. At the proposal stage of the project it was clear that for the research to be successful we needed to work closely with young people. With assistance from an NSPCC school team, the researchers approached a local school, which agreed that we could ask if any pupils would like to volunteer to be a member of a research advisory group for a two-year period. Young people who were interested in participating were required to return a consent form from a parent. Eventually we recruited 12 young people, all aged 14, to be on the group. The YPAG was convened within three months of the start of the project and followed the research through until completion.

Although the aims of the study were determined before the YPAG was convened, the group was influential in refining these, ensuring that suitable terminology was being used and young people's views were reflected in the research aims. The YPAG helped to design and develop all of the data collection tools, provided consultation on fieldwork issues, analysis and commented on findings and dissemination. For example, the research team had developed an outline survey, which had been positively reviewed by the adult advisory group. However, the YPAG made substantial comments on the type and range of questions, the format and style of the questionnaire itself and how the instructions were presented. Overall, acting on their comments, 20 questions were removed, others were rephrased and the survey format and instructions were simplified. We piloted the survey with 60 pupils, aged 15 and 16, from the same school. All provided very positive comments, which endorsed the changes initiated by the YPAG.

Some members of the YPAG also made a short DVD in which they introduced the research, explained why the research was important, what participation entailed, including consent and confidentiality, and how the findings would be used. The researchers played the DVD to pupils in participating schools to introduce the research and to show how young people were involved in the project. At the completion of the project the YPAG came to the University of Bristol for the day to provide feedback on findings, discuss practice implications and to say what they thought should be done next. Certificates of attendance were presented at the final meeting. Although, as with any advisory group, not everyone agreed on certain points, the group worked to ensure that all comments were given equal weight within the research process. We are very grateful to the YPAG for all their hard work and enthusiasm over the two-year project. We are also very grateful to their school, especially to one particular teacher, who provided valuable support to us and gave us a great deal of their time to ensure the group ran smoothly.

Alongside the YPAG, we also had a professional advisory group, which met twice at the beginning of the project and provided detailed suggestions and comments regarding the research tools. Throughout the research individual members of the group were asked to comment on particular research issues relevant to their specific expertise. The group also provided very important links in relation to gaining access to schools. The researchers undertook presentations at the request of some members of the group. These presentations provided valuable feedback on how different professionals viewed the emerging findings and what were seen as the main issues for their own practice in this area. Members of the group also provided detailed comments on the final draft report. The researchers are very grateful for their valuable contribution to the project.

Research aims

The overall aim of the research was to examine in depth young people's experiences of partner violence and how best to respond to this problem. The study utilised a wide definition of violence (Stanko 2000), which incorporated emotional, verbal, physical and sexual forms of violence. These were looked at both in isolation and as they co-exist within young people's relationships.

The more specific objectives included exploring:

- the nature, frequency and dynamics of different forms of violence in teenage relationships and the contexts in which they occur and persist
- young people's own understandings, attitudes to and evaluations of such violence
- if any groups are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims and/or assailants
- young people's perceptions of the impact of violence on their wellbeing, the coping strategies they used, their effectiveness, as well as factors that enabled young people to leave violent relationships
- the "reasons" why assailants used violence and their perceptions of its impact on their victims and themselves
- young people's views on prevention and how support services could best respond to preventing violence
- wider cultural or social processes that underpin experiences of exploitation and violence.

Multi-method approach

To fulfil the above objectives the research used a multi-method framework combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Plano Clark and Creswell 2008). Two data collection techniques were used:

- self-completion survey
- face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with vignettes.

Sample

Schools sample

The schools sample was chosen to reflect previous research findings that suggest deprivation and locality are possible risk factors associated with some forms of teenage partner violence victimisation (Hird 2000). Eight secondary schools participated in the research. Four schools were in England, two in Scotland and two in Wales (see table below). We wanted some geographical spread so as to represent a range of circumstances and to build on previous research relationships. Four schools were in suburban areas surrounding large cities, three schools were situated in predominantly rural areas and one was in an inner city area. The criterion of free

school meals was used to gauge the level of social derivation in each of the school's catchment areas. Applying this criterion, two schools were located in areas of very high deprivation, two in areas of high deprivation and four in areas of average to low deprivation. All eight schools were in the public sector. Only one school was faith-based (Catholic). Three of the schools had sixth forms attached.

Table 1 Schools sample

School	Deprivation level	Location	Sixth form
England 1 (E1)	High	Suburban	Yes
England 2 (E2)	Very high	Suburban	No
England 3 (E3)	Average	Inner city	Yes
England 4 (E4)	Low	Rural	Yes
Scotland 1 (S1)	Very high	Suburban	No
Scotland 2 (S2)	High	Suburban	No
Wales 1 (W1)	Average	Rural	No
Wales 2 (W2)	Average	Rural	No

Schools were accessed through a range of strategies, ranging from the research team directly approaching schools, being "introduced" to schools through the NSPCC's school teams and from assistance through other organisations. In addition to the above eight schools, three more were approached to take part but declined. In two cases internal school issues were presented as the explanation. The third school, having spent months in negotiations, stopped any correspondence without providing a reason. Two of these schools were within the independent sector and one was a state school situated in a very affluent area. Unfortunately, due to the time constraints of the project and the very time-consuming access negotiations required for each school, we were unable to pursue the inclusion of any further schools from the independent sector. Thus, although we attempted to increase the number of participants from more affluent backgrounds, we were unable to do so.

Survey participation rates

Pupil participation rates differed substantially between the eight schools. This was due to two main reasons: the way that parental consent was gained and administration of the fieldwork in schools. In six of the schools, agreement was gained to use *opt-out* parental consent for young people. Thus, in these schools, parents were required to

send back participation forms by the given date only if they did not want their child to participate. We received back only 19 opt-out forms from parents.

However, the administration of the survey in schools also significantly affected participation rates. In four schools the survey was undertaken in scheduled lessons, generally personal, social and health education classes (PSHE). In these schools researchers directly asked young people if they would like to take part. Only a minority of young people decided not to contribute and were given alternative work to do. In these schools participation rates (as a percentage) were 94, 81, 79 and 71 per cent. These percentages are based on comparing class lists with consent forms. This does not take into account the fact that some young people were away from school, undertaking other activities or in exams. Thus participation levels reflect how many young people took part, but not how many declined to be involved, as some young people were absent for other reasons.

In the two other schools, where opt-out parental consent was agreed, very different administrative procedures were followed. Although researchers still initially introduced the research, when the team returned to undertake the fieldwork they did not secure direct access to pupils. Instead teachers in each class asked young people on our behalf if they would like to take part. Those pupils who agreed to participate were taken from their classroom to where the survey was taking place. However, in many cases teachers were reluctant to encourage pupils to contribute, as this would entail missing lessons and, in some instances, exam revision sessions. Consequently, participation rates in these two schools (based on average class size as we were unable to gain access to class lists) were reduced to 56 per cent and 52 per cent. We tried to avoid busy times of the year, such as the run-up to exams but this was not always possible given that fieldwork had to be completed within 12 months.

In the remaining two schools the education authority had a policy of *opt-in* parental consent for all research with children and young people. Thus parents were required to complete the consent form and return it to the research team in order for their child to participate. Headteachers of both these schools stated that they often experienced great difficulty in having forms returned by parents. Interestingly, both headteachers said they felt opt-out consent would have been appropriate. In both cases the warnings

given were accurate. Roughly only a third of parents returned consent forms. Thus significantly lower participation rates were recorded for these schools: 38 per cent and 31 per cent. No young people whose parents had agreed to their participation declined to take part and many young people wanted to be involved but, for whatever reason, did not have a signed parental consent form. We do not know if parents actively chose to prevent their child's participation or if this non-response simply reflected a much more general pattern, as indicated by the school headteachers. Due to the low parental response rate the education authority subsequently agreed to a request by the research team, supported by a headteacher, to allow young people aged 16 years and over to participate with opt-out parental consent. We, therefore, returned to one school towards the end of the fieldwork to undertake the survey on this basis. The initial participation rate with opt-in parental consent of 31 per cent increased to 83 per cent with opt-out consent.

Overall, 1,377 young people completed the survey; 24 (2 per cent) of these were spoiled or completed incorrectly, thus 1,353 questionnaire responses were analysed (see section 1 for more detail of the survey sample breakdown). A total of 91 interviews (62 girls and 29 boys) were undertaken (see section 7 for more details).

Survey aims

A self-completion questionnaire was developed for young people aged between 13 and 16. The survey aimed to identify if respondents had ever experienced a range of violent behaviours from their partners and/or ever acted in this way towards their partners. Thus, the survey sought to understand, not only if young people had ever been a target for or perpetrated partner violence, but also if and how these two experiences were associated. A partner was defined in the research as anyone the young person had been intimate with, ranging from a serious long-term boyfriend or girlfriend, to a more casual partner or a one-off encounter. The main aims of the survey were to document:

- demographic characteristics of respondents
- incidence rates for different types of violence/behaviours in partner relationships
- identification of the broad dynamics involved

- impact on young people's welfare
- help-seeking behaviour and support
- past experiences of child abuse/inter-parental violence and wider peer violence.

Survey ethics and consent

Leaflets explaining the research aims, what was involved in participation, issues of confidentially and anonymity, and who the researchers were, including a photograph, were produced for the young people and parents. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, the word "violence" was not used; instead the project was introduced more broadly as a research study on teenage relationships and the concerns some young people may have in relation to these. Consent leaflets were designed both for young people and for parents. All young people who wanted to take part were required to sign a consent form. The research was developed on the basis of opt-out parental consent. If a parent did not want their child to take part, they were therefore required to complete the consent form and return it, in the stamped addresses envelope provided, to the research team by a specified date. However, one education authority insisted on opt-in parental consent for the two schools within their area. Here, parents who wanted their children to take part were required to complete the form and return it before their child could participate. Some of the implications of these two systems of gaining parental consent are presented under "Survey participation rates" on page 14.

Implementation of the survey

All surveys were confidential and anonymous. It was decided in both the YPAG and the professional group that, unless participants were guaranteed anonymity, many would be reluctant to answer such sensitive questions, especially concerning physical and sexual violence. We asked young people their views regarding these issues at the pilot stage of the research and received almost unanimous agreement in support of total confidentiality and anonymity.

It is important to recognise the very sensitive nature of some of the questions contained in the survey. The research team and members of the two advisory groups were both very aware of the importance of ensuring that questions were asked in an

appropriate manner. However, language describing violence, and perhaps especially sexual violence, can be problematic. For example, it was decided to use the phrase "physically forced into sexual intercourse" rather than the word "rape". Some members of the adult advisory group raised initial concerns that the wording of certain questions, especially this one, might lead some young people to minimise the impact and consequences of their actions. Thus, if the word "rape" were included, participants then would be more aware of the implications of their behaviour. However, both advisory groups also recognised that few young people would answer a question pertaining to rape, or indeed necessarily recognise their own experience of violence in this way, a presumption that was subsequently upheld in the interview data. This was an important issue requiring considerable thought. However, the research team decided that unless we used language that was more oblique and did not hold such direct connotations, we would severely limit young people's ability or willingness to participate fully in the survey.

Additionally, as participants for the second interview stage of the research were directly recruited following the survey, researchers were unable to provide any direct comments to pupils regarding the questions asked in the survey, as this may have influenced participants' subsequent interview responses. However, at the end of each survey session all young people were provided with a leaflet containing information on local and national sources of help.

We included in the sample a range of pupils within schools across year groups and educational attainment. Sometimes choice of respondents was restricted due to school or external priorities, such as tests or exams. Researchers introduced the study to individual classes or, in the case of three schools, in the school assembly. Leaflets and consent forms were given out to young people and any questions answered. Researchers then returned to each school within three weeks to undertake the survey. It was made clear to young people that participation was voluntary and they did not have to take part if they did not wish. Two researchers were present in each session so that young people who required reading support could be assisted. A "fun quiz" was placed at the end of the survey so that children who had not experienced a relationship, and therefore completed the survey sooner than others, could not be identified by other pupils. This activity also provided a "wind-down" time for all

participants at the end of the session, as young people's answers to the quiz were compared. In some cases teachers remained in the classroom and were invited to complete the quiz and compare answers, often to the amusement of their pupils.

As already discussed, the questionnaire included sensitive questions, which some young people may have found disconcerting. Researchers took great care to ensure that any participants who appeared to be affected by the questionnaire were discreetly approached afterwards to see how they were feeling and if they wished for someone in the school to talk with them. In addition, all researchers were available if any young person wanted to discuss any of the issues further. No young people asked for any additional help.

Aims of the qualitative interviews

The key aim of the second qualitative stage of the study was to enable young people to articulate their experiences in greater depth and allow participants to wield greater control over the focus and direction of the research (see Alldred 1998; Mayall 2002). The main aims of the qualitative methodology were to:

- engage young people to participate in "sensitive research"
- enable a discussion of personal experiences of partner violence
- explore the interpretations and meanings that young people ascribe to different forms of partner violence
- provide young people with greater control over the research interaction.

To fulfil these diverse aims, two complementary techniques were used: semi-structured interviews and vignettes.

Semi-structured interviews

In-depth interviews enabled young people to identify, define and contextualise their own personal experiences of partner violence. Within the interview, participants were given considerable freedom to introduce relevant areas and factors that they viewed as important in understanding these issues. Much methodological literature exists concerning the use of qualitative semi-structured interview techniques, which was drawn on within the research. We will not rehearse this here. Researchers used "active

listening" and "non-directional stance" (Whyte 1984), and conveyed a non-judgemental attitude (Hill 1997). This was not always necessarily an easy stance to maintain in interviews, especially when participants discussed their own use of violence, often with little recognition of the impact of this on their partners.

Interviews took place in five of the eight schools, with a total of 91 interviews. In each of these schools the qualitative interview followed several weeks after the completion of the questionnaires. It was initially envisaged that young people would self-select to take part in the interview by contacting the researchers, for example by use of a self-addressed envelope or a text number, or through volunteering after completing the questionnaire. All these strategies were found to be unsuitable at the pilot stage of the research. Due to issues of confidentiality and anonymity, questionnaires did not intentionally contain personal contact details, thus prohibiting their use for selection of interview participants. We therefore decided to move to a system where researchers asked a range of participants completing the questionnaires in the classrooms if they would also like to take part in an interview. Researchers observed to see which young people seemed to be engaging with the survey. They then asked those young people if they would like to take part in the interview stage. However, to ensure they were not perceived by their peers as being targeted for a particular reason, we also invited a pupil sitting alongside them to participate. Thus it appeared to the class that groups of pupils were asked rather than any individual. This system worked well and enabled young people to participate without the need for them to be seen to volunteer in front of their class. Young people received a £10 gift voucher as a token of our appreciation for being interviewed; this also provided them with a "valid" excuse for volunteering in front of their peers (Barter and Renold 2003). This selection method, therefore, inevitably entailed interviewing some young people who stated that they had no experience of partner violence.

Nevertheless, these interviews proved important for a number of reasons. First, we were able to identify protective factors in some young people's lives, which seemed to be associated with their positive relationship experiences. Second, although some young people firmly stated at the beginning of the interview that they had not experienced any such problems in their relationships, further discussions revealed a more complicated picture involving subtle forms of control. These incidents had not

always been reported in their survey responses. Thus, if a researcher had not asked these young people to participate, it is doubtful that they would have volunteered and these more divergent experiences would have been lost. Consequently, the qualitative dimension of the project provides evidence that, for certain forms of behaviour, the quantitative survey findings may under-represent the incidence. This is an important factor for interventions for young people. If young people do not recognise or define their experiences as constituting partner exploitation or violence, they will be less likely to engage with intervention programmes that focus exclusively on overt aspects of teenage violence and control. Although some young people had no direct personal experience of partner violence, many of them did have friends who had revealed their own experiences to them. Thus, we were able to explore with these young people their responses to these disclosures. This is an important area due to young people's reliance on peers as a source of assistance and support, identified in previous research (Hird 2000; Ashley and Foshee 2005; Ocampo et al 2007). Section 7 of this report also elaborates on these issues.

Some young people talked very openly about their experiences of partner violence. However, in a number of interviews, researchers felt that young people were more reticent and cautious with their replies. We often recalled that towards the end of these discussions, the young people seemed to begin to feel more comfortable; unfortunately in many instances the interview had to end due to time restrictions. Therefore researchers felt that for some young people, a single interview was insufficient to discuss such personal, and often hidden, experiences. This may also have been influenced by the fact that all interviews took place in school. For some participants the location may have been a barrier to talking openly about such sensitive issues. We tried to ensure that all interview rooms were private and schools had attempted to facilitate this. However, in some instances this was not always possible. For example, interviews sometimes had to take place in a library, which although separate was not private. Furthermore, in a small number of cases interviews were interrupted by teachers and also occasionally other pupils. We are unable to gauge the impact of this on young people's ability to talk freely to us. Such issues need to be taken into account in future research methodology in this area.

Young people were asked if they would like to be interviewed alone or with a friend. In three cases young people preferred to be interviewed with their friends. Thus we had one joint interview with two girls and a group interview involving three girls. Only one joint interview with boys occurred. We do not know how these peer dynamics influenced a young person's ability to talk openly about their experiences. However, these joint interviews did provide important insights into the ways in which peer interactions can influence how partner violence is perceived and, in some cases, normalised.

Interviews – ethics and consent

Issues of informed consent, anonymity and the balance between confidentiality and ensuring the safety of children and young people were central components of the research. An agreement was drawn up between the research team and each education authority specifying procedural requirements, including managing potential disclosures surrounding risk of serious harm, as well as ownership and storage of data.

Participant consent

Informed consent was sought from each young person. Before starting the interview the researcher discussed with participants what they were consenting to, including their right not to answer a question or to stop the interview at any stage, confidentiality and the researcher's obligation to report a risk of serious harm, anonymity, storage of data, and how their responses would be used in the final report and dissemination. Once the researcher was sure the young participant understood to what they were consenting, they were asked to sign a consent form.

Within the interview researchers used their discretion to determine if the discussion was becoming too stressful for the young person. In these circumstances the researcher would ask the young person if they wished to discuss a less sensitive area, introduce a vignette or take a break, either temporarily or permanently, depending on the young person's wishes.

Parental consent for interview

All parents of young people who agreed to be interviewed received an additional interview leaflet and consent form. The leaflet explained the selection procedure by

which their child had been asked to participate, what was involved and the limitations of confidentiality. Parents had to sign a consent form for their child to participate in the interview stage of the research.

Vignettes

The recognition and discussion of partner violence by young participants was facilitated within the interviews by the introduction of vignettes. Five vignettes were used, each depicting a different situation involving partner violence. The vignettes provided a range of benefits for the interviews. They enabled more subtle forms of control and manipulation to be recognised by young people as being appropriate for discussion, as shown in the following dialogue. All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Interviewer introduces a vignette depicting a girl responding to her boyfriend's violence

Interviewer:	Has that ever happened to you, being in that sort of situation?
Emma:	Yeah I've been in exactly that situation before.
Interviewer:	So what did you do?
Emma:	Pushed him away, told him to stop.
Interviewer:	And did he take any notice?
Emma:	Yeah.

Vignettes provided young people with the opportunity to decide if, and when, to contribute their own experiences of violence to the discussion, giving them greater control over the research interaction (see Barter and Renold 2000, 2003). For example, as illustrated below, young people could stop personal discussion when it became too sensitive by using the vignette (story b) as a way of changing the focus of the discussion to something less personal:

Rebecca:	I wasn't even, I was like seeing him when I slept with him, like I don't know, I don't mind, it wasn't like, he never pressured me…
Interviewer:	"Didn't mind" is not quite the same as wanting to though?
Rebecca:	But he didn't pressure me to, it just happened, but since I've been going out with him it hasn't happened since…
Interviewer:	Uum, OK.
Rebecca:	But it's hard.
Interviewer:	Yeah…?
Rebecca:	Yeah because he does do it all for me; shall we read story "b"?

The vignettes also enabled young people to respond to sensitive issues without having to introduce the subject themselves or having to respond to a direct question regarding their own experience of violence. Thus, vignettes provided a mechanism by which participants could choose when, and if, they wished to describe their own experiences rather than discuss the vignette scenario.

Although the vignettes provided a very useful tool with young people, they were not used within this research as an independent data collection technique. Researchers did not set out systematically to use each vignette within every interview. Indeed, once young people felt comfortable speaking about their own experiences, the use of vignettes became unnecessary. Thus, we have not analysed specifically young people's attitudinal responses to the vignette scenarios. A body of work has already testified to the worrying tolerance that young people show towards relationship violence generally (see Lacasse and Mendelson 2007; Silverman et al 2006; McCarry 2003), and we did not wish to repeat this here. Much less work in the UK has looked at young people's direct experiences of partner violence, and it is this gap in knowledge that the research aimed to bridge.

Analysis

All survey responses were inputted onto an SPSS database for analysis. Due to the large sample size, survey responses were primarily analysed using the Chi-Squared test for non-parametric data, through SPSS version 14. A forward stepwise logistic regression analysis was undertaken on significant associated factors identified through the Chi-Squared analysis. This enabled the prediction of which factors were most closely associated with both girls' and boys' (separately) experiences of partner violence, both as recipients and perpetrators (see appendix II for a more detailed explanation).

Interviews were all digitally recorded with participants' permission and fully transcribed and anonymised. NVivo8 software was used to facilitate qualitative analysis. A detailed coding frame representing the dominant themes and patterns was developed from initial reading of the transcripts. This coding frame was then refined and further built on in NVivo. The constant-comparative method (Boeije 2002) was used to interpret the qualitative findings. Analysis was informed by a standpoint

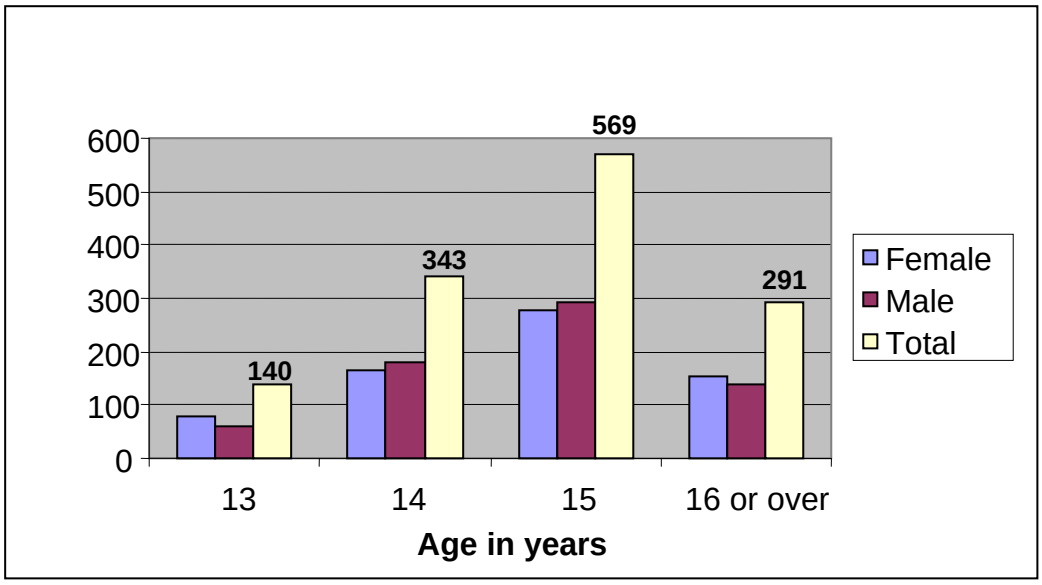
analytical framework (Harding 1993), which positions the young participant as the "expert" in understanding her or his own experiences. However, wider social processes of which young people may not be fully aware, for example gender inequality, also shaped the analysis, enabling the interface between structure and agency to be highlighted.

Section 1: Survey sample

Gender and age of participants

The survey of 1,353 young people was split evenly by gender, with 680 female and 669 male respondents (four replies omitted gender). Nearly three-quarters of respondents were 15 years old or older (see figure 1). This reflected our sampling framework, which prioritised older adolescents due to their increased opportunity of experiencing some form of relationship. Nevertheless, we also wanted to include younger respondents to ensure their experiences were represented. Gender was approximately evenly distributed within each of the age groups.

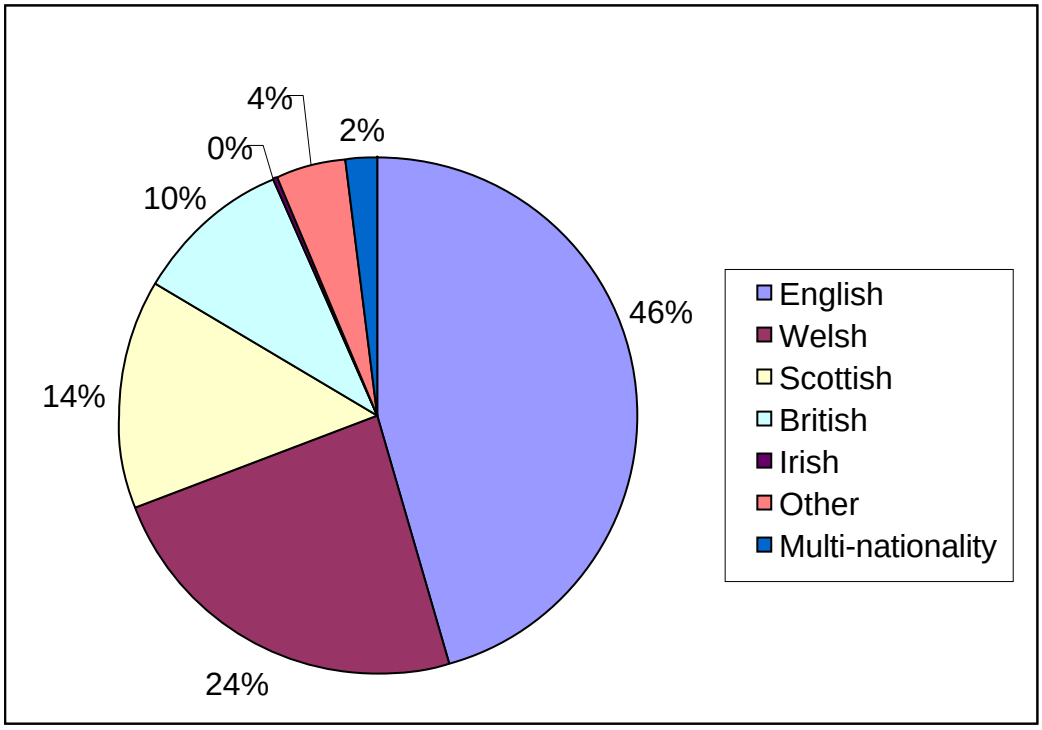
Figure 1 Age of young people



Nationality of participants

Approaching half of respondents (n=613) were English (see figure 2). A quarter of young people were Welsh (n=317), one in eight respondents were Scottish (n=192) and one in 10 described themselves as British (n=131). Only a minority gave multiple-nationality (n=27) or chose “other” (n=60) as their answer. Four young people were Irish. Gender was roughly equally distributed within each nationality (largest difference was 3 per cent).

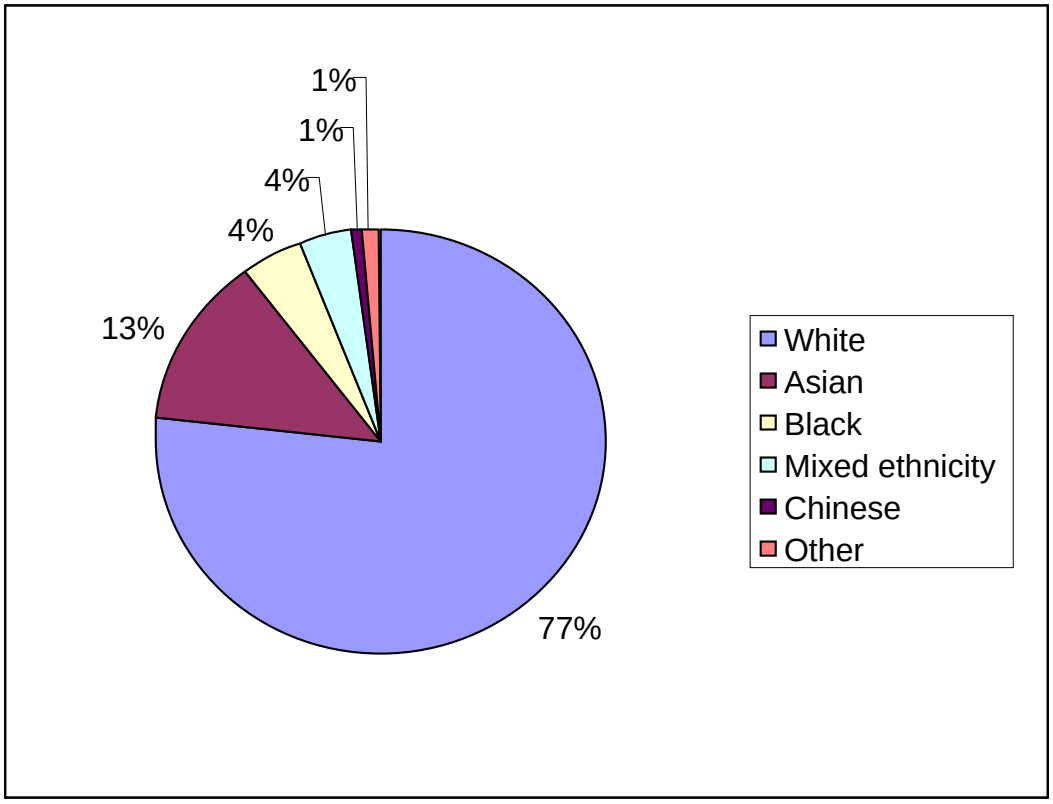
Figure 2 Nationality of young people



Ethnicity of participants

Most respondents (77 per cent) were white (see figure 3). Asian/Asian British (Asian) respondents constituted the largest minority ethnic group, representing just over one in eight young people (n=175). If we look at ethnic group by school breakdown, we find that most black (n=40) and just under half of mixed ethnicity (n=24) young people were all located within a single school (England 1). In addition, nearly all Asian young people came from only two schools (n=166). Thus, we need to be cautious when using ethnicity within our analysis as most minority ethnic young people are located in a small number of schools and, consequently, their experiences may be more geographically distinct than those of white respondents. All three rural schools had fewer than 10 respondents from minority ethnic groups. Slightly more girls (3 per cent, n=30) than boys were white; otherwise gender was equally distributed within each ethnic group.

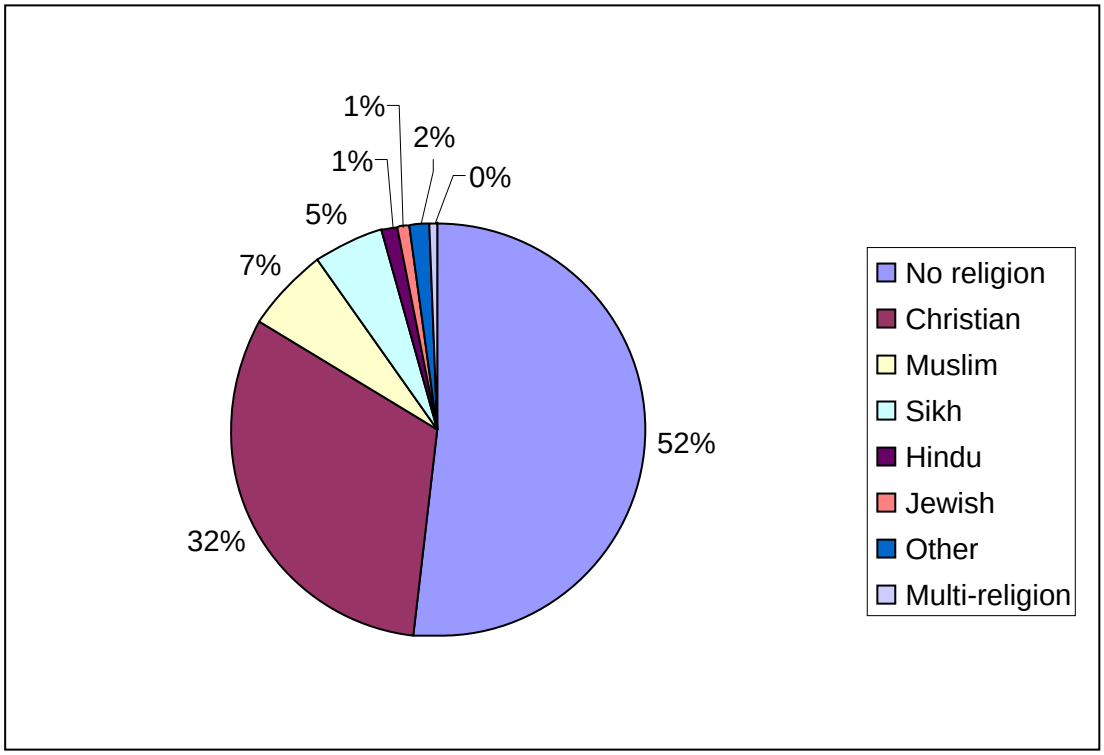
Figure 3 Ethnicity of young people



Religion of participants

Just over half of respondents stated they had no religion (n=695). Of respondents who reported a religion, three-quarters (n=429) stated they were Christian, 7 per cent (n=91) were Muslim and 5 per cent (n=74) Sikh (see figure 4). A minority of young people were Hindu (n=15) and 13 Jewish. Six young people had more than one religion and 23 stated “other” as a category. Gender was equally distributed within each of the categories.

Figure 4 Religion of young people



Looking at ethnic group and religion, a clear pattern emerges. The majority of white participants (64 per cent) had no religion and a third said they were Christian. Most Asian young people were Sikh (47 per cent) or Muslim (38 per cent), a minority (n=10) were Hindu. The majority of black participants (75 per cent) were Christian, with seven stating they had no religion. Over half (56 per cent) of mixed ethnicity young people stated they were Christian, while nearly a third (31 per cent) reported having no religion.

Family composition

Two-thirds of young people lived with both their natural parents (see table 2). A third of respondents lived in either a single-parent household (n=250) or a reconstituted family (n=224). Only 32 stated they lived in some "other" setting. Proportionally, Asian young people were most likely to be in households with two biological parents (86 per cent), while mixed ethnicity (45 per cent) and black (47 per cent) respondents were least likely to be living with both their parents.

Table 2 Family compositions and gender

	Both parents	Single-parent family	Reconstituted family	Other	Total
Female (count)	437	107	119	17	680
% within sample					
Male (count)	406	143	105	15	669
% within sample					
Total (count)	**843**	**250**	**224**	**32**	**1,349**
% within sample	63%	18%	17%	2%	100%

Disability

Three per cent (n=42) of young people self-reported some form of disability: 18 girls and 24 boys. However, we did not ask young people to state what form or how severe their disability was.

Section 2: Young people's experiences of family and peer violence

This section of the report examines young people's wider experiences of violence. Two distinct areas were explored within the survey: family violence and peer violence. Both of these forms of violence have been identified in US research as constituting a significant risk factor for experiencing teenage partner violence (Cyr et al 2006; Collin-Vézina et al 2006; O'Keefe et al 1986; Wolfe et al 2001a; Wolf and Foshee 2003; Whitfield et al 2003; Arriaga and Foshee 2004; Lavoie et al 2002).

Family violence

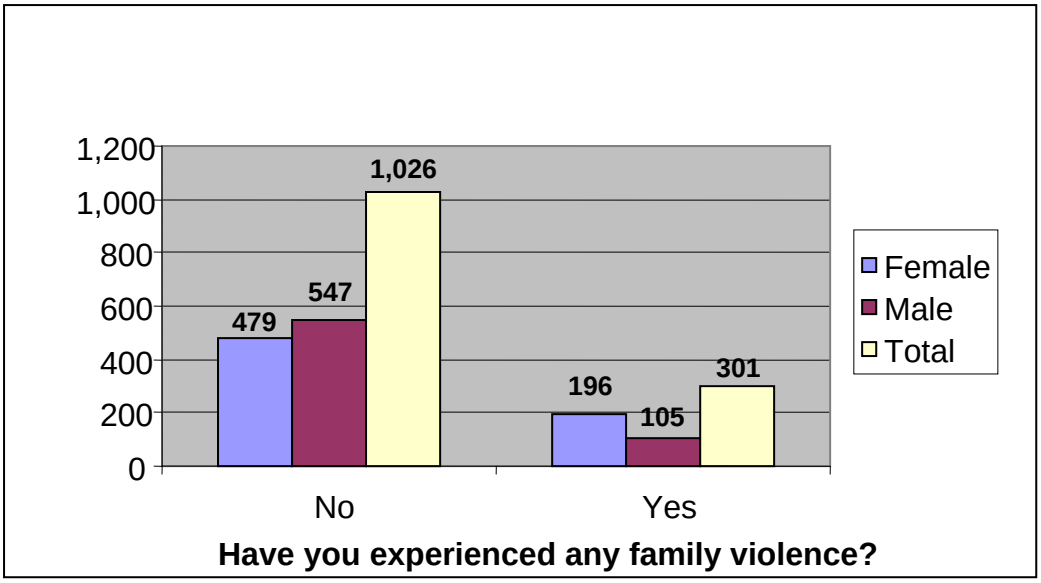
We asked young people to state if any adult in their house/family had ever used abuse or violence in three ways: against them, against another child or young person, or against another adult. We did not specify in the survey what constituted abuse or violence by an adult. Hence, young people were left to determine how they defined these concepts in relation to their own family experiences. Consequently, abuse or violence by an adult may be emotional, physical and/or sexual.

Looking first at the initial category of family violence, 13 per cent of girls (n=91) and 9 per cent of boys (n=58) stated they had experienced violence from an adult within their house or family. Thus, girls were significantly more likely to report experiencing child maltreatment than were boys (x^2 (1) = 6.997, p<.01). In contrast, a much smaller proportion stated an adult had used violence against another child or young person. Only 4 per cent of girls (n=26) and 2 per cent of boys (16) reported this. The highest incidence of family violence concerned domestic violence where an adult in the family or household had been violent towards another adult. Overall, one-fifth of girls (n=128) and one in 10 boys (n=68) reported they had experienced domestic violence. Again the gender difference was significant (x^2 (1) = 19.185, p<.001), with twice as many girls compared to boys reporting domestic violence in the home. We are unable to conclude, with any certainty, why this gender difference exists. Such violence may possibly be more hidden from adolescent boys compared to girls, due to the instigator's fear that boys may attempt to physically protect the victim. Girls may also perceive behaviours to be more harmful, and therefore define them as constituting

violence, than do boys. Interestingly, many more girls in the interviews spoke about family violence than did boys. In fact very few accounts of family violence were forthcoming from boys.

To aid analysis, all three forms of family violence were combined into a single, mutually exclusive category of family violence. By using this combined category we find that nearly a quarter (22 per cent) of young people reported some form of family violence from an adult (see figure 5). However, as illustrated above, this was unevenly distributed. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to state they had experienced some form of family violence: 29 per cent compared to 16 per cent (x^2 (1) = 31.629, p<.001).

Figure 5 Family violence by gender



As explained under “Research aims and methodology” on page 11, the number of questions we could ask in the survey was limited by the need to ensure that contributing did not have a negative impact on young respondents. Due to these constraints we did not ask respondents to identify who was perpetrating the violence. However, by comparing household composition and family violence we can determine in which family structures violence has been present. A significant association was found between household structure and family violence (x^2 (3) = 47.419, p = <.001). The lowest level of family violence (18 per cent) occurred in households where both birth parents were present. This rose to 30 per cent for single-

parent households and 40 per cent for reconstituted families. However, we do not know if the violence occurred prior to the family separation or following it. Most young people in single and reconstituted family settings stated they lived with their biological mother. Nearly a third (31 per cent) of young people who stated they lived in some "other" form of household experienced family violence. We also asked young people to say how their mother and father made them feel. A caveat is required regarding how this question was worded. The survey question asked young people to evaluate how, for example, their mother, stepmother or foster-mother made them feel. We therefore cannot tell which of these parental figures young people were evaluating. Nevertheless, overall, young people who had not experienced any family violence provided more positive accounts of their parents than did those who had been a victim of family violence. Furthermore, young people who had experienced violence from a family member were much more likely to say that their father made them feel sad compared to their mother. Thus, given the above finding and taking into account the research literature on the dynamics of domestic violence, it is plausible to assume that the majority of the domestic violence was perpetrated by a male adult against a female victim, who was most likely the respondent's mother. However, it is important to recognise that the majority of young people within each of the family compositions had no experience of family violence.

Ethnicity and religion

When ethnicity is taken into account a similar proportion of family violence was experienced across most groups: between 22 per cent and 24 per cent. However, a much higher percentage of young people from mixed ethnicity backgrounds (37 per cent, n=18) stated they had experienced violence. Although numbers are small, this does represent an important finding that would warrant further research. No significant association was found for religion.

Location

Incidence rates for family violence were unevenly distributed across the eight schools. Four schools within the sample significantly deviated from the average reporting level of 24 per cent ($x^2(7) = 15.691, p<.05$). Two schools (E4 and S2) reported higher incidence rates (34 per cent and 29 per cent respectively), while two schools (E3, S1) had significantly lower rates (18 per cent and 20 per cent respectively). Given the link

between social deprivation and domestic violence (Hird 2000), it may be assumed that schools with higher levels of family violence would be located in more disadvantaged areas. However, no such association was found within our analysis. Schools at both ends of the family violence incidence spectrum were in low and high areas of social deprivation. In addition, whether schools were in urban or rural settings was not associated with family violence.

Peer violence

We did not ask young people if they had ever used violence with their peers. It was felt that respondents had already been asked a range of sensitive questions about their own behaviour and we did not wish to overburden participants. We were, however, interested in measuring the level of intimidation and violence present in respondents' wider peer group relationships. It was decided that asking about their peers' behaviour, rather than their own, would be less intrusive for young participants. Previous US research has suggested a link exists between experiencing and perpetrating partner violence and having friends who routinely use intimidation and aggression against peers (Roscoe and Callahan 1985; Bookwala et al 1992; O'Keefe and Treister 1998; Arriaga and Foshee 2004).

Two survey questions sought to ascertain the level of peer violence within young people's lives. The first asked if their friends used aggression or abuse against their partners. Overall, nearly three-quarters of young people stated that their friends *did not* act in this way. A minority of 7 per cent (n=99) of young people, an equal number of boys and girls, stated that their friends did use aggression with their partners. In a third of cases respondents did not know if their friends used aggressive behaviour with their partners.

The second question looked at peer violence more widely and asked if their friends used aggression or intimidation against other young people. Again, the majority of young people stated their friends *did not* use aggression in this way. However, compared to the previous question, a higher affirmative response rate was found with 16 per cent (n=209) of young people, over double the proportion before, stating that their friends did use aggression against wider peers. Again, little difference was found

between male and female responses, although a much greater percentage of males (28 per cent) than females (18 per cent) reported that they were unaware if their friends acted in this way. Taking together both these areas of aggression, it seems that most young people do not believe their friends used aggression. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that many respondents did not know. This implies that young people are not necessarily aware of their friends' wider activities, especially in more deviant areas.

Ethnicity and religion

No significant associations were found between peer violence and ethnic group or religion, although some interesting observations are evident from data relating to violence against wider peers and ethnicity. Most white and minority ethnic young people reported relatively similar levels of peer intimidation. White participants reported the lowest level (15 per cent, n=146), followed by Asian (19 per cent, n=20) and black (20 per cent, n=10) young people. However, as with family violence, mixed ethnicity young people had a slightly increased incidence rate of 29 per cent (n=14). But numbers are small and we need to be cautious in making inferences from these statistics. Similar reporting levels for peer aggression were found across all religious categories. Only a single group, Muslim young people, reported a slightly increased level of peer aggression (26 per cent compared to an average rate of 16 per cent).

Age

For both forms of peer violence, as age increased so did reports of friends' use of aggression and intimidation. This is most evident in respect to aggression and intimidation against other young people. While one in 10 (n=14) 13-year-olds indicated that their friends used aggression or intimidation against their peers, this rose to nearly a quarter (22 per cent, n=64) of the 16 plus age group.

Location

Due to low reporting levels, friends' use of partner aggression cannot be looked at in relation to school location. However, incidence rates for wider peer violence were unevenly distributed across the eight schools. The average reporting rate for peer intimidation was 15 per cent; within this, individual schools ranged from 9 per cent to 24 per cent. These differences did not seem to be related to social deprivation, as schools at both ends of the peer violence spectrum were situated in disadvantaged

areas. This may reflect wider levels of bullying found in the schools, which in turn may reflect how violence and intimidation are viewed within young people's cultures more widely. Unfortunately, we did not collect information from schools on the incidence of bullying and cannot therefore make any further comparisons.

Family and peer violence

When reports of family violence and peer violence are compared, it is apparent that experiencing violence in one area is associated with an increased risk of aggression in another. While only 6 per cent (n=62) of young people who had *not* experienced family violence said that their friends used aggression with their partners, this rose to 13 per cent of those who had experienced family violence. Similarly, although 13 per cent (n=111) of those who had *not* experienced family violence reported they were aware that their friends used intimidation or aggression, this rose to nearly a third (30 per cent, n=85) of young people who had experienced family violence. This was a statistically significant difference (x^2 (2) = 47.666, p<.001).

Summary points

Family violence

- Thirteen per cent of girls and 9 per cent of boys experienced violence from an adult family member.
- Twenty per cent of girls and 10 per cent of boys experienced domestic violence.
- Overall 29 per cent of girls and 16 per cent of boys experienced some form of family violence.

Peer violence

- Seven per cent of the total sample, equal number of boys and girls, stated that their friends used aggression with their partners.
- Sixteen per cent of the total sample, equal number of boys and girls, reported that their friends used aggression with other peers.
- As age increased so did reports of peer aggression.

Family and peer violence

- Young people who experienced violence in the family were also more likely to state that their friends used violence.

Section 3: Young people's relationships

This section concentrates on findings relating to young people's own intimate relationships. Before the research was undertaken, researchers provided a clear explanation regarding the type of intimate relationships and encounters the survey questions focused on. The researchers stressed *that they* were interested in both long-term and more casual intimate relationships as well as one-off encounters, such as at a party. Thus, the survey covered all forms of intimate relationships or encounters the young people had *ever* experienced.

Overall, the vast majority of young people reported at least one relationship experience (88 per cent, n=1185). We wanted to know if young people who reported a relationship differed in any way from the 168 who had not. A range of factors were identified and a Chi-Squared test for non-parametric data was used to determine if any significant differences existed between the two groups.

Gender and age

No association was found between gender and the likelihood of ever having a relationship (89 per cent of girls compared with 86 per cent of boys). In contrast, a significant association was found between age and relationships (x^2 (3) = 14.910, p<.005). Thus, the likelihood of being in a relationship proportionally increased as the age of respondents increased, from 84 per cent of 13-year-olds to 91 per cent of those aged 15. However, and rather perplexingly, the oldest age group (16 years and over) was lower, with only 82 per cent reporting some form of a relationship – the lowest reporting level for all age groups. This trend remained constant for both boys and girls. It would be expected that as age increased so would the proportion of participants who had experienced some form of intimate relationship. We were unable to identify any associated factors that may have accounted for this disparity, such as ethnicity or religion (see below).

Ethnicity and religion

Ethnicity was significantly associated with a young person's probability of being in a relationship (x^2 (3) = 91.379, p<.001). The vast majority of white (92 per cent), mixed

ethnicity (91 per cent) and black (86 per cent) respondents reported experiencing a relationship. In comparison only two-thirds of Asian young people reported a relationship experience.

As would be expected given the above finding, religion was also associated with the likelihood of experiencing a relationship. Over 90 per cent of young people with no religion or who stated they were Christians reported a relationship. However, for all other religions relationship experiences were less frequent. Two-thirds of Sikh (n=57) and Hindu respondents, and 62 per cent (n=56) of Muslim young people, reported a relationship. As illustrated in the interview data, cultural and religious beliefs concerning the inappropriateness of relationships before marriage may explain these differences (see section 7).

Family violence

The probability of having experienced a relationship was significantly increased by exposure to family violence ($x^2(1) = 22.480$, $p<.001$). Young people who experienced family violence were nearly four times as likely to have had a relationship than those who had not. Additionally, those who had a history of family violence were more likely to have experienced a relationship at an earlier age than young people who had not. It may be that young people who have experienced family violence seek to compensate for these negative events through forming intimate relationships outside their families, perhaps from an early age. Thus, relationships may be perceived as a means to receive the support and care that may be absent from their family situations. Or the explanation may be more pragmatic: young people may seek to remove themselves from the family home through the formation of a relationship.

Disability

Having a disability did not alter a young person's probability of being in a relationship, with the majority of disabled young people (85 per cent, n=37) reporting a relationship experience.

Survey results for respondents who had been in a relationship

The remaining analysis in this section is undertaken only on the 1,185 respondents who reported some form of a relationship.

Young people's partners

The majority of young people (96 per cent) had partners only of the opposite sex. Fifty respondents, 21 females and 29 males, reported a same-sex partner. Most male respondents (59 per cent) stated that their partners had either been the same age as them or younger. For boys, age of partner was unrelated to respondent's age. Similarly, the majority of boys within each ethnic group, except one, reported a relationship with a same-age partner. However, only 44 per cent (n=12) of black boys had a same-age partner, while 30 per cent, the highest rate for any group, reported an older partner. We also wanted to know if experiencing violence within the family was associated with a respondent's choice of partner. Boys who had a history of family violence were more likely to report a younger partner (27 per cent) than were boys with no history of violence (16 per cent), and were slightly less likely to have a same-age partner. This association was significant (x^2 (2) = 9.170, p<.05). Perhaps boys who experience family violence are more likely to choose a partner who, due to the age differential, is less likely to challenge their authority within the relationship and thereby reduce the possibility of conflict.

In contrast, the majority of female respondents reported having an older partner (58 per cent), with 11 per cent of partners (n=68) being "much older". We did not ask young people in the questionnaire to state the actual age of all their partners, so we do not know how respondents have assessed "much older". As female respondents' age increased so did their likelihood of having an older partner. Just under half (47 per cent) of 13-year-old girls had an older partner, increasing to 66 per cent of 15-year-olds and 60 per cent of 16-year-olds. Only a minority of each age group reported a younger partner, ranging from 3 per cent of 13-year-olds to 7 per cent of those aged 16 years and over. For girls, ethnic group was not significantly associated with age of partner, although Asian girls were less likely than any other groups to have an older partner (41 per cent compared to an average of 60 per cent).

A significant association was found between the age of a girl's partner and experience of family violence (x^2 (2) = 8.610, p<.05), but differently to boys. While 56 per cent (n=222) of girls who had not experienced family violence reported having an older partner, this proportion increased to 69 per cent (n=126) for girls who reported family violence. We have already seen that girls who experience family violence often entered into intimate relationships at an earlier age than those who had not. The interview findings show that girls frequently stated that boys of their own age were uninterested in a serious relationship and wanted only sexual contact rather than emotional intimacy. However, older boys were considered more emotionally mature (see section 7). This may mean that girls who are seeking emotional support, due to negative family experiences, may perceive an older male partner as being more able to provide this within the relationship. Nevertheless, in reality, what was occurring for both boys and girls was the recreation of a gendered power dynamic exaggerated by the age disparity.

Within the survey we also wanted to know how, in general, young people felt about the relationships they had experienced. Thus, young people were asked to rate how their partners made them feel from one to five. We then categorised their answers for analysis into "happy", "neutral" and "sad". The vast majority of young people said that their partners made them feel happy. Again this was significantly associated with gender (x^2 (2) =12.156, p<.005). Interestingly, more boys (82 per cent) than girls (76 per cent) felt that their partner made them happy. Slightly more girls than boys (18 per cent compared to 15 per cent) gave a neutral rating and 6 per cent of girls compared to 2 per cent of boys stated that their partners made them feel sad. Looking at the age of partner and relationship evaluations, a worrying trend became apparent for girls. As the age difference between partners increased so did girls' negative evaluations of their relationships. However, no such association was found with boys and age of their partners.

Young people with same-sex partners

Respondents were asked if their partners had been male or female. We did not ask young people to define their sexual orientation as, for example, heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual. It was felt that young people may not necessarily identify with these definitions and may still be exploring and questioning their sexual identity. In

addition, given the high prevalence of homophobia in young people's cultures (Rivers and Cowie 2006; Rivers and Noret 2008), this seemed the most discreet way to ask this question, given that young people may not be "out" at school. Also, it was felt that using the above terminology may have encouraged some young people to respond in a homophobic manner. Nevertheless, researchers still experienced several young men making homophobic comments to this question. However, we believe this would have been a greater problem if more explicit language had been used.

Fifty young people, 21 females and 29 males, reported a same-sex partner. Twenty-five boys had only male partners and four boys reported both male and female partners. Fifteen girls had only female partners and six reported both. Thus, 40 young people reported only having a partner of the same sex, while 10 respondents had both male and female partners. For these 10 young people we do not know if their responses regarding their partners' behaviour relates to their male or female partners. Most respondents with same-sex partners were aged over 15 years (74 per cent). A higher proportion of respondents with same-sex partners indicated that their partners were older (54 per cent compared with 38 per cent of young people with opposite-sex partners). For boys this is a distinct difference to those with female partners, who mostly had same-age or younger partners. Slightly fewer respondents with same-sex partners stated that their partner made them feel good (72 per cent compared with 79 per cent for the general sample).

Those with same-sex partners were also more likely to have experienced some form of family violence (x^2 (1) = 8.024, p<.005). While a quarter (24 per cent) of respondents with opposite-sex partners reported family violence, this increased to 42 per cent for same-sex partners. Similarly, although 16 per cent of young people with opposite-sex partners commented that their friends used intimidation, the equivalent proportion for same-sex respondents was 25 per cent, although this difference was not statistically significant. However, it is not known if these young people's families or friends were aware they had a same-sex partner. It is also important to note that we do not know if the wider violence was experienced before or after these young people had a same-sex relationship, and possibly, as a direct reaction to their choice of a same-sex partner.

Summary points

- Overall 88 per cent of young people reported some form of an intimate relationship.
- A lower percentage of Asian young people had been in an intimate relationship.
- Young people with experience of family violence were more likely to have experienced a relationship, and more likely to have experienced one at an earlier age than young people with no history of family violence.
- Boys' partners were generally either the same age or slightly younger than them.
- Girl's partners were generally older; a minority had a "much older" partner.
- Girls with a history of family violence had an increased likelihood of having an older partner.
- For girls, as the age of their partner increased so did their negative evaluations concerning their relationships.
- Four per cent of respondents reported a same-sex partner.
- Young people with a same-sex partner were more likely to have experienced family violence than had young people with an opposite-sex partner.

Section 4: Recipients of teenage partner violence

This section looks at young people's experiences of physical, emotional and sexual violence within their relationships. All analysis is undertaken only on young people who reported a relationship experience. Thus, when viewing the findings, especially incidence rates, it is important to remember that young people who have not had a relationship, and therefore cannot have experienced any violence, are excluded.

Physical partner violence

Incidence rates

We used two questions in the survey to determine the incidence of physical partner violence. We firstly asked respondents if any of their partners had ever used physical force, such as "pushing, slapping, hitting or holding you down" (see table 3). Disconcertingly, overall, a quarter (n=150) of girls, reported some form of physical violence from a partner. In comparison, slightly fewer boys (18 per cent, n=100) stated their partner had been physically violent towards them. However, girls were also much more likely to report that the physical violence had occurred more than once, indicating that for girls this may represent a more established pattern of victimisation than is experienced by boys.

Table 3 Have any of your partners ever used physical force such as pushing, slapping, hitting or holding you down?

	No	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	450	47	84	15	4
Male	472	36	54	5	5
Total	**922**	**83**	**138**	**20**	**9**
	79%	7%	12%	2%	1%

Respondents were then asked if their partners had ever used any *more severe* physical force such as "punching, strangling, beating you up, hitting you with an object". It is important to note that we do not know how young people determined if their experiences constituted severe violence. Consequently, one young person's evaluation of severity may be very different to another's.

Fewer young people reported this level of physical violence. Overall 8 per cent (n=90) intimated severe physical violence (see table 4). Worryingly, *one in nine* girls (11 per cent) claimed some form of severe physical violence from a partner. In comparison, only 4 per cent of boys stated they had experienced severe physical partner violence. In addition, girls were three times as likely as boys to have experienced repeated severe violence from their partners.

Table 4 Have any of your partners ever used any more severe physical force such as punching, strangling, beating you up or hitting you with an object?

	No	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	529	38	24	3	1
Male	547	14	7	1	2
Total	**1,076**	**52**	**31**	**4**	**3**
	92%	5%	3%	–	–

A minority of young people had experienced only severe physical violence and not reported lower forms. Thus, for statistical analysis both categories of physical partner violence were combined into one mutually exclusive category. In addition, the range of answers was reduced to "had" or "had not" experienced physical partner violence. Unsurprisingly, given the above findings, a significant association was found between gender and being a recipient of physical violence from a partner (x^2 (1) =9.381, p<.005).

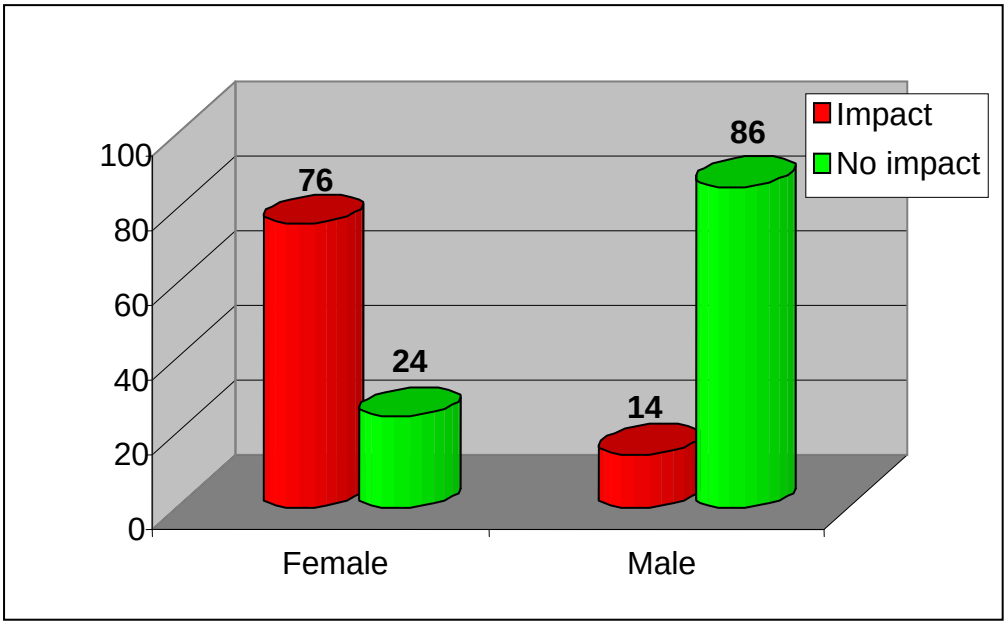
The incidence rates for physical violence found within our research are comparable to those found within US research, where between a third and a half of both female and male teenage respondents, reported physical aggression (O'Keefe et al 1986; Foshee 1996; Williams and Martinez 1999; Halpern et al 2001; Hickman et al 2004). Our reported incidence rate for boys is substantially lower than that found within the majority of US studies. However, our findings reflect previous research that has clearly demonstrated that girls generally suffer more severe forms of physical violence (Gamache 1991; Foshee 1996; Arriaga and Foshee 2004; Jackson et al 2000). According to Wolfe et al (2001b), this makes physical violence a common event in the lives of adolescents, rather than an isolated problem.

Impact of violence

Although it is important to know how frequently young people experience violence, unless we also understand what impact this has on them we are unable to develop an appropriate response. We therefore asked young people to select from a list of options how the violence made them feel. We grouped responses into two categories for analysis: "negative impact" and "no impact". The "negative impact" responses included scared/frightened, angry/annoyed, humiliated and upset/unhappy. No impact responses consisted of loved/ protected, no effect and thought it was funny. Young people were asked to select all that applied, thus respondents' answers can be present within both categories.

An overwhelming gender division emerged from young people's replies (see figure 6). Over three-quarters of girls (n=115) who experienced physical violence emphasised that it had a negative impact on them. This compares to just 14 per cent (n=15) of boys. Thus, and in direct contrast to girls, 86 per cent of boys stated the violence had no impact. All 11 per cent of girls who reported severe physical violence perceived a negative impact. Furthermore, not only did the majority of girls report a detrimental impact, but also most identified more than one negative impact on their wellbeing. The most commonly reported effects were to feel scared/frightened and/or upset/unhappy.

Figure 6 Impact of physical partner violence by gender (per cent)



Physical violence dynamics

We asked young people to report how many relationships had contained physical violence. In two-thirds of cases, girls and boys both expressed that the physical violence had occurred in only one of their relationships; a third reported the violence happened in a few. Only a minority of girls (n=5) and boys (n=8) replied that it happened in many or all of their relationships.

We were also interested in finding out if the violence young people experienced changed over time. We therefore asked if the behaviours stopped, stayed the same or got worse. With regards to the behaviour stopping, we do not know if this was due to the relationship ending or a discontinuation of the behaviour itself. Again, gender divisions emerged in young people's responses. The violence stopped for the majority of boys (61 per cent), this percentage being lower for girls at only 42 per cent. For girls, the violence was much more likely to stay the same (38 per cent) and, for one in five, it escalated. A third of boys reported the violence remaining the same and only six said it increased. We did not ask young people if they ended the relationship because of the violence. If the violence stayed the same or increased, it is probable that the young person had remained with their partner (although we recognise that the violence may have continued after the relationship ended – see the interview findings in section 7). We can extrapolate from these figures that the majority of girls remained within a relationship after the violence occurred, reinforcing previous research findings (Sugarman and Hotaling 1989; Bergman 1992; Jackson et al 2000). This has led commentators to conclude that, although physical violence is associated with emotional trauma and fear, in itself it is insufficient to terminate a relationship (Henton et al 1983; Roscoe and Callahan 1985). It may be that a girl's desire to have a boyfriend and the social acceptance this brings outweigh their desire to leave violent partners (Hird and Jackson 2001; Banister et al 2003). These issues are explored further in section 7.

When incidence rates for physical partner violence are looked at in relation to impact, it is clear that for girls physical violence from a partner represents a significant social problem, which impacts on their wellbeing. However, boys' evaluations concerning the impact of physical partner violence are very different. Due to discourses surrounding "hard" masculinities (Frosh et al 2002), it may be argued that it is especially difficult for

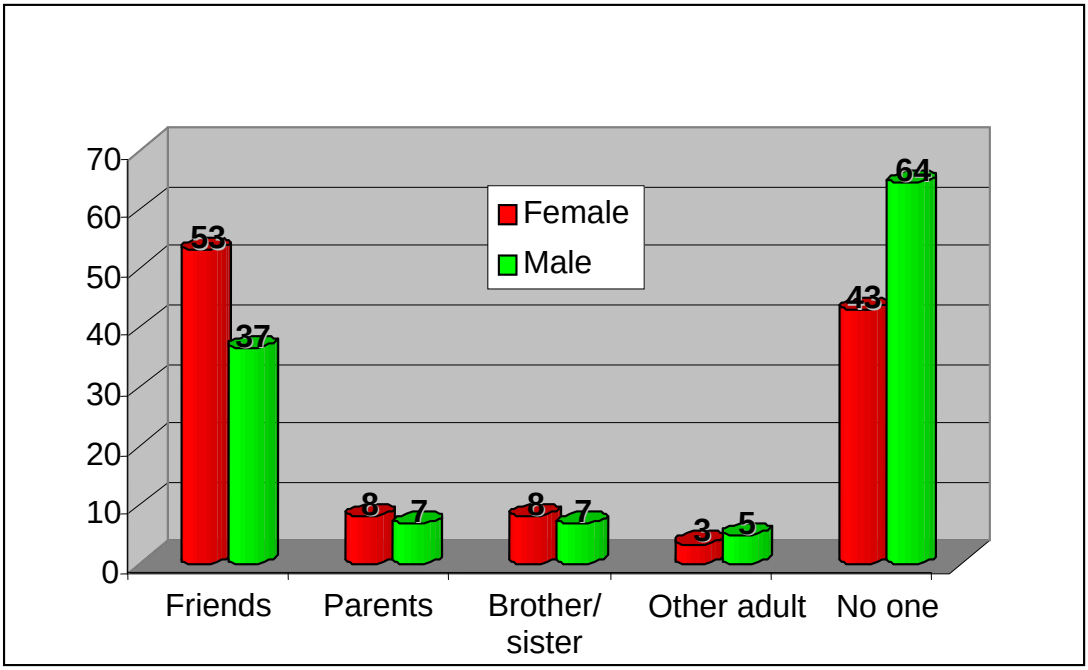
boys to acknowledge that violence, and perhaps especially violence from a female partner, has negatively affected them. Boys may be forced to hide their vulnerability due to their perceived need to adhere to a hegemonic masculinity where feelings, especially vulnerability, are restricted to female, and therefore inferior, traits.

However, if this were true it would seem inconsistent to admit to being a victim of physical violence but then to deny any impact. It would perhaps be more coherent to deny both, especially as violence may itself imply a certain lack of control over a girlfriend, something that again would be inconsistent with a hegemonic masculinity. This issue is looked at in greater depth in the interview findings (see section 7), although little evidence is present to support a hidden impact theory. In addition, interview data in this area is supplemented by discussions from the young people's advisory group, which provide important insights into this debate.

Help-seeking

We asked young people who reported physical violence if they had told anyone what had happened. A similar pattern for help-seeking emerged for all young people irrespective of gender, age or ethnic group. Interestingly, the most frequent, indeed only, source of advice and support accessed by young people was friends (see figure 7). More girls (54 per cent, n=85) than boys (34 per cent, n=37) sought help from a friend. Perhaps for boys this reflected that they had not reported any negative impact from their experience. It may also indicate a more general pattern concerning the "boundaries" of male peer friendships, discussed in the interview data. All forms of adult support were used very infrequently: only 8 per cent of girls and 7 per cent of boys told a parent or carer. Similar proportions informed a sibling. Thus, the majority of young people did not feel able to speak to their families, including parents, about this very important issue. Only seven girls and four boys told an adult who was not a parent or carer. As we shall see, this pattern of help-seeking is repeated for each form of partner violence experienced by young people. Previous research also shows the reluctance of young people to approach adults for assistance in this area (Western Australia Crime Research Centre 2001; Watson et al 2001; Ocampo et al 2007). It is of great concern that the vast majority of young people feel unable or are unwilling to talk with their parents or other adults about these very important issues.

Figure 7 Who young people told about physical partner violence (per cent)



Associated factors for experiencing physical partner violence

Having identified the incidence rates for physical violence in young people's relationships, our analysis moved on to consider which associated factors may help us to understand if any groups are particularly vulnerable to experiencing this form of victimisation. It is important to remember that the presence of such factors in the lives of young people does not necessarily mean that they will experience partner violence. Their presence does however indicate that these young people may be more vulnerable to violence. If and how these associated factors increase susceptibility to violence is mediated through, among other factors, young people's own actions and perceptions. The interview data provides important insights into these processes (see section 7).

Age

It may be presumed that, in general terms, as a respondent's age increased so did their level of relationship experiences: this would be reflected, due to a cumulative effect, in the incidence rates for violence. However, as we shall see, this assumption does not hold true for all forms of teenage partner violence. Thus, although age was significantly associated with physical partner violence for boys (x^2 (3) = 11.230, $p<.05$), it was not for girls. Boys' experiences of physical violence generally

increased as age increased, peaking at the 16 years and over age group, with 28 per cent of this group reporting physical victimisation. In contrast, incidence rates for girls were more evenly spread across the age range, from 21 per cent for 13-year-olds to 26 per cent of girls aged 16 and over. Consequently, girls as young as 13 were as likely as those aged 16 to have experienced physical violence from their partners. Indeed, looking specifically at only severe forms of partner violence, 13-year-old girls were slightly more likely than any other age group to report experiencing severe violence. This finding is difficult to explain given that, if a 13-year-old girl reported severe violence, this should also (if girls are answering in relation to *all* their experiences) be included in the responses of older participants. There are a number of possible explanations for this incongruity. Maybe older girls are failing to report experiences that occurred a few years earlier and are restricting their responses to more recent relationships. Another possibility is that as girls get older they redefine previous incidents of violence as being less severe. Or it may be that this youngest age range did experience severe violence at 13 while older participants did not.

Whatever the explanation for this discrepancy, it is of grave concern that girls this young are experiencing violent relationships, something their younger male equivalents appear protected from. This gender divide may reflect the fact that the girls are more likely to enter into more serious forms of relationships at an earlier age compared to boys, often with an older partner. Some of the associated factors that may help to illuminate this difference are explored next.

Age of partner

Having an older partner was a significant risk factor for experiencing physical partner violence (x^2 (3) = 35.841, p<.001). A distinct gendered pattern emerges when we look more closely at age of partners and physical violence. We have already reported that girls were much more likely to have an older partner than were boys. However, when we look at age of partner and girls' exposure to physical partner violence, a worrying association becomes evident. Using both levels of physical violence combined, 14 per cent (n=29) of girls with a same-age partner, 23 per cent (n=64) with a slightly older partner and 70 per cent (n=47) of girls who had a much older partner reported physical violence. Taking just the severe level of physical violence, no girls with a younger partner and only 6 per cent of girls with a same-age partner experienced

severe physical violence. This proportionally increases to 16 per cent for girls with an older partner. Therefore, *over two-thirds* of girls with a much older partner experienced physical violence, while nearly one-fifth also experienced severe violence. As previously stated, we do not know how girls assessed their partner's age as being "much older". As boys aged 16 and over generally reported their partner as being the same age or younger, we can assume, at least in relation to the older girls in the sample, that many of these "much older" male partners were past compulsory school age. Thus, girls with older partners seem particularly vulnerable to physical violence in their relationships. Moreover, girls with "much older" partners are *more likely* than not to experience physical violence. In contrast, boys' vulnerability to physical violence seems to be the reverse. Over a third of boys with a slightly younger partner reported being a victim of physical violence; this reduced to around 12 per cent for both same-age and slightly older partners.

Ethnicity and religion

Although statistically ethnic group was not associated with physical partner violence, some noteworthy distinctions did emerge in relation to ethnicity and gender. As numbers are small, caution needs to be shown in making any generalisations. Black girls reported a lower rate of physical victimisation (9 per cent) than any other group, where comparative incidence levels were around 25 per cent. Conversely, incidence rates for boys reflected a different pattern as black and Asian male respondents were most likely to report victimisation. In contrast, although religion was not significantly associated with physical victimisation for girls, it was for boys (x^2 (3) = 13.529, p<.005). Most girls, irrespective of religion, reported similar levels of violence. The average reporting levels for boys was 17 per cent. Two religious groups, Muslims (39 per cent, n=12) and Sikhs (24 per cent, n=8), reported increased rates of physical victimisation. Due to survey limitations, we did not ask participants to define their partner's ethnicity or religion. It is therefore not possible to fully comprehend how these tentative patterns surrounding ethnicity and religion are experienced. However, insights were gained through young people's interviews, which allowed a more detailed understanding to emerge (see section 7).

Family and peer violence

The vast majority of young people (83 per cent) who had not experienced family violence also reported no experience of physical partner victimisation. In comparison, 36 per cent of young people who had experienced family violence also reported experiencing physical partner violence, which represents a significant difference (x^2 (1) = 46.921, p<.001). We then wanted to investigate if severe physical partner violence was also disproportionally experienced by those who reported family violence. While 5 per cent of respondents who had no history of family violence experienced severe partner violence, this increased to 16 per cent for those with a history of family maltreatment. In addition, young people with experience of family violence were also more likely to experience physical partner violence on a more frequent basis than young people who had no history of violence from a family adult. Previous research has clearly identified that family violence represents a significant risk factor for partner violence victimisation within teenage relationships (Foshee et al 2005; Wolf and Foshee 2003; Cyr et al 2006). Although explanations concerning this association differ within the US literature, many commentators use theories based on the intergenerational transmission of violence: in essence arguing that children and young people who are exposed to family violence will themselves repeat these experiences within their own relationships. Further elaborations surround the process of "normalisation" of violence and the acceptance of such behaviours by young people as a normative aspect of all intimate relationships.

Although these theoretical concepts provide some level of insight into this complex phenomenon, they cannot in isolation explain how these factors are associated (Barter 2009). We should not presume that all young people see violence as a normative experience or that they seek to recreate their parents' violent relationships. Research on young people's experiences of domestic violence clearly shows that many children and young people do not view their experiences in this way (McGee 2000; Mullender et al 2002; Humphreys and Stanley 2006). Similarly, in the interviews girls rarely stated that they viewed their experiences of domestic violence as acceptable or a normal aspect of intimate relationships. Many provided more complex explanations regarding how family violence had impacted on their subsequent experiences of partner violence (see section 7).

Looking at peer violence, a significant association was also found between having friends who use intimidation and respondents' experiences of physical victimisation (x^2 (2) = 40.258, p<.001). While 81 per cent (n=569) of respondents whose friends did not use intimidation also did not report physical partner violence, this decreased to 60 per cent (n=115) for young people whose peers used intimidation. In addition, the incidence of severe violence also increased for respondents with aggressive peers, from 6 per cent (n=43) to 17 per cent (n=32). As with family violence, respondents whose friends used intimidation were also more likely to report that the victimisation occurred more frequently. Thus, young people with peer groups characterised by the use of intimidation were more susceptible to being victimised in their intimate relationships. This may perhaps be due to teenagers frequently forming intimate relationships with young people who they already knew or whom they met through their wider peer networks.

Location

A significant association was found between school sites and incidence levels for physical violence (x^2 (7) = 46.802, p<.001). Three schools (E2, E3 and S1) demonstrated a significantly lower reporting level for physical violence compared to other schools in the sample. Incidence rates in these schools ranged from 4 per cent to 14 per cent, compared with an average rate of 21 per cent. Interestingly, both of the schools within the most deprived areas were located within this group. So, children from very disadvantaged areas seemed to hold no greater risk of experiencing physical violence than those from less deprived areas. This finding is contrary to previous UK research, which identifies social deprivation or "class" as representing a significant risk factor for teenage physical partner violence (Hird 2000). It may be that our gauge, based on free schools meals, is too rudimentary. We did not ask young people directly about their parents' social class. This was due to the complexities of gaining an accurate reflection of social class from young people and the extensive range of questions required (Cawson et al 2000). Thus, levels of social deprivation in individual schools may differ substantially, and such variations would not be reflected in our analysis. Alternatively, it may be that social disadvantage is not directly linked to physical partner violence.

Same-sex partner

Having a same-sex partner significantly increased the risk of experiencing physical partner violence (x^2 (1) = 14.561, p<.001). While one in five (n=229) young people with opposite-sex partners reported some form of physical partner violence, this proportion doubled to 44 per cent (n=21) for participants with same-sex partners. The question exploring only the most severe forms of physical violence showed an even greater proportional difference between the two groups. Whereas 7 per cent (n=78) of participants with opposite-sex partners experienced severe physical violence, this increased to nearly a quarter (23 per cent, n=11) of young people with same-sex partners. A slightly higher percentage of young people with same-sex partners (57 per cent) reported being negatively affected by the violence compared to young people with heterosexual partners (48 per cent), this not being a statistically significant difference. Although the numbers of respondents with a same-sex partner are small, these findings do indicate an apparent heightened risk of physical victimisation within teenage same-sex relationships. Little research addresses this area of victimisation. However, UK work by Donovan et al (2006) on domestic violence and adults with a same-sex partner showed that 40 per cent had experienced some form of physical violence from their partner, and that adults under the age of 25 were most likely to report physical partner violence.

Disability

A slightly higher percentage of disabled young people (28 per cent, n=10) than non-disabled young people (21 per cent, n=239) reported physical violence from their partner, although this was not statistically significant.

Summary points

- Twenty-five per cent of girls and 18 per cent of boys reported some form of physical partner violence.
- Eleven per cent of girls and 4 per cent of boys reported severe physical violence.
- Seventy-six per cent of girls and 14 per cent of boys stated that the physical violence had negatively impacted on their wellbeing.
- Girls were more likely to say that the physical violence was repeated and also that it either remained at the same level or worsened.

- The majority of young people either told a friend or told no one about the violence; only a minority informed an adult.
- Boys' vulnerability to physical violence increased as they became older; in contrast, girls' exposure to violent victimisation was not associated with their age.
- Having an older partner, especially a "much older" partner, was a risk factor for girls.
- Experiences of family violence and wider peer intimidation were risk factors associated with physical partner violence for both girls and boys.
- Young people with a same-sex partner were more likely to report physical violence than were those in heterosexual relationships.

Emotional partner violence

Emotional forms of violence are possibly the most difficult to ascertain, due to the wide range of behaviours that may constitute victimisation. Stark (2007), based on his research with adults, argues that what he terms "coercive control" is the most prevalent form of domestic violence, as it underpins both physical and sexual forms of intimate violence, but is often the most hidden form of abuse. Stark argues that this is due to the individualised form this abuse takes, with perpetrators targeting specific behaviour at their victims, which becomes meaningful only when placed within the wider context of an abusive history.

Consequently, the complexity of emotional violence and the wide range of behaviours that can constitute it, make it difficult to adequately determine in a survey. On reviewing previous research in the area, and following advice from both our advisory groups, eight questions were used in our survey to ascertain the prevalence of this form of violence in young people's relationships. Each of the eight questions was designed to assess a particular aspect of emotional violence: from harming a young person's self-esteem through ridiculing them, making negative remarks and surveillance, to controlling behaviour, including using threats of violence (see table 5).

The survey questions on emotional violence account for the highest number of missed responses from young people (n=187). All eight questions demonstrated a very

similar non-response rate (on average 2 per cent): young people were not systematically declining to respond to any specific question.

Table 5 Young people's experiences of emotional violence

Have any of your partners ever?	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time	Total
Made fun of you	315	90	159	21	12	597
Girls	(53%)	(15%)	(27%)	(4%)	(2%)	(100%)
Boys	397 (70%)	60 (11%)	87 (15%)	16 (3%)	7 (1%)	567 (100%)
Shouted at you/screamed in your face/called you hurtful names	378	83	109	19	5	594
Girls	(64%)	(14%)	(18%)	(3%)	(1%)	(100%)
Boys	449 (79%)	54 (9.5%)	54 (9.5%)	7 (1%)	5 (1%)	569 (100%)
Said negative things about your appearance/body/friends/family	385	87	103	19	3	597
Girls	(64%)	(15%)	(17%)	(3%)	(1%)	(100%)
Boys	478 (85%)	44 (8%)	31 (5%)	6 (1%)	5 (1%)	564 (100%)
Threatened to hurt you physically unless you did what they wanted	525	38	22	5	2	592
Girls	(89%)	(6%)	(4%)	(1%)	(-)	(100%)
Boys	546 (96%)	14 (3%)	6 (1%)	1 (-)	2 (-)	569 (100%)
Told you who you could see and where you could go	417	59	77	29	15	597
Girls	(70%)	(10%)	(13%)	(5%)	(3%)	(100%)
Boys	493 (87%)	30 (5%)	26 (5%)	7 (1%)	11 (2%)	567 (100%)
Constantly checked up on what you were doing, eg by phone or texts	344	67	116	49	22	598
Girls	(58%)	(11%)	(19%)	(8%)	(4%)	(100%)
Boys	401 (71%)	45 (8%)	73 (13%)	30 (5%)	19 (3%)	568 (100%)
Used private information to make you do something	539	37	17	1	0	594
Girls	(91%	(6%)	(3%)	(-)		(100%)
Boys	537 (94%)	17 (3%)	12 (2%)	2 (-)	1 (-)	569 (100%)
Used mobile phones or the internet to humiliate or threaten you	528	42	28	1	0	599
Girls	(88%)	(7%)	(5%)	(-)		(100%)
Boys	546 (96%)	14 (2%)	5 (1%)	1 (-)	3 (-)	569 (100%)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Responses to all eight questions were combined to provide an overall incidence rate for emotional violence. This showed that three-quarters of girls (n=428) and half of boys (n=289) experienced some kind of emotional violence from their partner, a statistically significant gender difference (x^2 (1) = 50.662, p<.001). It is important to remember that the above figures include behaviours that occurred only once, such as being shouted at or made fun of. Consequently, such isolated acts may not be viewed by young people as constituting a problem. This observation is upheld within our analysis concerning the impact of the emotional violence, which is presented later in this section. Nevertheless, when young people's responses were compared across the range of questions, it became apparent that young people did not usually experience one aspect of emotional violence in isolation. Most commonly, young people who experienced emotional violence reported experiencing between two and three aspects. However, girls generally reported experiencing more forms of emotional violence than did boys. The very high incidence rate for emotional violence found within our research reflects previous findings in this area (Bergman 1992; Jezl et al 1996; Hird 2000; Halpern et al 2001; Collin-Vézina 2006; Sears et al 2006; Sears et al 2007). Some studies have identified rates as high as 90 per cent (Jezl et al 1996).

By examining responses to the questions individually, a gender divide became more apparent. For each of the eight components of emotional violence, a higher proportion of girls than boys reported victimisation. However, looking at which types of emotional violence young people were most likely to experience, a similar pattern emerged for both girls and boys. The most commonly experienced form of emotional violence, irrespective of gender, was being made fun of: nearly half (47 per cent) of girls and a third (30 per cent) of boys reported this. The second most frequently reported behaviour was constantly being checked up on by partners: 42 per cent of girls and 29 per cent of boys divulged this form of control. However, analysis of overt forms of controlling behaviour, determined by asking young people if their partners ever told them whom they could see and where they could go, produced a more distinct gender divide. A third of girls reported experiencing this, compared to just over one in eight boys (13 per cent). Similarly, more direct forms of emotional violence were also more prominent for girls. Just over a third of girls (36 per cent) reported their partners had shouted at them, screamed in their face or called them hurtful names. A similar proportion of girls (35 per cent) also stated that their partners

said negative things about their appearance, body, friends or family. In comparison, one in five boys reported being shouted at and only 15 per cent experienced negative comments about themselves or their families. Less prevalent forms of violence involved the use of new technologies. Overall, 12 per cent of girls and 4 per cent of boys said that their partners had used mobile phones or the internet to humiliate and threaten them. The low response rate to this question was surprising when viewed in the context of our interview findings. Many girls stated that online communication technologies were an important component of teenage relationships generally. However, for those young people who were in a violent relationship, such technologies provided an extra mechanism by which partners could exert control (see section 7). It may be that the survey question was worded too imprecisely and, therefore, did not adequately capture the subtle ways in which new technologies are used by partners to control and manipulate.

Emotional violence also included the use of threats to intimidate partners, although girls were more often the recipients of such tactics than were boys. One in 11 girls (9 per cent) and 6 per cent of boys stated that their partners had threatened to use personal information to make them do things against their wishes. However, the gender discrepancy increased when threats concerned physical violence: 11 per cent of girls and 4 per cent of boys reported being physically threatened by a partner unless they did what they wanted.

Thus, we can see that girls are more likely to experience emotional violence than are boys, more frequently experience more than one form of emotional violence, and are more likely to experience direct intimidation and control. This gender distinction continues when we observe repeat victimisation. A third of girls stated they had been made fun of at least a few times, and a similar proportion alleged their partners frequently checked up on what they were doing. Around one in five girls reported that partners often shouted at them, said negative things about them or their families, and/or told them whom they could see or where they could go. Boys also reported behaviours occurring repeatedly, although at a much more reduced rate. Primarily, only two forms of emotional violence were experienced with any frequency by boys. A fifth of boys (21 per cent) stated that their partners had frequently checked up on their movements by phone or text, and a similar proportion (19 per cent) said they had

been made fun of more than once. For all other aspects of emotional violence, only a very small minority of male respondents reported repeat victimisation. A few previous studies have also identified girls' increased reports of more severe forms of emotional violence. For example, Sanders (2003) looked at behaviours deemed controlling and isolating and found that nearly a quarter of her sample of girls experienced what she terms "severe emotional violence".

Impact

As discussed earlier in this section it may be that some forms of emotional violence, if experienced in isolation, may have minimal impact on young people's wellbeing. This contention is partly upheld by our analysis, where 69 per cent (n=379) of girls and nearly all boys (94 per cent, n=471), who experienced emotional violence stated that it had *no* impact. If we compare this result to the impact of physical violence, and indeed later in relation to sexual violence, this represents the only form of partner violence where the majority of recipients, irrespective of gender, considered it had no effect on their welfare. Young participants who stated a negative impact (n=202) were more likely to report more forms of emotional violence, which occurred with greater regularity, than young people who were unaffected.

Only 6 per cent of boys, compared to a third of girls, claimed that they were negatively affected by the emotional violence they experienced. This gendered impact disparity upholds Stark's (2007) contention that coercive control, which many of our components of emotional violence reflect, is made meaningful only when placed within a gendered power understanding of intimate violence. Thus, although girls had used emotional violence, without it being underpinned by other forms of inequality and power, their attempts were rendered largely ineffectual.

Emotional violence dynamics

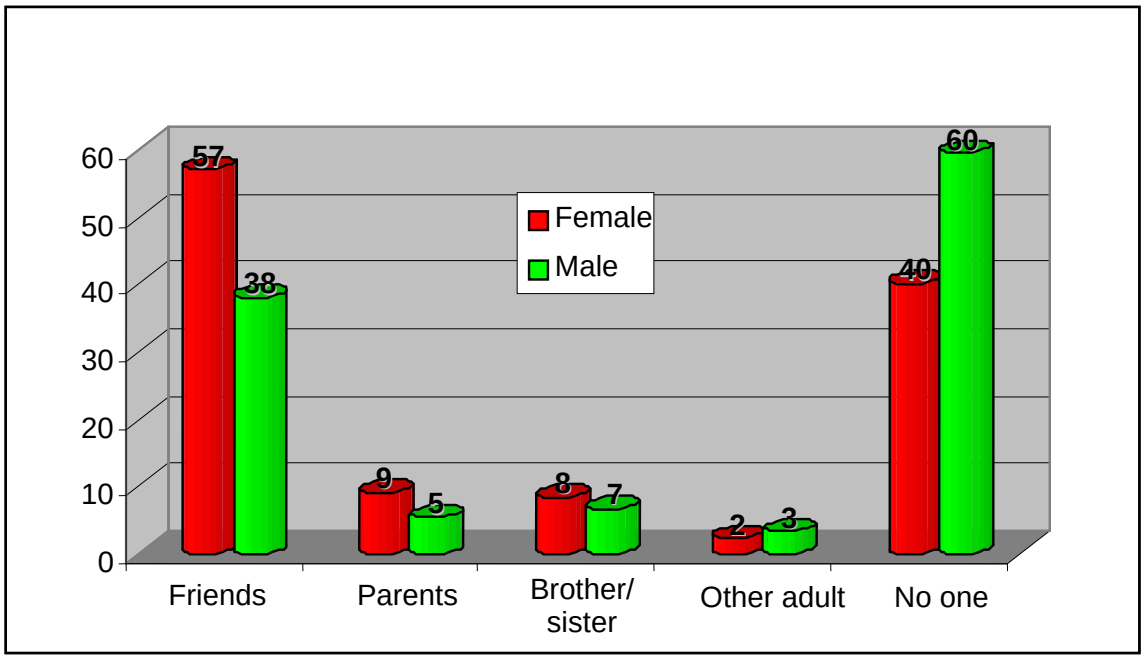
Reflecting the findings for physical violence, the majority of girls (n=251) and boys (n=159) stated that they had experienced emotional violence in only a single relationship. Nevertheless, roughly a third of girls (n=129) and a similar proportion of boys (n=68) who experienced emotional violence divulged that this had occurred in a few relationships.

However, a more prominent gender divide occurred with regards to how the violence changed over time. Again this reflects the earlier findings concerning physical partner violence. For two-thirds of boys the violence quickly stopped, but only half of the girls reported this. Where the violence did not stop, most boys stated it remained the same. In contrast, girls were as likely to report that the emotional violence either remained at the same level (43 per cent) or increased (6 per cent).

Help-seeking

Compared to other forms of partner violence, a greater proportion of young people told someone about the emotional victimisation (see figure 8). Again, peers were the most prominent source of assistance: 57 per cent of girls (n=220) and 38 per cent of boys (n=89) told a friend. All other forms of support were used infrequently.

Figure 8 Who young people told about emotional violence (per cent)



Associated factors for experiencing emotional partner violence

Age

Age was significantly associated with experiencing emotional violence both for girls (x^2 (3) = 18.162, p<.001) and for boys (x (3) = 19.420, p<.001). For all young people, as age increased so did the likelihood of having experienced emotional violence.

However, some gender distinctions were present. For girls, incidence levels increased as girls became older, from 57 per cent at 13 years old to a peak of 80 per cent at 15, but then dropped slightly to 65 per cent for 16 years old and over. As with severe physical violence, it is not possible to say with any certainty why this decrease occurred, although the previous suppositions are applicable. In comparison, younger boys (aged 13 and 14 years old) reported lower incidence rates than did younger girls (on average 42 per cent), which increased to half of all 15 year olds. However, for the oldest age range (16 years and over), boys reported an increased incidence rate of 68 per cent. This represents the highest rate for of any age group, irrespective of gender.

Ethnicity and religion

No association was found between experiencing emotional violence and ethnic group or religion for boys or girls. Interestingly, only half of Muslim girls reported emotional abuse compared to an average incidence rate of 71 per cent.

Age of partner

Age of partner was significantly associated with experiencing emotional violence for girls (x^2 (2) = 34.132, p<.001) and boys (x^2 (2) = 17.064, p<.001), although for opposite reasons. Three-quarters (n=20) of girls with a younger partner and 58 per cent (n=114) with same-age partners reported emotional violence. Four-fifths (n=232) of female respondents with an older partner experienced emotional violence. In addition, girls with an older partner were more likely to experience multiple forms of emotional abuse, and to experience them more often, than those with a younger or same-age partner. When the above findings are linked to impact, it becomes apparent that negative impacts for girls are more often associated with older partners.

In contrast, for boys, having a younger partner was associated with the highest risk of experiencing emotional violence. Over three-quarters (68 per cent, n=60) of boys with younger partners reported emotional violence, compared to 56 per cent (n=46) with an older partner and 44 per cent (n=156) with a same-age partner. Again, when viewing these figures, it is important to remember that for most boys no negative impact resulted from their experiences.

Family and peer violence

Just over half (57 per cent) of young people who had not experienced family violence reported emotional partner victimisation. However, for young people with a history of family violence, incidence levels increased to three-quarters (77 per cent), constituting a significant difference (x^2 (1) = 39.444, p<.001). Similarly, an association was found for peer violence (x^2 (2) = 28.148, p<.001). While 58 per cent of young people whose friends did not use violence stated that they had experienced emotional violence, this rose to 79 per cent of young people with aggressive peer networks.

Location

Across all eight schools the average rate of experiencing emotional violence was 65 per cent. However, individual schools within this ranged from between 51 per cent to 75 per cent. This constituted a significant association (x^2 (7) = 26.441, p<.001). Three schools (E2, E3, S1) had significantly lower incidence rates of between 51 per cent to 54 per cent. Two of these schools were in areas of very high deprivation. Interestingly these are the same three schools that also had the lowest rates of physical partner violence. In contrast, two schools (E4, W2) had significantly higher incidence rates (69 per cent and 75 per cent respectively). These two schools were situated in areas of average and low social deprivation. Thus, our findings seem to imply that social deprivation is linked to reduced levels of emotional partner violence. The possible caveats regarding our findings in this area have already been provided (under “Location” on page 53).

Same-sex partner

As with physical violence, having a same-sex partner was associated with a significantly higher risk of experiencing emotional partner violence (x^2 (1) = 9.779, p<.003). While 60 per cent of respondents with opposite-sex partners (n=674) reported emotional abuse, this compares with 83 per cent (n=40) of participants with same-sex partners. In addition, more young people with a same-sex partner (38 per cent) reported being negatively affected by the violence compared to young people with heterosexual sex partners (18 per cent), this being a statistically significant difference (x^2 (1) = 9.779, p<.005). Donovan et al (2006) also found similar rates, with 78 per cent of their adult sample reporting some form of emotional violence from

a same-sex partner, with respondents under the age 25 being most likely to report victimisation.

Disability

A slightly lower percentage of young people with a disability (57 per cent, n=20) than non-disabled young people (62 per cent, n=693) reported emotional victimisation from their partner, although not statistically significant. This is perhaps a slightly surprising finding given the wide body of literature testifying to the increased incidence of bullying and peer violence directed at disabled young people (Mishna 2003; Smith and Tippett 2007).

Summary points

- Seventy-two per cent of girls and 51 per cent of boys reported some form of emotional partner violence.
- The majority of these young people reported more than one form of emotional violence.
- Most commonly reported forms of emotional violence, irrespective of gender, were “being made fun of” and “constantly being checked up on by partner”.
- More direct or overt forms of abuse were reported more frequently by girls than boys.
- Thirty-one per cent of girls and 6 per cent of boys stated that the emotional violence had negatively impacted on their wellbeing.
- Girls were more likely to say the violence occurred repeatedly and more likely to perceive that it remained the same or got worse.
- Most told either a friend or no one about the emotional violence; few told an adult.
- As age increased so did young people’s reports of emotional violence.
- Having an older partner, especially a “much older” partner, was an associated factor for girls; in contrast, boys with a younger partner were most at risk.
- Experiences of family violence and wider peer intimidation were factors associated with emotional violence, irrespective of gender.

- Young people with a same-sex partner were more likely to report emotional violence than did those with an opposite-sex partner, and more likely to report a negative impact.

Sexual partner violence

Four questions were used in the survey to gauge the incidence of sexual violence in young people's relationships. The questions were designed to reflect the role that both "pressure" or coercive control and physical force can play in perpetrating sexual violence. In addition, two levels of sexual violence were investigated. Firstly, a wide definition of sexual violence was utilised, upon which basis respondents were asked if they had ever been "pressured" or physically forced "to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else". This was followed by a more restricted definition, which focused on ever being pressured or forced into "having sexual intercourse". These two levels of sexual violence were used, as previous US research indicates that different risk factors are associated with these two levels of violence, and specifically that sexual violence involving physical force and intercourse has significantly more impact than other forms (Kaestle and Halpern 2005).

Girls were significantly more likely than boys to experience sexual violence (x^2 (1) =34.026, p<.001). Combining all reported incidents, 31 per cent (n=185) of girls, compared to 16 per cent (n=93) of boys, experienced sexual violence from their partner. Thus, one in three girls had experienced sexual violence. Breaking this down into the specific questions asked, in the case of both genders coercive control or "pressure" was used much more frequently by partners than physical force (see tables 6–9).

Just over a quarter of girls (27 per cent, n=162), stated that they felt pressured into doing something sexual against their wishes (see table 6). For the majority this had happened only once or a few times. However, for a small minority (n=9) this had been a regular occurrence. More than one girl in eight (13 per cent) had been physically forced into doing something sexual, but for most this was an isolated incident (see table 7). For 31 girls (5 per cent) the victimisation was occurring on a more systematic basis. In relation to sexual intercourse, 16 per cent (n=93) of girls reported that they had been pressured into intercourse (see table 8) and 6 per cent (n=35) stated they had

been physically forced (see table 9). Again, although for many this represented an isolated experience, 6 per cent had regularly been pressured into sexual intercourse and five girls reported that physical force had been reported.

Boys reported much lower levels of sexual violence, although some anomalies existed, which we will address shortly. Overall, 15 per cent of boys said they had been pressured to undertake something sexual against their wishes, with 6 per cent stating physical force had been used. The same proportion of males (6 per cent) stated that their partner had pressured them into sexual intercourse and 3 per cent reported physical force had been used. In contrast to the girls, the majority of boys remarked that the violence had occurred more than once. A minority of boys claimed they were being pressured into some form of sexual act frequently. We will return to discuss some problematic issues relating to boys' rates of sexual victimisation later in this section (see "Note on boys' experiences of sexual violence" on page 71).

Table 6 Have any of your partners ever pressured you into kissing, touching or something else?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	438	78	75	7	2
Male	484	33	35	7	9
Total	**922**	**111**	**110**	**14**	**11**
	79%	10%	9%	1%	1%

Table 7 Have any of your partners physically forced you into kissing, touching or something else?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	516	49	27	3	1
Male	532	12	15	7	1
Total	**1,048**	**61**	**42**	**10**	**2**
	90%	5%	4%	1%	–

Table 8 Have any of your partners ever pressured you into having sexual intercourse?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	505	57	34	1	1
Male	532	13	14	2	6
Total	**1,037**	**70**	**48**	**3**	**7**
	89%	6%	4%	–	1%

Table 9 Have any of your partners physically forced you into having sexual intercourse?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	562	30	4	0	1
Male	549	9	8	1	1
Total	**1,111**	**39**	**12**	**1**	**2**
	95%	3%	1%	–	–

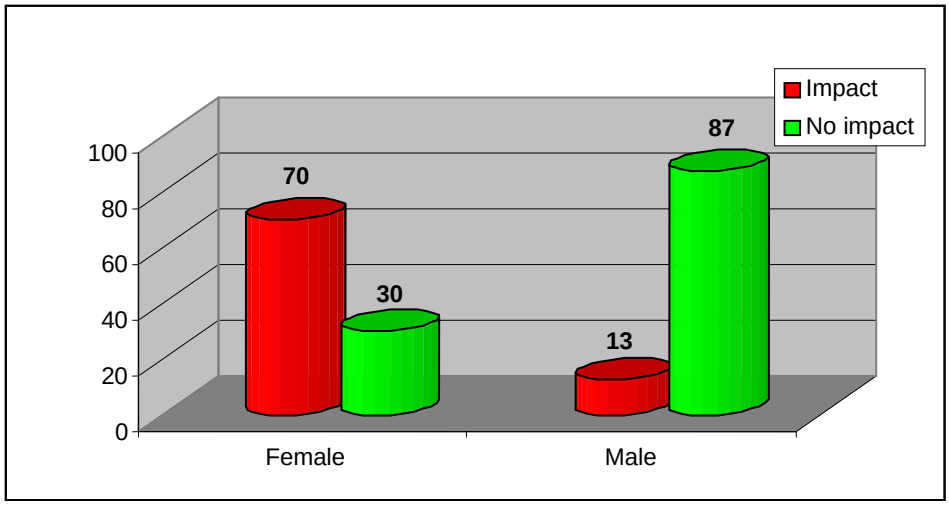
Estimates of sexual coercion and violence within previous research range from 4 per cent to as high as 78 per cent, although most studies consistently show, as does ours, that girls are most likely to be victims and males the perpetrators (Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs 1985; Roscoe and Callahan 1985; Muehlenhard and Linton 1987; Gamache 1991; Silverman et al 2001; Ackard et al 2003). This wide variation reflects in part a definitional problem of what encompasses sexually aggressive acts. For example, Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) found that 15 per cent of their sample had been rape victims, although nearly 80 per cent had experienced some form of unwanted sexual activity from their boyfriends, mostly forced kissing and touching. Others report levels more consistent with our own findings. For example, Ackard (2003) found that 4 per cent of adolescent girls reported being physically forced into sexual contact against their will in a relationship or during a date. Our research sought to overcome this methodological dilemma by including a range of survey questions on specific aspects of sexual violence, and analysing responses both on an individual basis and as a combined category of sexual violence.

Impact

The vast majority of girls (70 per cent) who were sexually victimised emphasised that this had a negative impact on their welfare (see figure 9). In direct contrast, 87 per cent of boys reported no adverse effect. In fact only 12 boys reported a negative outcome. Thus, from these findings it seems conclusive that partner sexual violence

represents a problem for girls, while boys report being unaffected. As before, boys' inability to express their vulnerability may be relevant. Within masculinity discourses, boys are often pressured to present an image of a controlling and pervasive sexuality. Therefore, to contradict this through an acknowledgement of sexual victimisation may be difficult. Boys could, as discussed previously, minimise the impact of their experiences. Much literature exists on sexual violence against women, which identifies the increased impact of sexual violence when the perpetrator is a partner (Easteal and McOrmond-Plummer 2006). This is primarily due to the violence also involving an indisputable betrayal of trust. These very sensitive issues are explored in more depth in the interview findings in section 7.

Figure 9 Impact of sexual violence (per cent)



Sexual violence dynamics

Three-quarters (n=146) of girls stated the sexual violence occurred in only a single relationship. However, for a quarter (n=43) the violence had happened in a few relationships. In contrast, boys reported a higher level of sexual victimisation across relationships. Fewer boys, nearly half (n=47), reported that the violence had occurred in only a single relationship. A similar proportion of boys, a third (n=31), stated that it had happened in a few relationships. However, and in contrast to girls, 20 per cent of boys reported sexual violence in *many* or *all* of their relationships. This represents the highest frequency rate for all forms of violence irrespective of gender. We return to this finding later in this section.

Moving on to look at how the sexual violence changed over time, a slightly different picture emerges compared to physical and emotional forms of violence. For the first time a similar proportion of girls and boys stated that the violence stopped. Previously a much higher proportion of boys compared to girls reported that the violence ceased.

Only 44 per cent (n=43) of boys said that the violence stopped, just over half (51 per cent, n=49) said it stayed the same and five male respondents claimed that it worsened. Proportionally, slightly more girls (46 per cent, n=89) said the violence stopped. Over a third (39 per cent, n=70) said it remained the same. Girls (n=28) were more likely than boys to report an escalation in sexual violence within their relationships.

Help-seeking

Reflecting the established pattern for help-seeking, peers were the only substantial area of support used by young people. Nearly half of girls (48 per cent, n=92) and 44 per cent of boys (n=42) informed a friend about their sexual victimisation. Siblings were used by 8 per cent of girls and 4 per cent of boys. Only a very small minority of young people told an adult.

Associated factors for experiencing sexual partner violence

Age

Age was not associated with sexual violence for either gender. Incidence rates for sexual violence were equally represented across the whole age range. This means, as before, that younger girls and boys were as likely to report sexual violence as did older participants. Given the impact on girls, this must be viewed as a very worrying finding and one that has important safeguarding implications – these are discussed later in section 8. However, more girls in the oldest age group (16 years old and over) reported being physically forced into sexual intercourse than were any other age range: 11 per cent compared to an average of 5 per cent. It may be that as girls get older they are more able to resist sexual pressure and therefore some boys resort to physical force. For boys, reporting of sexual violence peaked for two age groups: 14 and 15-year-olds.

Age of partner

As with previous forms of victimisation, a significant association existed between age of partner and sexual violence for girls (x^2 (2) = 27.315, p<.001), although not for boys. Three-quarters (76 per cent) of *all* incidents of sexual violence for girls occurred with an older partner. No fewer than three-quarters of girls who had a "much older" partner reported sexual violence. In contrast, boys marginally experienced greater rates of sexual violence from younger-age partners.

Ethnicity and religion

Ethnicity and religion were not significantly associated with experiencing sexual violence for girls. However, for boys, ethnicity was associated with sexual victimisation (x^2 (3) = 29.413, p<.001), as was religion (x^2 (3) = 33.327, p<.001). White boys reported the lowest level of sexual violence (13 per cent), followed by black (18 per cent) and mixed ethnicity (24 per cent) young males. In comparison, an incidence rate of 39 per cent was found for Asian male respondents. This represents the highest incidence rate for all ethnic groups irrespective of gender. Introducing young people's religion provides some further insights. Compared to the average reporting rate of 16 per cent, two religious groups reported significantly higher levels of sexual victimisation. Nearly half of Sikh boys (47 per cent) and a third of Muslim males (35 per cent) stated that their partner had been sexually violent towards them. A possible explanation concerning these findings, specifically how authentic they may be, is presented towards the conclusion of this section. We return later to the validity of this.

Family and peer violence

As with physical and emotional partner violence, a significant association was found between family violence and sexual partner victimisation (x^2 (1) = 56.447, p<.001). Just under a fifth (18 per cent) of young people with no family violence reported sexual partner violence; this proportion doubled to 40 per cent for those who had experienced some form of family violence. The inclusion of gender in the analysis showed that, although a quarter of girls (25 per cent) who had not experienced violence in the family experienced sexual violence, this increased to 45 per cent for girls with a history of family maltreatment. For boys, the proportional increase was even greater: from 13 per cent with no history to 30 per cent of boys who experienced

family violence. Likewise, having friendship networks characterised by aggression was also significantly associated with an increased risk of sexual violence (x^2 (2) = 16.993, p<. 001). While a fifth of young people with non-aggressive peers reported sexual violence, this incidence rate increased to over a third (36 per cent) of young people who reported aggressive friendship networks.

Location

Reporting of sexual violence was unevenly distributed across the eight school sites, these differences being significant (x^2 (7) = 34.547, p<.001). Looking first at girls, most schools exhibited an incidence rate of between 14 per cent and 28 per cent. Three schools had significantly higher incidence rates (E4, W1 and W2). In one school nearly half of all female respondents (49 per cent) reported some form of sexual violence. The remaining two schools had an incidence rate of 40 per cent. Pupils from these schools were all white, the group reporting the highest level of sexual violence. It is also important to note that these three schools constituted all of the rural schools in our sample and included both of the Welsh schools. Two were in areas of average deprivation and one in the least deprived sample area.

For boys, incidence rates varied from between 9 per cent and 22 per cent. One school (E1) had a markedly higher rate for sexual violence, this being 37 per cent. This was mostly attributed to the large percentage of Asian boys attending this school who reported sexual victimisation. Thus, for boys, it appears that this discrepancy can be explained by ethnicity, rather than geographical location.

Note on boys' experiences of sexual violence

Taking all of the above findings into consideration, it appears that a very high proportion of Asian boys in the same age group from a single school accounted for a high proportion of all sexual violence reported by boys, especially repeated forced sexual violence. Thus, either the school had a specific problem with teenage female sexual perpetrators, or this group of boys did not complete the form completely truthfully. Looking at our fieldwork notes from this school, the researchers noted a great deal of laughing and talking between male respondents, even though researchers and female respondents attempted to minimise this disruption.

Same-sex partners

As with physical and emotional violence, having a same-sex partner was associated with a significantly higher risk of experiencing sexual partner violence (x^2 (1) = 7.908, p<.005). While nearly a quarter (23 per cent, n=258) of young people with opposite-sex partners reported some form of sexual victimisation, this rose to 41 per cent of participants with same-sex partners. However, no significant difference between the two groups existed in relation to impact. Again, work by Donovan and colleagues (2006) found that adults with same-sex partners also reported significant rates of sexual violence, with respondents under the age of 25 being most at risk.

Looking at same-sex sexual victimisation more closely, some important patterns emerge in relation to gender, although these differences are not statistically significant due to the small number of participants with same-sex partners. For the young people with both male and female partners, it is not possible to know which partner committed the violence. However, what is apparent is that having a same-sex partner only can increase vulnerability to sexual violence, even if the same-sex partner is not perpetrating the violence.

Disability

No significant association was found between disability and sexual violence.

Summary points

- Thirty-one per cent of girls and 16 per cent of boys reported some form of sexual partner violence.
- The majority were single incidents; however, for a minority of young people sexual violence was a more regular feature of their relationships.
- Seventy per cent of girls and 13 per cent of boys stated that the sexual violence had negatively impacted on their welfare.
- Some anomalies exist with regards to boys' responses, which may call into question the validity of some of the findings on male sexual victimisation.
- Most young people informed a friend; all other avenues of disclosure were used infrequently.

- Respondents' age was not associated with incidence rates for either girls or boys. However, for girls, as age increased so did reports of being physically forced into sexual intercourse (rape).
- Seventy-eight per cent of *all* incidents of sexual violence against girls occurred with an older partner and 75 per cent of all girls with a "much older" partner experienced sexual violence.
- Experiences of family violence and wider peer intimidation were associated with increased rates of sexual violence for both girls and boys.
- Young people with a same-sex partner were more likely to report sexual violence than those with an opposite-sex partner.

Section 5: Instigation of teenage partner violence

Overall, young people reported significantly less involvement in instigating partner violence compared to receiving it. This pattern held true for all three forms of partner violence, irrespective of gender.

Physical partner violence

More girls reported using physical violence against their partner than did boys; this represented a significant difference (x^2 (1) = 60.804, p<.001). A quarter (n=148) of girls compared to 8 per cent (n=44) of boys stated that they had used some form of physical violence against their partner. Looking first at less severe physical violence (see table 10), the vast majority of girls (89 per cent) reporting the use of physical violence had used it once or a few times. Only a few (11 per cent) used it more frequently. Similarly, the small proportion of boys who admitted using physical violence also generally used it infrequently (83 per cent).

Table 10 Have you ever used physical force against your partner?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	455	66	64	9	7
Male	526	9	27	4	3
Total	**981**	**75**	**91**	**13**	**10**
	84%	6%	8%	1%	1%

In relation to severe physical violence, only a very small minority (3 per cent) of young people indicated they had used this against a partner (see table 11). Again, more girls reported using severe violence: 5 per cent (n=30) compared to 2 per cent (n=12) of boys. Generally, the violence occurred either once or a few times; only three young people reported using it frequently.

Table 11 Have you ever used more severe physical force against your partner?

	No	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	569	19	9	1	1
Male	556	5	6	0	1
Total	**1,125**	**24**	**15**	**1**	**2**
	97%	2%	1%	–	–

Reasons for violence

We asked young people to say why they had behaved in this way. A range of possible reasons were presented in the survey and young people were asked to tick all that applied. Due to the small sample size all responses were grouped into three categories: negative reasons, messing around and other. Negative reasons for violence included: to hurt them, due to their behaviour, jealousy, to impress others, to get what I wanted, anger, to humiliate them and drinking/drugs. As young people could provide multiple responses, counts add up to more than the number of respondents. A similar proportion of girls reported that they had acted in this way due to a negative reason (45 per cent, n=67) or due to messing around (43 per cent, n=64). Only 18 per cent gave "other" as a reason. In contrast, boys were much more likely to say that their behaviour was due to messing around. Over half of boys (56 per cent, n=27) gave this response, a third stated it was due to a negative reason (n=160) and five stated "other". Similarly, Foshee et al (2007) identified in their research that in many of the young people's accounts, and in a slightly higher proportion of boys' accounts, violence was often perceived as a playful and accepted aspect of relationship behaviour. However, behaviour that is viewed as playful by one person may not necessarily be seen the same way by their partner. Young people who view physical violence as "only joking" or messing around will have little motivation to stop, irrespective of its consequences (Sears et al 2006). This contention is explored further in the interview findings (see section 7).

Regarding physical violence, we asked an additional question relating to why young people had acted in this way: did you mostly act in this way due to self-defence? It is important that we recognise the difference between the defensive use of violence as a response to an attack rather than as an act of initial aggression. More girls reported using physical violence in this way than boys. Overall, 44 per cent (n=65) of girls

stated they had used violence as a means to protect themselves compared to only 30 per cent (n=15) of boys.

Associated factors for using physical partner violence

Age

As young people's age increased so did their propensity to use physical violence within their relationships. Age was significantly associated with physical violence perpetration both for girls (x^2 (3) = 7.203, p<.07) and boys (x^2 (3) = 30.423, p<.001). In relation to girls, 16 per cent of 13-year-olds, 20 per cent of 14-year-olds, 27 per cent of 15-year-olds and 30 per cent of the oldest age range (16 years and over) reported using physical violence against their partners. For boys, instigation rates remained relatively stable from the ages of 13 to 15, but levels doubled to 20 per cent at 16 years and over.

Ethnicity

For boys, a significant association was found between being an instigator of physical violence and ethnicity (x^2 (3) = 8.261, p<.05). Black (13 per cent, n=7) and white (15 per cent, n=143) male respondents were proportionally the least likely to report using physical violence, while mixed ethnicity (23 per cent, n=11) and Asian (25 per cent, n=28) boys were more likely to use physical violence in their relationships. In contrast, no such association was found for girls.

Religion

Reflecting the above finding, religion was significantly associated with perpetration for boys (x^2 = (3) 10.327, p<.05), but not for girls. Male respondents two religious groups, Muslim (27 per cent, n=15) and Sikh (25 per cent, n=14), showed increased rates compared to non-religious (16 per cent, n=52) or Christian (13 per cent, n=52) young people. However, we need to show caution in making any inferences from these statistics alone as counts were low. For girls, nearly all religious and non-religious groups showed very similar levels of physical violence perpetration between 21 and 25 per cent.

Family and peer violence

For both genders, rates for instigation of partner violence proportionally increased for respondents who had experienced family violence, this being statistically significant for girls (x^2 (1) = 25.114, p<.001) and boys (x^2 (1) = 3.469, p<.05). While 19 per cent of girls with no history of family violence used physical violence in their relationships, this rose to 38 per cent for those who reported family violence. Comparative figures for boys were 7 per cent and 12 per cent. Having friends who used intimidation was also associated with higher perpetration rates: 33 per cent (n=64) compared to 13 per cent (n=88), this being a significant difference (x^2 (2) = 45.407, p<001). We do not know if young people who used violence sought out peers who mirrored their own use of violence or if young people became more violent due to associating with those who routinely used intimidation. Previous research by Lavoie et al (2000) and de Bruijn et al (2006) showed that male adolescents who communicate their use of partner violence to their peer group often appear to receive support for it. Thus, it does seem plausible that if your peer group relationships are characterised by the use of intimidation and violence, then you may be more susceptible to using violence in your intimate relationships as well.

Same-sex partners

No significant association was found between physical violence perpetration and same-sex partners. One-fifth (n=10) of young people with a same-sex partner compared to 16 per cent with an opposite-sex partner used physical violence in their relationship.

Disability

No association was found between disability and perpetrating physical partner violence.

Summary points

- Twenty-five per cent of girls and 8 per cent of boys reported using physical partner violence.
- Three per cent of young people had used severe physical violence.

- Most respondents stated they had used physical violence against their partner once.
- Girls were more likely to report using physical partner violence for negative reasons, while boys generally stated their behaviour was due to messing around.
- Forty-four per cent of girls and 30 per cent of boys stated they used physical violence in self-defence.
- Use of physical violence by girls and boys increased with age.
- Instigation of physical violence was associated with exposure to family violence and aggressive peer networks.

Emotional partner violence

Emotional violence perpetration was explored using the same eight questions as used to determine victimisation rates. Combining all forms of emotional violence revealed an overall instigation rate of 59 per cent for girls and 50 per cent for boys. This made emotional violence the most prevalent form of partner violence young people reported using. It is also the most gender neutral form of violence, at least in terms of incidence.

In relation to instigation, a gender-specific pattern emerged across most categories: girls were more likely to report using each form of emotional violence and most commonly reported using it once or a few times. Only two categories, threatening to use personal information and the use of new technologies to humiliate or threaten, showed similar levels of perpetration both for girls and for boys. The largest gender gap occurred in relation to shouting and/or screaming at a partner, with nearly a third (31 per cent) of girls reporting behaving in this way compared to only 14 per cent of boys.

In respect to frequency, making fun of a partner was the behaviour most likely to be used more than once by both genders. However, this question also received the highest level of non-response from young people (non-responses = 455). We believe this high non-response rate was primarily due to a printing error on the questionnaire,

which meant that this particular question was not correctly highlighted and therefore could have been missed by respondents.

Reasons for violence

Slightly more girls (45 per cent, n=133) than boys (38 per cent, n=67) stated that they used emotional violence due to a negative reason. Boys (45 per cent) were more likely than girls (39 per cent) to report that they had been "messing around" when they acted in this way.

Number of relationships

The vast majority of young people indicated that they had used this form of violence only in one relationship, slightly more for girls (71 per cent, n=210) than boys (62 per cent, n=109). Around a quarter of girls (26 per cent, n=76) and a slightly higher proportion of boys (30 per cent, n=52) said they had used emotional violence in a few relationships. Only nine girls and 14 boys had used it more frequently.

Associated factors for using emotional partner violence

Age

As the age of respondents increased so did incidence rates for perpetration of emotional violence, representing a significant association both for girls (x^2 (3) = 15.487, p<.005) and for boys (x^2 (3) = 12.996, p<.005). The proportional rise in perpetration rates was very similar for both genders, with 36 per cent of all 13-year-olds using emotional violence, rising to 65 per cent of 16-year-olds.

Ethnicity

A significant association between ethnicity and perpetration of emotional violence was found for boys (x^2 (3) = 11.703, p<.01). A lower proportion of white male respondents (52 per cent) reported using emotional violence compared to minority ethnic groups (64 per cent Asian, 71 per cent black and 71 per cent mixed ethnicity). No significant association was found between perpetrating emotional violence and girls' ethnicity.

Religion

Perpetration of emotional violence was also significantly associated with religion: for girls (x^2 (3) = 7.326, p<.07) and boys (x^2 (3) = 9.386, p<.05). In relation to female respondents nearly all religious and non-religious groups reported very similar incidence rates of between 52 per cent and 56 per cent. However, for female Sikh participants this proportion increased to 89 per cent (n=16). Similarly, Sikh boys also reported a higher level of perpetration (78 per cent, n=29) compared to other groups where incidence levels ranged from 52 per cent to 56 per cent. However, numbers are small.

Family and peer violence

Two-thirds (68 per cent, n=149) of young people with a history of family violence reported using emotional violence, compared to only half of young people with no family conflict, this being a significant difference (x^2 (1) = 21.763, p<.001). Similarly, young people whose peers used intimidation were significantly more likely to use emotional violence than were other respondents (x (2) = 17.465, p<.001). Nearly three-quarters (70 per cent, n=105) of respondents with aggressive peers reported use of emotional violence compared to only around half (n=248) of other respondents.

Same-sex partner

More young people with a same-sex partner used emotional violence than those with an opposite-sex partner, this difference being significant (x^2 (1) = 7.852, p<.01). Three-quarters (77 per cent) of respondents with a same-sex partner reported using emotional violence compared to just over half (54 per cent) of those with a partner of the opposite sex.

Disability

No association was found between disability and perpetrating emotional partner violence.

Summary points

- Fifty-nine per cent of girls and 50 per cent of boys reported instigating emotional violence.

- Instigation of emotional partner violence represents the highest rate of incidence compared to other forms of partner violence.
- Girls were more likely to report using violence due to negative reasons, while boys most frequently said that they were "messing around".
- The use of emotional violence increased with respondents' age.
- Instigating violence was also associated with exposure to family violence and aggressive peer networks.
- A greater proportion of young people with a same-sex partner used emotional violence compared to those with opposite-sex partners.

Sexual violence

Sexual victimisation represented the lowest level of reported violence by young people. Just over one in eight boys (12 per cent, n=68) and 3 per cent of girls (n=19) reported the use of sexual violence. More males reported instigating sexual violence for each category than did females. The highest incidence rate for both genders concerned pressuring partners into sexual behaviour: 11 per cent (n=63) of boys and 2 per cent (n=15) of girls divulged this (see table 12). Similar numbers of boys stated that they had acted in this way once (n=31) or more frequently (n=32).

Regarding respondents who had physically forced their partner into sexual behaviour, 4 per cent of boys and 1 per cent of girls said they had done so (see table 13). A similar proportion, 5 per cent of boys and 1 per cent of girls, stated they had pressured their partner into having sexual intercourse (see table 14). Twelve boys and four girls stated they had used physical force to make their partner have intercourse (see table 15).

Table 12 Have you ever pressured your partner into kissing, touching or something else?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	584	6	4	0	5
Male	497	31	27	2	3
Total	**1,081**	**37**	**31**	**2**	**3**
	93%	3%	3%	–	1%

Table 13 Have you ever physically forced your partner into kissing, touching or something else?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	593	2	0	0	4
Male	540	8	11	0	2
Total	**1,133**	**10**	**11**	**0**	**6**
	98%	1%	1%	–	–

Table 14 Have you ever pressured your partner into having sexual intercourse?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	593	3	1	0	2
Male	432	16	8	1	3
Total	**1,125**	**19**	**9**	**1**	**5**
	97%	2%	1%	–	–

Table 15 Have you ever physically forced your partner into having sexual intercourse?

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Female	594	1	1	0	2
Male	547	9	1	0	2
Total	**1,141**	**10**	**2**	**0**	**4**
	99%	1%	–	–	–

Reasons for violence

Boys and girls provided very similar reasons for using sexual violence. Around half (n=40) of participants acknowledged that they acted in this way for a negative reason. A third said it was due to “messing around” and a minority (n=14) stated “other” reason.

Associated factors for using sexual violence

Age

Boys’ instigation of sexual violence was significantly associated with age (x^2 (3) = 11.108, p<.05): from 7 per cent at age 13 to 21 per cent at age 16 and over. Girls’ numbers were too small to analyse statistically.

Ethnicity and religion

Similarly, it was not possible to undertake statistical analysis due to small cell counts.

Family and peer violence

Previous experiences of family violence were significantly associated with an increased risk of perpetrating sexual violence both for girls (x^2 (1) = 12.858, p<.001) and boys (x^2 (1) = 8.495, p<.005). Only 1 per cent of girls with no history of family violence reported instigating sexual violence; this rose to 7 per cent for those with a history of violence. The respective rates for boys were 10 per cent and 20 per cent. Sexual violence perpetration was also significantly associated with friends' use of intimidation (x^2 (2) = 27.464, p<.001). Only 5 per cent (n=37) of participants who reported no peer intimidation admitted instigating sexual violence; this rose to 17 per cent (n=37) for respondents whose friends used intimidation.

Same-sex partner

As with emotional violence, respondents with a same-sex partner were more likely to report perpetrating sexual violence: 23 per cent compared to 7 per cent for respondents with an opposite-sex partner. This difference was statistically significant (x^2 (1) = 17.524, p<.001).

Disability

No association was found between disability and perpetrating sexual partner violence.

Summary points

- Sexual violence represented the lowest level of reporting for all forms of partner violence instigation.
- Twelve per cent of boys and 3 per cent of girls reported using some form of sexual violence.
- Most reported cases involved boys pressuring girls into sexual behaviour (11 per cent of boys).
- The reasons given for sexual violence perpetrations were similar, irrespective of gender: half stated negative reasons and one-third said they had been "messing around".

- The use of sexual violence increased with age.
- Instigating violence was also associated with exposure to family violence and aggressive peer networks.
- A greater proportion of young people with same-sex partners used emotional violence compared to those with opposite-sex partners.

Section 6: Further multivariate statistical analysis

Having identified the key influencing factors through the Chi-Squared analysis, we were also interested in understanding the relative weight of each of these significant associated factors in explaining differences in partner violence victimisation and instigation. This is how the variables already identified act in combination. We therefore carried out a series of forward stepwise logistic regressions to help predict those boys and girls (separately) who had been victims and instigators of the three types of partner violence (the outcome variables) from predictor variables such as age.

Six key indicators, based on the Chi-Squared analysis, were used in the binary logistic regression: respondent's age, ethnicity, religion, family violence, peer violence and age of partner. For the regression analysis, three categories were re-coded due to small cell counts: ethnicity, religion and age of partner. Ethnic group was re-coded into two groups: white or black minority ethnic/other group (BME). Religion was re-coded into religious affiliation or no religion. For age of partner, older and much older were combined into one category. Analysis was undertaken separately by gender (see appendix I for a more detailed explanation).

While viewing the results presented in the following analysis, it is important to remember that the impact of each form of victimisation had a significantly greater negative effect on the wellbeing of girls than it did for the vast majority of boys. By stating this, we do not mean to imply that it is acceptable for girls to act in this way or that boys' welfare is not worthy of safeguarding. However, it is essential that the following findings are placed within the wider context of how such victimisation is experienced by young people themselves, which, as we have clearly demonstrated, is significantly demarcated by gender.

Victimisation

Physical partner violence victimisation

The regression analysis for girls identified three significant factors associated with experiencing physical partner violence: age of partner, family violence and peer violence.

Girls with an older partner were five times as likely as those with a younger partner to experience physical partner violence (<.05, Exp (B) = 4.910). Age of partner represented the strongest predictive indicator within the regression model. However, the importance of other forms of violence in explaining physical victimisation was also highlighted in the model. Girls with a history of family violence were nearly three times as likely as those without any such history to experience physical violence from a partner (<.000, Exp (B) = 2.765). Similarly, the presence of violent peer networks also increased girls' vulnerability to physical partner violence. Girls with violent peers were just over twice as likely to report physical partner violence as those with non-violent peers. Overall, the predictors within the regression model account for 20 per cent of the total variance between those who did and did not experience partner violence. This means that 80 per cent of the variance remains unexplained by the six predictors. Thus, the explanatory power of the model could be described as weak to moderate.

For boys who were victims, a slightly different picture emerged from the regression analysis. Only two predictors were found to be pertinent: peer group violence and age of partner. Boys who associated with violent peers were just over twice as likely as boys with non-violent peers to experience physical violence from their partners (<.007, Exp (B) = 2.301). However, boys with a same-age partner were 60 per cent *less* likely than those with a younger partner to be a victim of physical partner violence (<.008, Exp (B) = 409). The predictors for the male regression analysis accounted for only 12 per cent of the variance, indicating the explanatory power of the model was weak. It is interesting to note the gender distinction concerning family violence. For boys, family violence was not a predictor for physical partner violence, whereas for girls it represented the second strongest predictor.

Emotional partner violence victimisation

In relation to emotional forms of partner violence, it appeared that a history of family violence was as equally disquieting for both female and male adolescents. However, the analysis also showed that the presence of a violent peer group was a stronger predictor irrespective of gender. Thus, although female participants with a history of family violence were nearly twice as likely as those without to experience emotional partner violence (<.010, Exp (B) = 1.801), girls with a violent peer group were over twice as likely as those who had non-violent friends to report emotional violence from a partner (<.027, Exp (B) = 2.464). All other predictors were found to be insignificant, including age of partner. This may be due to the re-coded category combining both "older" and "much older" partner, effectively eliminating any distinctions between these two groups. It is therefore even more interesting that age of partner was such a strong predictor for physical partner violence for girls. Overall, the predictors for girls accounted for only 15 per cent of the model variance.

Regarding boys, those who experienced peer group violence (<.006, Exp (B) = 2.212) or family violence (<.034, Exp (B) = 2.058) were both more than twice as likely as those who did not to experience some form of emotional violence victimisation. In addition, boys with a same-age partner were less than half as likely as those with an older partner to experience emotional partner abuse (<.009, Exp (B) = .444). The model power is weak, as the predictors accounted for only 13 per cent of the variance between the two groups.

Sexual partner violence victimisation

For female participants, only one predictor, family violence, was significant. Girls with a history of violence in their families were nearly two and a half times as likely to experience sexual violence compared to those who did not. Overall, even though only a single predictor was significant, 14 per cent of the model variance was accounted for.

Similarly, for boys, family violence was the strongest predictor: boys who reported family violence were nearly three times as likely to state they had experienced sexual violence than boys with no family violence (<.005, Exp (B) = 2.766). However, ethnic group was also a predictor, whereby boys from black or other ethnic groups

were over two and a half times as likely to state they had experienced sexual violence compared to white participants. We need to remember when viewing this result that certain discrepancies were present within this data. To recap, a number of minority ethnic boys, all the same age and from a single school, answered with very high rates of repeated sexual violence victimisation. Thus, either the school had a specific problem with female sexual violence perpetration targeted at ethnic minority boys, or this section of the survey was not answered truthfully. Only 13 per cent of the variance was explained within the model by the predictors. It is interesting to note that peer group violence does not seem to be a factor in explaining sexual violence for girls or boys.

Gender comparison

We have so far analysed the predictors for teenage partner violence separately for girls and boys. However, it is also important to understand the relative weight of each predictor across genders, in other words: which predictors account for the greatest variation in experiences of partner violence between girls and boys (see appendix II).

For physical violence, age accounted for a relatively greater proportion of the variance for boys (24 per cent) than for girls (11 per cent). Thus, as found earlier in the Chi-Squared analysis, girls were more likely to experience victimisation across the age range compared to boys. However, family violence accounted for half the variance for girls compared to only a quarter for boys. Conversely, peer violence accounted for a relatively greater proportion of the variance in experiencing physical partner violence for boys (25 per cent) than it did for girls (15 per cent).

Age of respondent and family violence accounted for roughly the same proportion of variance for girls and boys in respect to emotional violence. However, mirroring findings on physical partner violence, violent peer networks explained a slightly greater degree of variance for boys (22 per cent) than for girls (18 per cent). Age of partner was a more powerful predictor for girls (25 per cent) than boys (20 per cent).

Lastly, in relation to sexual violence, ethnic group and family violence accounted for three-quarters of the variance for boys, compared to roughly 60 per cent for female participants. For girls, the age of a partner was an important indicator, which

accounted for over a quarter of the variation, while for boys it held little explanatory power (1 per cent).

Summary points

- The main predictor variables for girls in explaining victimisation variance were family violence and age of partner.
- The main predictor variables for boys in explaining victimisation variance were age, family violence and peer group violence.

Instigation

Physical partner violence instigation

Girls who experienced peer group violence (<.001, Exp (B) = 2.691) or family violence (<.002, Exp (B) = 2.183) were more than twice as likely to instigate physical partner violence. Overall, 20 per cent of the variance was accounted for by the predictors, indicating a weak to moderate strength model. For boys, although family violence was not a predictor of instigation, peer group violence was. Boys with friendships characterised as violent were three times as likely to instigate physical violence as young people with non-violent peer networks (<.010, Exp (B) = 3.124). Also, age was associated with instigating partner violence, although in a somewhat arbitrary manner. Fifteen-year-old boys were less likely to say they instigated such violence compared to other age groups. Overall, 25 per cent of the model was explained by the predictors, indicating a weak to moderate explanatory power.

Emotional partner violence instigation

Two main predictors were identified for female emotional violence instigation: age and ethnic group. Girls aged 15 were two and a half times as likely to use emotional abuse than those aged 13 (<.010, Exp (B) = 2.762). Additionally, although not significant, girls aged 16 and over were twice as likely to use emotional violence as those aged 13. Thus, we may tentatively conclude that older girls use this form of abuse more often than their younger counterparts. Girls from minority ethnic groups were also two and a half times as likely as white female respondents to use emotional violence (<.017, Exp (B) = 2.541). However, predictors only explained 13 per cent of the variance for girls. Age was also a predictor for boys, with older boys being many

times more likely to use emotional violence than younger boys. Boys in the oldest age range, 16 years and over, were four and a half times as likely to use this form of abuse as 13-year-olds (<.008, Exp (B) = 4.587), while 15-year-old boys were nearly three time as likely (<.046, Exp (B) = 2.888). Again, for boys, violent peer groups were associated with a twofold increase in instigation of emotional violence (<.022, Exp (B) = 2.168). The final significant predictor for boys was age of partner: boys with a same-age partner were half as likely to use emotional violence compared to boys with a younger partner (<.031, Exp (B) = .451). Together, these predictors explain 19 per cent of the variance within the model.

Sexual partner violence instigation

For girls, wider experiences of violence were associated with an increased risk of sexual violence instigation. Female participants with a history of family violence (<.26, Exp (B) = 3.971), or whose peer group used intimidation (<.28, Exp (B) = 3.832), were almost four times as likely to use sexual violence with their partners. Predictors within the model account for 17 per cent of the variance. For boys, violent peer networks, but not family violence, were a significant predictor for their own use of sexual violence. Boys with such friendships were three times as likely as those with non-violent peers to use sexual violence (<.002, Exp (B) = 3.059). The other significant predictor within the model was ethnicity. Boys from minority ethnic groups were nearly three times as likely to say they used sexual violence as white respondents (<.002, Exp (B) = 3.059). Overall, the predictors explained 18 per cent of the variance within the model.

Gender comparison

Having identified the predictors for instigation of teenage partner violence for girls and boys separately, we now turn our attention to compare how these predictors applied across genders (see appendix II).

Looking first at physical violence instigation, nearly 60 per cent of the variation for boys was explained through the respondent's age; in comparison this accounted for only a small degree of variance for girls (11 per cent). For female participants, family violence was the strongest predictor, accounting for over a third of the model variance (38 per cent). Peer violence was equally significant for girls (25 per cent) and boys

(19 per cent). However, age of partner was an important predictor for girls alone (21 per cent).

A slightly different picture emerged in respect to emotional violence. Age was the most important factor for both genders, explaining nearly half the variance for both groups. A quarter of the variance in relation to girls' use of emotional violence was accounted for by ethnicity and nearly 20 per cent by family violence. For boys, family violence and peer group accounted for a small, although nearly identical, proportion of the variance at around 14 per cent.

Age was a relatively more important predictor of boys' use of sexual violence than for girl's (23 per cent compared to 7 per cent). Similarly, ethnicity accounted for a greater proportion of the variance for boys than for girls (38 per cent compared to 9 per cent). Family violence was far more important in models predicting female sexual instigation than for those predicting male sexual violence (35 per cent compared to 10 per cent), as was age of partner (29 per cent compared to 2 per cent).

Summary points

- The main predictor variables for boys in explaining the instigation variance were age and peer group violence.
- The main predictor variables for girls in explaining the instigation variance were family violence and age of partner.

For girls the same two predictor variables (family violence and age of partner) accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in both receiving and instigating partner violence. For boys, however, although the age of respondent and peer group violence predictors accounted for a significant proportion of both experiencing and instigating partner violence, family violence was a predictor only for boys' victimisation.

Section 7: Interview findings

This section reports on the qualitative interview findings. Reflecting the survey results on gender, qualitative analysis was undertaken separately for females and males, although comparisons between girls' and boys' accounts are made throughout this section. When viewing the qualitative findings it is important to remember that the aim of this aspect of the research was to enhance our understanding of young people's own experiences and views of teenage partner violence, and to explore how young people's own agency mediated their experiences. Thus, the interviews provide the wider context in which the incidence rates and associated factors identified in the survey need to be viewed.

However, it is important to remember that the interview sample is not necessarily representative of the wider sample and so the rates of violence reported, or the demographic breakdown of the sample on the basis, for example, of age and ethnicity, cannot be generalised to any wider pattern of partner victimisation or instigation. It is the survey that provides this evidence. In contrast, the interviews provide very valuable and often disconcerting insights into young people's own experiences of physical, sexual and emotional forms of partner exploitation and violence.

Interview sample

Interviews took place in six schools, with a total of 91 young people being interviewed (see table 16 for a detailed breakdown). Twice as many girls as boys were interviewed. The majority of young people were aged 15 or older. The method of recruitment of young people for the qualitative sample was described under "Research aims and methodology" on page 11. To recap, in five schools the qualitative interview followed the completion of the questionnaires. It was initially envisaged that young people would self-select to take part in the interview by contacting the researchers, such as by using a self- addressed envelope. However, this was found to be unsuitable at the pilot stage of the research. Due to issues of confidentiality and anonymity, the questionnaires intentionally did not contain personal contact details, thus prohibiting their use for the selection of interview participants. We therefore moved to a system whereby researchers observed which young people seemed to be engaging with the survey. They then asked those young people if they would like to take part in the interview stage. To ensure they were not perceived by

their peers as being targeted for a particular reason, we also invited a pupil sitting either side of them to participate. Thus, it appeared to the class that groups of pupils were asked, rather than any individual. This system worked well and enabled young people who wanted to take part to participate without the need for them to be seen to volunteer in front of their class.

Table 16 Interview sample

Gender	**Count**
Female	62
Male	29
Age (years)	
13	1
14	9
15	27
16	42
17	12
Nationality	
British	34
Scottish	19
English	14
Welsh	6
Other	18
Ethnicity	
White	51
Asian	12
Black	12
Mixed ethnicity	11
Chinese	1
Other	4
Religion	
No religion	54
Christian	23
Sikh	7
Muslim	5
Family composition	
Both biological parents	52
Single parent	22
Reconstituted family	12
Other	5

Part 1: Interview findings – girls

Girls' experiences of physical partner violence

There was a clear consensus within girls' accounts that boys used physical violence in relationships more often than did girls. This common understanding regarding the gendered nature of physical violence was reported by almost all girls, whether they themselves had experienced violence or not:

Interviewer:	When it comes to kind of pushing and shoving, do you think that's something that boys do more, or do you think girls do that too in relationships?
Kathy:	Boys do it a lot more.
Interviewer:	You think so?
Kathy:	With the relationships I've been in and seen, like boys seem to do it more.
Interviewer:	Do you think boys and girls both use physical force?
Lucy:	Maybe boys 'cos they think they're like stronger, they'll use that more so I suppose it's boys yes.

However, this shared knowledge regarding male physical violence was not reflected in the survey data, where both boys and girls reported experiencing physical violence victimisation. Furthermore, a greater number of girls than boys in the survey reported using physical violence. But if we also take into account the survey findings regarding the impact of physical violence on recipients, specifically the greater level of negative impact reported by girls compared to boys, it may be that female participants were minimising the use of physical violence by girls due to perceptions surrounding the lack of impact such actions have on male partners. Conversely, an alternative explanation may be that boys were overstating their own physical violence victimisation (Robinson and Rowland 2006). In addition, a greater proportion of female than male use of physical partner violence was explained within the survey as self-defence. This is also reflected in the interview data, explored later in this section.

Although girls identified boys as possessing a greater *potential* to use physical partner violence, this was not universally applied to all boys. Often their own boyfriends were positioned outside this gendered discourse. Interestingly, this distinction was largely applied to current rather than previous male partners. It may be that to identify a present boyfriend's potential to use physical violence was too problematic for some girls to acknowledge, given their investment in the relationship. They may have felt that a new relationship would be different or better. Indeed, where *actual* instances of

physical partner violence were discussed by girls, this was generally concerning past rather than present relationships. On the other hand, it may be that these girls did now have non-violent partners.

Physical violence was used by male partners mainly as a way to directly control an aspect of their girlfriend's behaviour, or as a means to impose their dominance more generally within a relationship:

Tanisha:	He bit me on the face, it was horrible, really disgusting.
Interviewer:	Why...?
Tanisha:	Because when I was trying to show my point of view, he doesn't appreciate it.

A few teenage participants who were able to share their experiences described very serious acts of violence, which had often occurred when they were several years younger. Although young people interviewed were mostly aged between 15 and 17 years old, most of their experiences of physical partner violence had started much earlier, in two instances as young as 12. This is below the survey age range, which started at 13. We may have overestimated the age at which partner violence begins in young people's lives. The need to include the experiences of younger children is also implied within the survey data, where 13-year-old girls were as likely to report physical violence as those aged 16. Consequently, research attention needs to focus as well on pre-teenage children. It also has major implications regarding the routine inclusion of pre-teenage children in school intervention programmes and personal, social and health education lessons aimed at preventing this form of violence. In comparison, all of the male partners who used severe violence were older, generally at least two years, than their girlfriends. This reflects our survey findings regarding the age of male partners and associated risks for violence within relationships. Some male perpetrators of severe physical violence were not teenagers but adult men, in one case married with their own children. Thus, we need to be aware that these relationships may constitute sexual abuse (Pearce 2006). We shall return to this important issue later when we consider girls' experience of sexual violence.

The physical violence experienced by some of the girls interviewed was extremely serious and in one instance required medical attention:

Interviewer:	Did you think that Joel loved you?
Amy:	At one point.

Interviewer:	At one point, did it stop feeling like love at some point?
Amy:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Yeah, what point did it stop feeling like love do you think?
Amy:	When he started hitting me and beating me up.
Interviewer:	Did he hurt you?
Amy:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Did you have to go and see the doctor ?
Amy:	Yeah…
Interviewer:	So what did you tell them?
Amy:	I just said that…I'd had a fight at school, I'd come in with cuts all over my face and up my arms as well…and he (the doctor) was asking if I was sure and stuff and 'cos I was like "yeah I'm sure" because I had handprints all up my arms. I just got really defensive about it so I think he knew what was going on but he didn't want to say anything, just gave me uum painkillers…

In the above quotation Amy describes the severe injuries she incurred due to her boyfriend's violence. The injuries were so serious that she was referred to a doctor by school staff. However, Amy lied to the doctor about how she received the injuries. Later in the interview she stated that she did this due to being scared of her partner's reaction and due to not wanting to be viewed as a victim of violence from her partner (Glass 1995). Interestingly, Amy used a school fight to explain her injuries, perceiving this form of violence as being less likely to induce further professional intervention. Earlier in the interview Amy described a different relationship in which physical violence was used routinely. The violence was generally not a reaction to a specific incident but was used more generally within the relationship. Similarly, Lucy described her partner becoming angry and physically violent over insignificant events:

Lucy:	It was just like he'd get really angry over the littlest things that I did and it just like upset me. So that didn't really work out.
Interviewer:	So how did you deal with that?
Lucy:	Well we sort of like, we sort of had an on-and-off like, we sort of split up and then we'd get back together and then it just went on for a while so then we just like called it a day.

As Lucy's statements illustrate, most physical violence was not an isolated incident but was experienced repeatedly throughout the relationship.

Girls routinely described a physical attack as unprovoked and often occurring with little warning. In these instances the violence was not perceived by girls as an outburst following a specific conflict. Instead, the violence was something that was routinely used within relationships as a general method of domination. Such behaviour was extremely difficult to anticipate and therefore more difficult for the victim to avoid.

However, girls did identify one main area where the use of physical violence was more predictable: this exception was in relation to sex. In the majority of instances, severe physical violence was initially experienced in a relationship due to a refusal, or more often reluctance, to undertake a particular sexual act, most often sexual intercourse (Kaestle and Halpern 2005). However, as we have already stated, once physical violence was used, its presence within a relationship became more routine:

Sian:	I only went out with him for a week. And then…'cos I didn't want to do what he wanted to do [have sexual intercourse] he just started picking on me and hitting me.

As with Sian, occasionally the physical violence occurred at the very beginning of a relationship. However, more routinely physical violence started when a relationship became "serious". This may be due to physical violence being primarily associated with the commencement of more intimate sexual experiences. Often, girls stated that pressure relating to sex increased and became more intense once a relationship became "serious". However, seriousness for girls was not necessarily always related to duration of a relationship, although this was an important factor. For many it was a combination of factors, including: for how long they had been going out; how much time they spent together; level of commitment by their partner, for example through their inclusion in their partner's future plans; and how "public" was their relationship. This last component referred to whether they were publicly perceived as a couple by both sets of friends and the wider peer group.

Once physical violence was used within this specific context, its presence within the relationship often escalated and became more routinely used by male partners to exert control:

Amy:	He was just…I don't know what happened, he just went through a stage. He'd be all right and then he'd be horrible to me and then he'd be all right and I just kept giving into him…
Interviewer:	How long did you go out together for?
Amy:	About a year...
Interviewer:	So how long was he all right, how long was he sort of fun to be with before he started being nasty?
Amy:	About nine months and then he started being horrible, that's why the school got involved because he'd come into school and stuff.

Yet physical violence did not necessarily have to directly target the victim to cause distress:

Interviewer:	Have you ever had boyfriends that have got angry or made you get angry?
Natalie:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Mm. The most recent one or other people?
Natalie:	Yeah. The one I was with last, yeah.
Interviewer:	What did you get angry about?
Natalie:	Well I don't know, he like reckoned I was going with other boys and that. So when I didn't go up there like a couple of times.
Interviewer:	Jealous?
Natalie:	Yeah so I kept shouting at him and that…I thought he was going to punch me but he punched a wall like that.
Interviewer:	So you hadn't been up to see him on a couple of occasions and that made him angry?
Natalie:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Was he actually accusing you of having done something then?
Natalie:	Yeah, and then having a go at this boy and I didn't even know who the boy was like.
Interviewer:	Had you seen anybody else?
Natalie:	No.

Having a partner physically out of control was very frightening for young women, especially as they were unsure if the violence may be targeted at them. In the following instance, the male partner violence continued for a prolonged period while Kelly was unable to leave the situation:

Kelly:	I was in the [name of garage], went in and got a drink and he was screaming and shouting "why did you do it blah blah blah?"…And he raised his fist to hit me and I was stood there and I was thinking, I, and at one point I know it sounds stupid but I wanted him to, because I felt, I felt as if I deserved it, but I was, I was scared. But he couldn't do it, he just looked at me and he just turned around and smashed things up in there and walked out and then come back in again, started shouting again, and then walked back out again and come back.
Interviewer:	That does sound quite scary.
Kelly:	I was scared…

Kelly stated that at one point she felt that the violence was justified. Evidence from previous research has also highlighted how girls become responsible for the violence they have experienced through individualisation of blame (Banister et al 2003; Chung 2005). This is a powerful method of manipulation used by violent partners to avoid responsibility for their own behaviour and relocate the blame on their victims. Similarly, a few of the girls interviewed stated that, while they were in the relationship, they felt very unsure if they were in some way responsible for their partners' violence, as articulated by Amy:

Amy:	Like, when I told someone, I was really proud of myself but I was like really scared of what they were all going to say.
Interviewer:	In what way were you scared of what they would say?
Amy:	Because I thought all my friends were going to resent me, like they wouldn't want to speak to me and things like that…if they thought it was my fault I brought it all on myself.

Girls also sometimes reported using physical force. Female participants spoke about their own use of physical violence in two main ways: as an attempt to defend themselves against a physical attack by a partner or within a discourse of mutual "play-fighting". Very few girls reported using physical retaliation in self-defence. Most girls who experienced physical violence mainly stated that they felt extremely scared while the attack occurred and sought to protect themselves against injury through non-violent protective defence of their own bodies. A minority of girls had used retaliation in self-defence:

Rebecca:	…You're scared as well, and like, it's like all a flash like really, and he's coming at you and like the first thing you do is defend yourself [unclear] I pushed [name of boyfriend] as well, pushed him over and I pushed him into a fence.
Interviewer:	In self-defence?
Rebecca:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	How did that end...?
Rebecca:	Yeah he just walked off and left me.
Interviewer:	With your friends?
Rebecca:	Yeah.

Using physical retaliation could result in the aggressor's violence escalating (Burman and Cartmel 2005; Stark 2007). Rebecca used violence in self-defence in this case in public surrounded by her friends. However, girls expressed a generally held view that female physical violence was most commonly used as a protective reaction to male attack. Indeed, it may be that some young women may hold unrealistic expectations concerning their ability to defend themselves.

Only one form of physical aggression was viewed as acceptable within girls' accounts, namely low-level physical violence in the form of play-fighting:

Sarah:	Obviously there is carry-ons and everything, we play-fight, but he doesn't hit me if we argue or anything.
Interviewer:	…play-fighting?
Sian:	Yeah, but not like hard, just stupid.
Interviewer:	Is there ever a point when play-fighting gets out of control?

Sian: No.
Interviewer: You think there's a difference between them and people know the difference?
Sian: Yeah definitely.

Within many of these discussions play-fighting was depicted as being fundamentally different to physical violence. The context was one of mutual understanding concerning the limits of the play-fight, which seemed to provide an opportunity for physical closeness between couples. Such incidents also provided the opportunity for issues of trust to be explored within a relationship. Indeed, within the survey some female respondents commented that not all physical force was violence:

> Some of the questions say have you or your partner ever been pressured or forced which isn't true because it doesn't say anything about you doing them willingly.
> (Female participant aged 13)

> Me and my boyfriend mess around all the time play-fighting, so don't read too much into things.
> (Female participant aged 16)

> Not all holding down and stuff is abuse.
> (Female participant aged 15)

The existence of play-fighting within teenage relationships has also been found and questioned in a previous US study (Lavoie et al 2000). Foshee et al (2007) also found that consensual violence was viewed as an accepted and playful aspect of "flirting" in young people's relationships. If play-fighting is equally and freely entered into, with no coercion or negative impact on either party, then such behaviour can be part of a healthy relationship. However, if the level of force increases or a partner breaches the boundaries of acceptability, then such behaviour can become problematic. Concerns are also raised in relation to the normalisation of such behaviour whereby a young person could come to expect play-fighting to be a part of all their subsequent relationships, irrespective of their partner's wishes. As shown in our interviews, such precise boundaries of acceptability were, in practice, often breached. For many young women the line between play-fighting and actual physical violence was not so well-defined or adhered to by partners.

Interviewer: So you've experienced that, someone that kind of pushes you around?
Kathy: Well not like really violent pushing like, but…Something they take too far…after a while you would get a little bit like uncomfortable.

Rebecca: And I hates it as well, it annoys me…"urggh"…and drag me and it's like "get off me now you're annoying". I just don't like it.

As described in the above accounts, often when these thresholds were breached it was difficult for girls to have their discomfort recognised or taken seriously. As Sears et al (2006) argue, boys who justify their violence as "only joking" or "messing around" will have little motivation to stop, irrespective of its consequences.

We now focus on sexual violence which, as we have already discussed, was often linked in girls' accounts to the commencement of physical violence within a relationship, although its use did not necessarily remain restricted to this area.

Girls' experiences of sexual partner violence

Importantly, all accounts of sexual violence involving physical force related exclusively to older boyfriends. Previous research on sexual exploitation has highlighted how girls can be groomed by their adult "boyfriends" into wider sexual exploitation (Pearce 2006). In our interviews we did not find evidence that partners had coerced girls into undertaking any sexual acts with other men or been involved in the production of pornography. The majority of accounts of sexual violence involving physical force occurred within serious relationships. The following quote is from a group interview with three girls, each of whom had experienced sexual violence:

Tasminder:	See with my relationship it wasn't up to me [when to have sex].
Jasleen:	And same here.
Interviewer:	That's not all right is it really?
Jasleen:	But when it happens it just kind of happens and then afterwards you think oh my god.
Interviewer:	How did you feel afterwards?
Tasminder:	I just couldn't, I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror.
Jasleen:	Yeah, same here…but the weirdest thing is you still go back, we still go back to them, we still see them again because we have feelings for them obviously, but we shouldn't have went back to them.
Interviewer:	You still have feelings for them?
Jasleen:	They didn't force you because they can't, well they did kind of, yeah.
Interviewer:	…so did you feel like you were physically forced?
Tasminder:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	…did he hurt you?
Louise:	Um…well yeah, he was pressuring me a lot. But there'd be a few times where he was like really trying to force me…yeah it was a few times he did yeah.

While some girls were able to talk in depth about the sexual violence they had experienced, others, such as Louise, found it very hard to describe what they had been through except to state, very briefly, that it had occurred. In some instances, although

there was a suggestion that force may have been used, this was not openly stated; often this occurred in relation to current partners. Researchers therefore felt it would have been inappropriate to ask this question directly given the participants' obvious reluctance to raise it themselves. This disinclination may be explained by a range of reasons, with the above extract illustrating one of the most prevalent of these: the wish to remain within the relationship or, perhaps more accurately, the desire to have a boyfriend. The difficulties that girls face are clear in some accounts, as they attempt to reconcile their boyfriends' violent behaviour with their wish to maintain the relationship, despite their partner's behaviour.

Many of these girls attempted to do so through limiting the significance and impact of their actions. Jasleen sought to minimise her partner's actions by initially stating that she had not been physically forced into sex, although she then acknowledges that he "did kind of". Similarly, only when the interviewer directly asks Tasminder if physical force was used (in relation to sexual intercourse) does she acknowledge that it was. The sexual violence, described by all three girls above, may be seen as tantamount to rape. Nevertheless, girls struggled with classifying their experience of sexual violence in this way. None of the girls who had been physically coerced into sexual intercourse defined their experience as rape. To have done so may have involved too great a realisation of what their boyfriend had done to them in the past, or in one case what their current partner may have been continuing to do[1]. This confirmed our initial assumption concerning the use of the word "rape" in the survey, as discussed under "Research aims and methodology" on page 11. For many of these girls such violence was not an isolated incident but had been present throughout the relationship. Sexual violence involving physical force was generally accompanied by other forms of partner violence and high levels of control. The dynamics of partner control are explored later in this section.

More girls spoke to us about their experiences of sexual violence based on pressure. Again, in most instances these accounts were restricted to past boyfriends, although some referred to their present partner's behaviour:

[1] The research team ensured that a professional was aware of the sexual violence.

Rebecca:	He tried making me, he like, he was like oh, he kept trying to make me have sex with him and I was like, and first of all I was like "no no no" and then he was like trying kissing my neck and stuff like that to try and make me do it…I was like "no no no" because I hadn't done it before, he was like "go on, go on, go on" and I was like "no" and then I finally like give in to him and we went off to go and do it. But obviously like I was like "I don't want to do it", it was the most stupid place he took me.
Interviewer:	Did he keep trying?
Rebecca:	Yeah and I was like "no I can't I can't" and he, oh my god, and he made me suck his dick and it was horrible, and then he never made me but he kept telling me to do it and I was like "no", because I'd never done anything like that before and I was like "no, no, no" and then I done it and it was proper horrible and I'm never doing it again but it was horrible and I can't believe I done it. Then like afterwards where I'd been seeing him for so long I thought we'd go out with each other this that and the other, like being stupid, but then afterwards, once he done that he didn't really speak to me again [nervous laughing] and I was so young as well, I didn't know what I was doing.

In the above quote, Rebecca clearly stated that although she persistently said "no", her boyfriend ignored this and continued to demand a sexual act. She continued that eventually she performed the sexual act against her wishes, although she also stressed she was not physically "forced". Nevertheless, the extensive coercive pressure placed on girls and its persistent nature should not be underestimated. It may be perceived that sexual violence involving physical force is significantly more detrimental to wellbeing than sexual violence through coercion. However, as Rebecca showed in her recollection, although the actual physical act was traumatic, this was also accompanied by overwhelming feelings of guilt due to "allowing" herself to comply. Indeed, three years after the incident it was still the fact that she "gave-in" to his demands that caused her most distress. This assessment of weakness and its impact was mirrored in many of the girls' retrospective accounts. Professionals need to recognise that the impact of sexual pressure can be as damaging as other forms of sexual violence.

Most forms of sexual coercion used by male partners were generally much more subtle than the persistent sexual demands placed on the above 12-year-old girl by her 15-year-old partner. Interviews revealed two ways in which sexual coercion was presented in girls' accounts. Either the behaviour was overtly recognised and defined as sexual coercion; more commonly, its presence was suggested in discussions, but not explicitly identified as constituting sexual violence. In these accounts sexual coercion was most frequently exercised through five strategies: loss of partner,

allusion to love, accusations of immaturity, manipulation of saying "no" and fear tactics.

Loss of partner

Possibly one of the most powerful forms of sexual coercion that boys used was introducing the fear that they may lose their partner if they did not comply:

Jordynn:	I said I didn't want to go any further but they persistently asked and asked and if they don't get their own way they put on like a strop. Like [name of boyfriend] storms out and then you feel like well you can feel like "yeah OK then whatever makes you happy" sort of thing…
Interviewer:	And how have you felt about that afterwards?
Jordynn:	I felt, because obviously he felt happy, like maybe I was insecure in the relationship that the fact that he might leave me if not.
Sarah:	Uh huh, I think that boys put pressure on the lassies to go further than they want too.
Interviewer:	What type of pressure?
Sarah:	Like saying that they are not going to stay with them and they will go and get somebody else that will do it.

The above extracts show how girls can routinely defer their own wishes for their partner's sexual gratification, including having sexual intercourse. It is also important to acknowledge partners' awareness of their own actions in these situations. In these cases, girls are clearly demonstrating they do not wish to continue, as evidenced by the way in which Jordynn's boyfriend "storms" out of the room. Therefore, it is not that male partners are getting "carried away" or that they are failing to read the signs of female non-consent. Many of the girls who experienced this felt that the fear of losing a partner was too great a risk to take.

Allusion to love

Often linked to the fear of losing a partner were insinuations concerning love: specifically, if they loved them, they would do what they asked. Such pressure was not generally used by boys quite so flagrantly but through a more subtle form of pressure, which sought to instil a sense of obligation:

Louise:	Well they kind of…like say…it was like they manipulate you into thinking that's what you had to do. Like if you *really* respect (love) them…they try and do that…That was quite hard, I remember that. Because you know I was like young so…
Interviewer:	Yeah. So did you end up…did you do anything that you didn't feel comfortable doing?

Louise: Yeah. A few times…then like the next day I'd be like "God, can't believe that happened" you know.

Accusations of immaturity

Some girls stated that older boys used pressure based on the age difference, which sought to emphasise the younger partner's lack of sexual maturity. Inherent in this form of sexual pressure was the fear that they may be replaced by an older, more sexually active, girlfriend (McCarry 2003):

Karen: Also like…also when the boys are saying stuff it makes you feel bad and makes you want to like show that you're not afraid of doing things.
Anita: Yeah.
Karen: And that you don't want to be the only one...
Anita: Yeah.
Karen: The only one that hasn't.

Manipulation of saying "No"

For the majority of girls who experienced sexual coercion, saying "no" to their partner's demands was extremely difficult. Previous work has shown that perceptions of "no" in heterosexual relationships are gender-specific. Hird (2000) shows how girls generally view verbal expression of non-consent as sufficient, while boys demand physical as well as verbal signs, such as pushing them away or removing hands and so forth.

Some girls had developed defensive strategies to resist unwanted sex, but most felt they had little choice but to endure it. A common theme to emerge was that active defiance of sexual coercion was often too risky a strategy to employ, due to the fear of making their partner angry, and consequently many girls resorted to "passive resistance". As evidenced in the quote below, often girls felt that saying "no" was extremely problematic. However, some male partners used this reluctance to their own advantage:

Laura: To say "no" is really kind of big; like got to say no because you really don't want to do this, and usually in my head it's like I'm going to count down from ten and then I'm going to say no.

Interviewer: So how did you deal with that when he was trying to force you?
Tasminder: I didn't, I just went with the flow really. I was just crying, I was just crying and crying and crying.

In Tasminder's account, the sexual violence continued even though the victim was clearly distressed throughout her ordeal. Thus, in this situation, as in many others, it

was not that the "signs" of non-consent had been misinterpreted. Her partner was clearly aware that he was forcing his girlfriend into sexual intercourse. A few participants reported enduring sexual coercion up to a point and then removing themselves from the situation when it became too difficult to tolerate any longer. However, this strategy seemed to be mostly applied in situations that did not involve a serious long-term partner:

Natalie:	But they [one-off encounter] have like tried to kiss me and that and take me away like…one boy like.
Interviewer:	What did you do?
Natalie:	Oh I just let him carry on like. But then I just walked off. I don't know.
Interviewer:	When he got to a certain point?
Natalie:	Yeah.
Zoe:	Um, yeah he uum…he took me back to his house and he was really determined for me to wank him off and I was like "not being funny, no".
Interviewer:	Was this fairly soon after you started going out?
Zoe:	Yeah it was after the first couple of days and he was like "oh come on" and I was like "no". And he was like, would you ever and I was like, I dunno but I'm not going to do it after the first couple of days you know. I do have some pride, but he then he just kept pushing and pushing and pushing and I went home.

Fear tactics

In some instances the sexual coercion experienced by the girls interviewed was also underpinned by threats of intimidation and violence. Many of these girls were too scared of their partners' reaction to refuse their demands:

Amy:	Sometimes I just really didn't want to do anything. I'd rather just sit there, it was kind of weird, he just wouldn't want that. So then I thought if I don't he'll just get mad with me and I don't want that so I just let him get on with it.
Interviewer:	So you used to do it because you were scared then sometimes?
Amy:	Yeah…He wanted to do it all the time and I just didn't want to do that and then it got to the end when I didn't want to do it at all if it was with him…he wanted it all the time and I never 'cos if I didn't go out with him he'd go mad.
Interviewer:	So you're on your own in the house looking after the little ones [younger sibling as mother worked evenings]?
Amy:	Which I don't mind doing but then it got out of hand when he come round at night and like if he could hear someone talking and it would be the tele he would be trying to get in the house and stuff and I wouldn't let him in because I knew he was going to go mad and stuff.

Often these relationships initially contained coerced sexual intercourse as well as consensual sexual experiences. However, as described by Amy, as the relationship progressed the consensual aspect often declined. For some, this meant that towards the end of the relationships the majority of their sexual experiences were negative.

The difficulty for girls of experiencing consensual (and enjoyable) sexual experiences alongside sexual violence could be very confusing. Indeed, some girls were already struggling with very complex issues regarding how to determine if their partner's behaviour constituted sexual coercion:

> Jasleen: But how do you know if someone's using you or not? How can you tell if someone's using you for sex, how would you tell…because you don't know if they're genuine or not?

Many girls perceived that boys' use of sexual pressure was not simply due to "getting carried away" or not being able to correctly "read the signs" of non-consent (Hird 2000), but was more premeditated:

> Louise: Yeah the guys like think, well you know sometimes it seems as if some guys actually have a plan just to kind of from the start as if they're only wanting one thing, some guys.

In one case, even when a partner had previously been a long-term friend, this held little protection against sexual coercion and made the impact of the violence even greater:

> Jordynn: I wasn't really concentrating on that part of the relationship to be honest and we were like best friends for years so it was really hard to deal with the fact that he lied and just yeah manipulated me [to have sexual intercourse].

Around half of the girls interviewed had a direct experience of sexual violence or coercion. Even more recounted numerous examples of friends who had experienced such violence from their male partners. This provided additional weight to our analysis:

> Interviewer: Is it something that happens in your friends' relationships, pushing and shoving?
> Kelly: I know one of my friends who was in like, she's got scars on her back and everything.
> Interviewer: From her partner?
> Kelly: Who did it because she didn't want to do stuff [sexual].
> Interviewer: Is she still with him?
> Kelly: No…I think she's stronger than that.

In the above abstract Kelly concludes that her friend was "strong" enough to end the relationship, which may conversely imply that to remain in a violent relationship would indicate a degree of weakness. The implications of viewing victims who

remain in such relationships as weak, and perhaps therefore as less "deserving", will be discussed later in the section on young people's responses to disclosure.

Although about half of girls interviewed did not have a direct experience of sexual violence, there was a widespread concern about the general threat of male sexual violence:

Interviewer:	In general do you think that's something that happens in young people's relationships?
Hannah:	Sometimes it will happen if boys are just wanting some stuff, they just get aggressive and push and stuff and say you better do this or that and they just basically get forced into doing stuff they don't want to.
Interviewer:	Is that something that you've had friends talk to you about?
Hannah:	Uum no, none of my friends.
Interviewer:	It's just something you're aware of goes on sometimes.
Hannah:	Aye.

For many, male sexual coercion was perceived as a standard, though still unacceptable, aspect of heterosexual relationships:

Gail:	That just sounds like a normal boy doesn't it? Gets jealous when they don't do it [sex].

Girls spoke about boys their own age being very immature, not wanting a serious commitment and being preoccupied with the availability of sex:

Interviewer:	A year or two [older], is that quite common for girls to have like older boyfriends?
Natasha:	Say for our age group now I reckon it is quite common, no one tends to go out with people that are our age.
Interviewer:	Oh really, why's that?
Seraya:	Because they're either immature or [interrupted]
Natasha:	Just want sex.
Seraya:	They're into being with their friends a lot and they just mess about and if you're looking for something serious you don't want someone that's always messing around.
Natasha:	No time for you.

In contrast, older boys were perceived as more emotionally mature, who understood the seriousness of a long-term relationship and who could provide them with emotional intimacy:

Interviewer:	Do girls generally have older boyfriends?
Michelle:	I think they do because older guys are more sensible, whereas guys our age are dead immature and stuff so we don't really like them.
Interviewer:	So do you think that's quite a general thing then…?
Michelle:	Yeah, I think they do like older people.

But this position was paradoxical. Having an older boyfriend, generally where the age gap was more than a year, was commonly linked to increased levels of sexual coercion. As the age gap increased so did girls' evaluations of sexual risk. Some girls acknowledged that older partners held increased expectations regarding sex and that these expectations would negatively impact on the safety of a younger partner:

Michelle:	Yeah because he would want to do it more than she did if he was older and he's a guy.
Interviewer:	So do you think there are different expectations if the boyfriend is older?
Michelle:	Yeah.

The majority of girls who recognised the risks involved in having an older partner stated they had relationships only with boys either their own age or slightly older. However, some girls with an older partner recognised that the risk to their welfare was too great to sustain:

Interviewer:	Do you think that was something [sex] that he was expecting at his age?
Julie:	I think so…he wasn't like that, he wasn't like being pushy or anything, but like I kind of felt that he like wanted to so, I didn't and I wouldn't do for like quite a while so I didn't think it was fair to him really.
Interviewer:	So you didn't think it was fair to him?
Julie:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	How did you pick up on that?
Julie:	Like he kept trying to take things further but he wasn't, but I would just say no, but he wasn't like pushing it and pushing it…He would just be "OK", he wouldn't get angry or anything he would just say "That's OK".
Interviewer:	OK and how did you feel about it all?
Julie:	I don't know, I was really young and like, thinking back I was just, I don't know, I just knew that I wasn't ready.
Interviewer:	Yeah because you were only 14 weren't you?
Julie:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Do you think...if you had carried on going out with him…you would have ended up just doing it...?
Julie:	Yeah, that's why, that's kind of why I broke up with him, because I knew I would end up probably and I didn't really want to.

Additionally, girls identified that the inequalities present in these relationships, including financial, meant that the younger partner may be vulnerable:

Louise:	He was, like at the start he did kind of pamper me, and I was 12, I hadn't been used to that. I was like "Oh oh, that's quite good"…can you imagine – 12 years old, starting to be a teenager, getting into, you know starting secondary, there's this guy you know older, pampering you, yeah that's cool…So it's easy to kind of get into that.

Nevertheless the attraction of having an older boyfriend and the status this provides in some peer groups should not be underestimated.

Although the research was concerned with exploring partner violence, we also recognised that this form of violence is not experienced in isolation. Thus, the role of wider structural inequalities in shaping young people's experiences requires recognition. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that girls' experiences of sexual violence and harassment are not restricted to their intimate relationships or encounters, but also shape their lives more generally (Kelly 1988):

Leya: Well just like guys, because it happened like last week when we were on study leave and I was walking up the road with one of my friends. And then three guys from our year then came over and they were all like putting their arms around me and everything. My friend was actually on the phone so she didn't know and then when we got like around the corner, when she got off the phone, I was like "Vicky" and then she turned around and she was like, "what are you doing to her?". And then we went a different way but it wasn't like that kissing or anything.

This wider male sexual harassment and violence had long-lasting negative effects on young people's welfare:

Interviewer: Have you ever felt any pressure from any of the boys that you have been with?
Chellise: Not that I have relationships with, there is some boys in the school that like keep asking me to have sex with them and I am just like "no", like on a daily basis.
Interviewer: What, they just ask you to have sex?
Chellise: Yeah, on a daily basis and like they will walk around school and try dragging me into corners and feel me up and everything and it's just irritating because they just don't understand.
Interviewer: Really?
Chellise: No, they don't understand no means no and it's just irritating.
Interviewer: Do you ever tell a teacher or anything?
Chellise: Yeah there was an incident before like some boys, they was like six or seven of them and they did the same thing to me and my friend and feeling us up and pulling up our skirts and dragging us into corners and stuff. And we actually told the teachers. And it got into one big thing and police were involved and I had to go to court and everything and it was just a long process and in the end of all that nothing happened…Because the amount of grief that I got off it, I stayed off school for how long because the amount of grief that I got off it.

The role of media technologies, such as social networking sites, also provides the mechanism for wider sexual harassment to infiltrate many aspects of young people's lives. The use of media technology in relationships will be explored in more depth later in this section:

Zoe: I experienced that from a random guy online, like thinking I was his girlfriend, but I just like kind of told him like "I'm nothing to do with you, do you want to stop" kind of thing.

These wider experiences of sexual violence and harassment, alongside partner sexual violence, provide an overall context in which girls' experiences of sexual violence need to be situated. However, in a minority of accounts, the role of the wider female peer group in underpinning sexual pressure was recognised:

Interviewer: When you were saying like you know some girls get pressured into it, is it any of your friends?
Michelle: I think one of my friends did it because most of her [female] friends had, if that makes sense. I got dead upset about it, I was like "Why" but not a lot of my friends have.

Only three girls stated that they thought girls could be instigators of sexual violence, although no female participants acknowledged that they had acted in this way:

Kelly: I know actually quite a few people in school where it's the girls who does it [sexual pressure].

Girls' experiences of emotional partner violence

Reflecting the survey findings, the most commonly experienced form of partner violence was emotional. In the research, such violence was defined as non-physical behaviour aimed at intentionally harming or controlling another person emotionally (Barter et al 2004). Compared to physical or sexual violence a greater proportion of girls reported both mutually-occurring and instigating emotional partner violence. However, girls also often positioned their use of emotional violence as being fundamentally different, both in origin and impact, to that of boys'. This was the only form of violence that girls spoke about perpetrating without it being a response to their partner's initial use of violence.

The most prevalent form of emotional violence reported by girls was "coercive control" (Stark 2007) and surveillance. This form of abuse is defined as behaviour that is aimed at intentionally harming or controlling another person emotionally or psychologically and is underpinned by wider gender inequalities (Lacasse and Mendelson 2007). Actions identified as constituting coercive control include: manipulation; controlling or restricting movements, decisions and/or autonomy;

isolation from support; humiliating or disrespectful behaviour; verbal abuse; exploitation; and domination (Sears et al 2007).

In our research, coercive control by partners was reported both by girls who also experienced other forms of partner violence and by those who had not. But the manner and extent to which control was exercised in these relationships was often quite distinct. Partners who used physical or sexual violence more often used less subtle and more direct forms of control and surveillance, and were less likely to attempt to justify their actions. Where control was used in isolation from other forms of violence, it was often more difficult for recipients to determine its presence and the detrimental impact on their wellbeing at the time:

Louise:	Uh the first guy definitely, he got really really possessive.
Interviewer:	Really?
Louise:	Well actually quite a few guys just got really possessive.
Interviewer:	So like how would they act possessive? What would they do?
Louise:	Wouldn't let me out with anybody, if I wasn't phoning them or texting them, it was basically the same as that.
Interviewer:	Really?
Louise:	Yeah, you know they'd get really annoyed if I was talking to somebody else and stuff like that.
Interviewer:	What if you were talking to another girl or another boy?
Louise:	Both.
Interviewer:	Both?
Louise:	Just "No you're mine, and you're not allowed to do with anything else" and then they'd get really angry.
Interviewer:	And what did you think about that?
Louise:	Well I don't like that at all. I was like "No leave me alone". Well the first guy I didn't know, well the older you get the more you handle it. You know like these days I'm kind of like "Well if you're going to act like that, bye". But you know then, a few years ago I'd have just like tried to be nice to them.

When control was used by male partners who were also physically violent, its scope was often all-encompassing and virtually impossible for girls to oppose:

Emma:	Like when I'd be out with my friends and he'd drag me off and say he didn't want me out any longer and I'd got to go in and it could be like half past six.
Amy:	Yeah like saying "I don't like her" or "I don't like him", "you're not allowed to speak to them any more".
Interviewer:	And what would you say?
Amy:	I'd say at the end of the day they're my friends I'll speak to whoever I want to and then he'd get really mad.
Interviewer:	So if you did see the people he didn't want you to see what would happen?
Amy:	He'd drag me away from them.
Interviewer:	Physically drag you away?

Amy: Yeah. Just drag me away and then say that I'm not allowed out kind of thing unless it's with him, I'm with him, or I've got some lads to keep an eye on me he didn't trust me…I'd go out with my friends and then he'd turn up or I'd have to go down with his friends and I weren't…I'd just have to sit there and I wasn't allowed to move or anything…and then he'd get funny with his friends if they tried to talk to me.

Physical intimidation was also used more widely by male partners to control the lives of their girlfriends:

Keira: I didn't like it [the control], I just didn't tell him things like, that time I was telling you about when I was on MSN [online instant messaging] and that boy said "Hi" and he said tell him to go away, tell him he can't talk to you. And all the boys downstairs [block of flats] none of them used to like speak to me any more because if they did then, because they used to be friends and then they were used to [name of boyfriend] and…everyone was like oh well don't if you speak to Keira that's [fight] going to happen.

Control usually centred on two distinct areas: the wish to restrict and determine a partner's movement; and the desire to disrupt, or in some cases sever, friendship networks. A principal component of this control involved continual surveillance. A central mechanism to enhance the level of surveillance was through the use of mobile phones, specifically the use of text messages. Violent partners often used their own peer networks as a means to keep partners under observation and to extend their control over them. A few also attempted to coerce their girlfriend's own friends into reporting her movements and interactions. Nonetheless, control did not have to be underpinned by physical violence or intimidation to impact negatively on girls' lives:

Hannah: No it's not happened to me, it's my friends, well actually it has happened to me.
Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that?
Hannah: Well I was going out with this boy and he was jealous all the time. And I was hanging out with my friends, and he wanted to know where I was 24/7, and he wouldn't stop phoning me. He wasn't texting me he was phoning me and in the morning he'd phone at nine o'clock in the morning and texting me like to find out where I was…so I says to him come round about 11 and he probably thinks I would sneak off somewhere else earlier seeing as how I wasn't available at 10.

Although Hannah initially began by denying her own experience of control, she then retracted this and decided to speak to the researcher about her partner's controlling behaviour. Her experience of being under continual surveillance, through texts and phone calls, mirrored many other girls' experiences. Although boys may not use

physical violence directly to control their girlfriends' lives, often their actions could still place their partners' physical safety in jeopardy (Stark 2007):

Keira: He wouldn't shout he used to just, once round there it was me and my friends and we went into [name of place] to see someone else. And then when we come back he had been phoning my friend like to see where I was and she just like not answered her phone because she didn't hear it. And then we came back and he was like "why didn't you answer your phone". And we were walking back and his other friend was there and he went across the road. And then I said something to him [friend] and then he was like "oh just hang about with him then" and he just went home and it was like half 11 [pm] and he just went home and I was by myself and then he just used to do stuff like that.

Other forms of control were exercised more subtly. This made it more difficult for recipients to determine if their partners' actions were an indication of possessiveness rather than care:

Lisa: Yeah if I wasn't online or if I wouldn't pick up my phone or anything he would call my friend, who he is really good friends with as well, and ask where I was and stuff and just ask about me all the time.
Interviewer: How did that feel for you?
Lisa: I was a bit flattered because he was really sweet but he didn't act like this really I suppose.

In these situations girls were unable to specify exactly how the control was exercised, but were aware of its implications:

Moira: I make the decisions but I make them to suit him, like I decide not to go out but I'm doing it to keep him happy which is probably wrong.

Many girls felt that, although a partner's behaviour at the time of the relationship appeared acceptable, when the relationships ended they were able to recognise the level of control being exercised:

Interviewer: So he would be out with his pals and you were meant to wait for him?
Keira: He used to have to do go away places like, I don't know what for he just used to go. And I would just end up not going out that much and then he used to be like "why are you going out with them if I am not out" or "what do you want to go out for?"…
Interviewer: So what did you think then, when he was saying to you, well I am not going to be here but I don't want you going out, I want you to stay in?
Keira: I used to think that it was OK then but I don't now.

Occasionally it was only through the research interview that young people began to question their previous relationship experiences:

Interviewer:	When you were going out together, who used to make the decisions, do you think, about where you were gonna' go at the weekend and things like that?
Tanya:	Uum, mainly him I think because if I said something that he didn't want to do, that's kind of it. 'Cos if he wanted to go somewhere even if I didn't want to, I still would, because he wanted to.
Interviewer:	That doesn't sound very fair?
Tanya:	Yes I know [*laughing*].

Interviewer:	So when you saw him like every night after school, was that his choice to see you every night after school or your choice?
Natalie:	Both like really.
Interviewer:	Both?
Natalie:	But sometimes I did prefer to go out with my friends like but…I don't know.

In some instances girls' evaluations of acceptable levels of control were viewed by the researchers as being problematic. An explanation commonly given by girls in an attempt to understand and justify their partner's behaviour surrounded being cared for and loved:

Interviewer:	Have you experienced that, boys that want to know where you are all the time?
Anita:	Yeah.
Karen:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Yeah you've both experienced that, how do you feel about that?
Karen:	It is nice but then after a while it does get a bit annoying.
Interviewer:	Uum?
Karen:	Because it shows that they do actually want to know that…
Interviewer:	Does it feel…like you're loved or does it feel like you're checked up on then?
Karen:	It does.
Anita:	It feels both.
Karen:	I think mostly loved, but…

It is important to recognise that in many of the relationships young people spoke to us about, a high degree of communication through social networking technologies was present. This may represent a significantly different aspect of teenage relationships compared to adult ones:

Rebecca:	Yeah, he was like he obviously rings me and texts me and all that, like all the time, but I don't mind about that.

Kelly:	In a way that is kind of similar to me and Ben [boyfriend], he doesn't like when boys are around, pulls me closer and stuff like that, we don't walk

around holding each other's hands constantly. But we text each other every day, he rings me at night and if I'm not like, if we're out I've got to text him when I get home to make sure he knows I'm home and all right and then he'll ring me later on at night.

Interviewer: And would it happen the other way round as well like if he was out you'd want him to text you?

Kelly: Yeah.

Interviewer: Does it feel like you're checking up on each other or does it feel like a caring thing?

Kelly: It's more a caring thing.

The above findings support earlier studies, which argue that young people may be less likely than adults to recognise emotional victimisation and control in their intimate relationships (Lavoie at al 2000; Sanders 2003, Sears at al 2006). However, some girls did recognise that their partners' behaviour had been unacceptable. Generally, this awareness was restricted to the action of ex-partners rather than current boyfriends. Most often in these instances girls clearly identified that their partner's behaviour was due to unfounded jealously and the wish to control their lives:

Interviewer: I know you said that's what your boyfriend did…

Moira: …he would be always phoning and texting, "who's there, what you's doing?" He does stupid stuff like, the shops are right across the road from my house and a lot of boys hang about in [name of place] obviously because boys hang about everywhere. And let's say if we were to get a Chinese for dinner, or something, then it would always bother him because he would be worried who would be at the Chinese, if the boys would be there. Just stupid stuff like that.

Interviewer: Is that about jealousy?

Sarah: Aye.

Interviewer: Jealous of you speaking to another guy?

Sarah: Aye.

Interviewer: And why do you think he's jealous?

Sarah: Don't know. He is being insecure.

Interviewer: And how do you feel when he acts jealous?

Sarah: That annoys me, he's no reason to get jealous. I never ever done anything for him to not trust me.

Rhiannon: Sort of yeah, not as bad as that. 'Cos when it come to the point of "Well where you to then?" "Why are you doing that with them?" I just told him "Right, if you're going to be like that then I don't want to know any more at the end of the day, 'cos I've got a life as well." And you went with your friends, I just seen you out with them and it could be someone else couldn't it?

An aspect of this control by male partners extended to comments surrounding the appropriateness of their girlfriend's clothes:

Keira: Fine, fine, arguing like arguing but it's nothing serious. He once like, he split up because he was moaning about me, the way I was dressed or

> something. He was saying that I dressed too revealing and I know that I don't and I was like, "OK if you are going to say that then I am not going to worry about if what I am wearing if it's going to upset you and everything."…Like my friend Paula just now she is going out with some guy and he phone her saying "put on a skirt or else I am not coming to see you" and I was like, "what are you doing?"...and she was like "oh no it's fine" and he always does stuff like that to her.

The effects of control left a few girls isolated from peer support networks and, paradoxically, more reliant on the person who had initiated it:

Interviewer:	So is there anything bad about your relationship?
Sarah:	Well you don't get to see your pals as often and when you fall out with your boyfriend, you feel as though you don't have anybody.
Interviewer:	And so how does that make you feel then, when you fall out?
Sarah:	Really lonely…because if I don't have him I don't have anybody.

The difficulty many girls encountered in recognising the presence of control in their relationship is worrying, especially as this can result in the gradual erosion of peer support networks. Interventions aimed at reducing partner violence for teenagers will need to incorporate not only overt forms of violence but also the more elusive and less visible aspects of partner control.

Girls also reported their own use of controlling behaviours, although this was less frequent than reports of being a recipient of control. Generally, this concerned the need to know what their partners' movements were and who they were seeing, thus reflecting boys' own use of control:

Interviewer:	How do you feel about Hassan [boy in vignette story] particularly in that?
Jessica:	Um, he sounds like me.
Interviewer:	Do you do that?
Jessica:	Yeah, all the time.
Interviewer:	Why do you think you do that?
Jessica:	I don't know, I'm just…even though it's stupid because I knew he wouldn't do anything and that…But I just. Yeah, Hassan might really like her and might not want to ever see them two split up, that's why he might want to know where she is and that, so he knows them two are all right.
Interviewer:	So is that kind of why you do it, because you like him so much really and you want to…
Jessica:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	How does your partner feel about that, does he mind?
Jessica:	I don't know, he does sometimes, but not really.
Interviewer:	Does he feel kind of loved or does he feel controlled or checked up on?
Jessica:	Not too sure, we are with each other all the time usually anyway. We are quite…I don't know, he might feel a bit of both.
Interviewer:	Do you think it's a boy thing or a girl thing or both, that checking up on people?

Tracey: I think it's a bit of both really. Because like one of my friends, she don't trust her boyfriend at all.

However, the majority of girls felt that the reasons girls and boys used control was fundamentally different and stemmed from different causes:

Karen: Because sometime you think why are they with me kind of thing when like they could get other people, so you are always checking up…
Nicole: Girls like seem like they worry about them more but boys are more like they get angrier like. They do something more about it like girls just moan but boys will like…
Interviewer: What sort of thing do boys do?
Nicole: …Overall they're like, they're more over-protective of the girls than the girls are over the boys.

One female participant spoke about control in a same-sex relationship. Interestingly, and in contrast to most of the girls' evaluations, Jodie commented that girls use surveillance more than boys:

Jodie: The person I'm with now is quite like that actually.
Interviewer: …Does she get in touch quite often?
Jodie: Yeah if I don't ring her she's like "Why didn't you ring me? Don't you love me any more?" I was like "Well you know I've only just come back from school, I don't want to ring you just yet. Give me time, leave me alone."
Interviewer: So she would like you to be in touch every day?
Jodie: Yeah. I have to talk to her every day on the phone, at least once a day…and she texts me a lot. And if I haven't got credit she texts me about four times saying "Get credit, get credit, get credit". And it's like "All right I'll get credit, hang on."
Interviewer: Mm. Is it something you could talk about?
Jodie: Yeah. Yeah it is. But I think I'd just get…"I love you, why don't you like it?" – things like that. It's annoying.
Interviewer: Yes, the "I love you" thing is a pretty powerful tool isn't it?
Jodie: Girls do it more. 'Cos girls don't trust boys as much as boys trust girls. 'Cos girls get addicted to people more than boys do to be honest I think.

As indicated in many of the above illustrations, the role of mobile telephones and internet social networking sites was a central feature of nearly all young people's relationships. This role that "online" spaces and new technologies (such as mobile phones and texting) play in perpetuating exploitation and control in teenage relationships is explored later in this section.

Following coercive control, the most frequently reported form of emotional violence was name-calling. Often girls used name-calling or shouting in the context of a wider

argument. In many of their evaluations, they presumed that the actual impact of their actions on their partners' welfare was minimal, at least in the long term:

Interviewer:	Have you ever been in a relationship where you felt scared?
Natasha:	No, no, I've just argued a lot, a lot, every other week over stupid things… It's mostly me doing the shouting and screaming, just silly really.
Interviewer:	And when you are arguing, does it ever get to the point where he is calling you names and stuff? Or you calling him names?
Sarah:	I usually call him names…Like he thinks he fat, so then when we are arguing I call him fat, just to annoy him 'cos I know he thinks he is fat, but he isn't really.
Interviewer:	Does that hurt him?
Sarah:	Aye. It did at first, I think he just ignores it now 'cos I'm talking rubbish.

Mutual shouting and name-calling seemed to be a common aspect of some teenage relationships where more positive forms of conflict resolution had still to be developed. Importantly, in most instances where girls used emotional violence, either as an instigator or when it was reciprocal, no other forms of partner violence existed. Thus, it may be that girls feel able to initiate such abuse, or reciprocate, only when they feel the threat of physical or sexual retaliation is minimal:

Interviewer:	…What sort of thing do you do which you regret afterwards then?
Jessica:	I don't know, I calls him names sometimes and that.
Interviewer:	What do you call him?
Jessica:	Like an idiot, fatty and all that.
Interviewer:	Is he fat?
Jessica:	He is a bit [unclear], he's not even that fat.
Interviewer:	Does he call you names as well?
Jessica:	No, he winds me up.
Interviewer:	How did you feel when he shouted at you?
Hannah:	I felt angry and annoyed and I just started shouting at him.
Interviewer:	Did you manage to sort that one out?
Hannah:	I said to him I don't see why you were shouting at me just because I'm your girlfriend. You think it's me because [unclear] whereas you've no right to do that and then he says I'm sorry.
Interviewer:	So that's only happened once?
Hannah:	Once, aye.

Even in relationships where physical violence had not occurred, girls were still aware of the possible dangers that a confrontation may pose. For example, in the extract below, Seraya, following her friend's assertion, acknowledged her own use of emotional abuse. However, she also counteracted this by applying a double standard of impact, whereby her actions were minimised while the serious impact of her boyfriend's behaviour was emphasised:

Seraya: We had arguments, like before like petty ones. Like if I crack a joke and he takes it the wrong way or whatever. But it's not to the point where, he would never get physical with me or hit me or nothing like that.
Interviewer: What does he do…?
Seraya: Probably just shouts but not to the point where I feel like violence is going to start. Like once he did shout once and I was kind of scared because I'd never heard him shout before.
Natasha: You're the one who's always shouting.
Seraya: I'm the one who's always shouting, so it's like no. And then that one time it was like I had never seen that side to him so I was like gosh. But I didn't feel like he was going to hit me.

In the extract, Seraya explicitly stated on three separate occasions that her boyfriend would not use physical violence. But, at the beginning she emphasised that her use of emotional abuse in the form of jokes and the hurt this caused was contained in acceptable limits. This may be seen to imply that a threshold of harm exists, which, if breached, may result in some partners retaliating physically, although she stressed her boyfriend would not. In a few accounts, explicit name-calling was identified:

Keira: He used to just, he used to just call me a bitch and stuff and cow.
Interviewer: Did he?
Keira: Yeah and then he starting calling me a slut as well, but I am not he went "yeah but you will turn into one".

Interviewer: What did he used to do when he got in a stress?
Natalie: Oh nothing, he just like would say that I was nasty and sick and all that and that I'm leaving him for my friends.

In other cases emotional violence involved the direct use of intimidation:

Rebecca: He used to drive it [moped] really close to me like come speeding up to me, just like literally stop in time and he's been drinking as well, and I'm thinking…and I had so many arguments, blatantly all our arguments practically was on that. I'd say to him "look you drive that bike near me again and I swear to god" because I don't like bikes myself…Yeah it was annoying, because usually I don't know if he's been drinking, I don't know if he's going to turn this way, or turn that way, so you've just got to stand there like, and it's so annoying.

Kelly: He goes "I was so close to it" he goes "but I couldn't". We had a picture took going back last year in November and I went round his house that day and the picture was smashed.
Interviewer: He'd got angry with the picture?
Kelly: And he's got angry and punched it. He goes "it was either that or your face" and he goes "and there's no way on earth it would be your face".

The majority of girls who experienced physical violence also reported some form of emotional violence. In these accounts girls rarely used emotional violence in retaliation.

In some cases it was not necessarily obvious if a partner's behaviour constituted emotional violence. Often distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour were difficult for girls to clearly define, especially if partners were able to explain their actions in terms of "concern and care". However, in many instances girls reported that behaviour that they had initially viewed as "caring" became more obviously abusive as the relationships progressed:

Leona:	Yeah like if you don't answer your phone, like "Why don't you answer your phone?" "Where were you?" and stuff like that. Or if you're going out like "Don't do anything that I wouldn't do'' and stuff like that. "Make sure you behave yourself" and stuff like that. It's just like too much if you know what I mean, like.
Interviewer:	OK. So did you think he was being like that because he cared about you, or was he being over-protective, like you say or…
Leona:	I don't know, just like um, I don't know maybe it's like a bit of both, like that he cares, but it's just like became too much if you know what I mean.
Tanya:	I don't know. I don't really think so, I just think I just used to annoy him because I wasn't that confident in myself, but I think that did annoy him…
Interviewer:	And how did he used to show he was annoyed?
Tanya:	'Cos he used to actually, he used to, if there was something that he didn't like he used to tell me what he didn't like.
Interviewer:	About you?
Tanya:	Yes. Like if he thought that I'd done something that he didn't like then he'd phone me up and he'd be like it's kind of annoying how you're doing this and that and stuff. He used to be honest but…because it was only towards the end of the relationship, when he used to say it in a hurtful way but before, he just used to be like more understanding about it.

Although Tanya acknowledged that towards the end of the relationship her partner's behaviour was unacceptable, she still stated that prior to this he was acting in her own best interests. Tanya also stated that her lack of self-esteem was linked to the conflict with her partner. She did, however, fail to reflect on how her partner's attitude towards her may have compounded her negative feelings in this area. Such conceptualisations enable positive perceptions of the relationship to remain intact, thus reducing the need for girls to question their earlier experiences and, possibly more importantly, the need to re-evaluate how much they were valued and respected by their partner. Girls also reported more subtle forms of behaviour, which were more difficult to recognise as abusive, even though they made them feel unhappy.

Interviewer:	…And after, did you manage to sort of calm it down then?
Rhiannon:	Yeah, sort of realised then, well maybe I'm over-reacting a bit.
Interviewer:	Mm. What was he doing? Was he using mobiles?

Rhiannon: Yeah mobile phone. Didn't ever shout at me or anything like that, just the tone of the attitude like, and was like "Who do you think you're talking to?"

"Winding-up" was also a mechanism used in relationships to cause conflict. This mechanism has been identified in recent research with adult men (Stanley et al 2009). However, such behaviour was frequently undertaken under the guise of humour, making it difficult for the recipient to have its impact properly recognised:

Interviewer: Is there anything in your sort of current relationship…that you didn't like?
Isabella: Um yes. Boys will be boys, like making little remarks.
Interviewer: Right, what sort of remarks?
Isabella: Um things like you know they're really immature about periods and everything like that that girls go through?
Interviewer: Yes?
Isabella: When like I'm trying to talk to friends and he'll but in, I go "no hold on, hold on, like I wanna talk", and then he'll get lairy 'cos he wants to talk to me and then I'll say "just wait a minute" and he'll say "'Oh Period Pains" like that. And just comments like, oh it drives me mad and he knows it annoys me which is why he does it.
Interviewer: Why do you think he does that?
Isabella: I don't know he just thinks it's funny 'cos he likes to wind me up…'Cos he knows I can't stay mad at him sort of thing so he knows how to wind me up. He has all these little ways. But then he always ends up saying sorry and stuff. I mean it never leads to anything like a big argument; but it's the little things that really annoy me!
Interviewer: Does he often do that when there's like, he's sort of in front of other people?
Isabella: Um yes, he pretty much does it if he's with a friend…So I expect, showing off.

Although this type of behaviour was sometimes mutual, the impact was viewed very differently:

Interviewer: OK, has anybody, any of your boyfriends, casual ones or more serious ones…called you names…?
Leya: Well like sometimes when I was going out with Neil he would like jokingly called me names and stuff but it would be like jokingly and I would know that it was jokingly and stuff.
Interviewer: Like what names?
Leya: Just like when I would sit on his lap or something he would be like "oh you are heavy" or stuff like this but yeah it would just be like jokingly kind of thing…I would just like laugh along, I would probably go like "oi", yeah I would be like "oh" but laugh along kind of thing.
Interviewer: Have you ever done anything like that to any of your partners?
Leya: No not, well probably in like a jokingly way…because when he used to take off his shirt and stuff because he is like really, really skinny and I used to be like "oh my gosh I can see your bones" and everything but yeah it would all be in like a jokingly way, I didn't actually mean to hurt him or anything.

Although a young person may recognise the harm their partner's behaviour causes them, this understanding may not necessarily be transferred to their own behaviour.

The survey findings showed that boys rarely reported any detrimental effects resulting from their own experiences of emotional violence. Thus, it may be that girls are more perceptive about their own use of emotional violence. Nevertheless, if one person in a relationship uses emotional violence, this may increase the propensity for their partner to also act in a similar manner, irrespective of any difference in impact. Furthermore, if boys do not experience any significant impact from their partners' emotional abuse, they may transfer this assessment of harm onto their own behaviour. So, boys may not always necessarily be aware of the negative impact of their actions, unless their partner is able to tell them.

New technologies

Previous work shows that youth mainly use online forms of communication to maintain and extend offline friendships, rather than create new "virtual" friends (Alvermann 2002; Holloway and Valentine 2001; Leander and McKim 2003). However, this body of work does not consider how offline relationships characterised by violence are maintained in online spaces. Recent research on "text" and cyber-bullying undertaken by Smith et al (2008) and Rivers and Noret (2007) provides important insights into the prevalence of this form of control, its gendered nature and impact on young people's wellbeing. Our interview findings suggest that online control mechanisms hold some similarities to offline forms of control, although we have also identified distinct forms of online exploitation. Regrettably, as our primary aim was to analyse the incidence and dynamics of offline practices, the research has been unable to investigate fully the complexity of this emerging area of child welfare. Nevertheless, the interviews provided insights into this area of partner control, which has not previously been recognised. We aim to pursue this further elsewhere.

To contextualise this aspect of the interview data, it is important to acknowledge that many of the girls interviewed, whether they had experienced partner violence or not, spent considerable amounts of time online or using mobile phones with their partners:

Interviewer:	Do you use MSN as well or Bebo?
Emma:	Both of them MSN and Bebo like every night.

Mobile phones, especially text messages, were used frequently by both female and male partners to keep in continual contact. However, girls gave very different

evaluations regarding what were and what were not seen as acceptable levels of contact. What was considered a sign of caring concern by one person was seen as intrusive by another:

Interviewer:	Is that difficult if someone's ringing you all the time, does it sometimes make you feel uncomfortable?
Courtney:	Yeah, because I did have, not in a serious relationship, but someone just texting me and phoning me all the time and I got to the point that I don't want nothing to do with him, because I thought he was a bit like freaky.
Natalie:	He reckoned that he didn't phone me all the time, he said "I don't phone all the time" but he didn't stop phoning me or texting me. And if I didn't text him back he'd go mad. And he wouldn't like it, and then he'd keep texting me and trying to text.
Interviewer:	How many times a day? Roughly?
Natalie:	Oh he'd phone…I'd go in about half 10 in the night and he'd stay on the phone to me until like one in the morning and he wouldn't get off the phone.

It was apparent from many of these accounts that new technologies may facilitate, and possibly exacerbate, the problem of partner control in the lives of teenagers. Some girls, such as Courtney, were unwilling to live with such surveillance and quickly ended the relationship. However, others wished to remain in the relationships, although they were unhappy with the level of control being exercised:

Interviewer:	You text a lot?
Emma:	Yeah all the time.
Interviewer:	Does it ever feel like you text him too much?
Emma:	Yeah sometimes because it just drags.
Interviewer:	Uum because you're doing it too much or because he's doing it too much or because you're both doing it too much?
Emma:	Because we just both do it too much.
Interviewer:	How often do you text then of an evening if you're not together?
Emma:	Nearly all the time every day and every night.
Interviewer:	Just a kind of back and forward conversation all evening?
Emma:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Does it ever feel you're being checked up on by him?
Emma:	Yeah sometimes…
Interviewer:	Yeah. Would you ever say to him I don't want you to text me so often or would that be hard to say?
Emma:	I would say it but then he'd probably be like "why?"
Interviewer:	Um, could you explain why?
Emma:	Um probably be awkward.

As described by Emma, sometimes girls felt unable to discuss the level of control being exercised by their partner for fear of hurting his feelings. This reflects the earlier issue concerning where the boundary lies between concern and control. This is a powerful mechanism, which reduces girls' ability to question the level of surveillance and control

to which they are subjected. The use of new technologies also enabled control to extend into young people's homes and even impact on their family interactions:

Natalie:	Yeah, I'd been out with him like…I'd go in like about…as soon as I went in like, he'd phone me and then I'd say "Oh I'm having my food" or whatever and talking to my mother, phone me after. And then he'd just like phone me half an hour later and stay on the phone to me like for ages. And when I didn't go out with him on the weekends when he was out with his friends and I was out with mine, he'd text me and text me and text me, asking me what I was doing and that and who was I with.
Interviewer:	More than 10 times a day?
Natalie:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Yeah. More than 20?
Natalie:	Well probably texting yeah, but he'd phone me like about five, something like that. He don't phone me in the mornings, he texts me in school, he used to.

Control was also exercised through the use of the internet. The use of new technology enabled partners to extend their control to virtually all aspects of their girlfriend's life. Most often control through the use of new technology was experienced in a wider repertoire of online and offline control strategies:

Keira:	…most of the time it would be fine, then one thing would happen he would just go mad about it. Like even on the computer if I took too long to reply he would be like "why, what are you doing, what are you doing, do you not want to talk to me, do you not have time for me or anything?" I would be like "no that's not why, it's just because I am doing something else", stuff like that all the time.
Interviewer:	What, how would you describe his behaviour towards you now?
Keira:	He's just so controlling.
Interviewer:	Controlling?
Keira:	Manipulative like that.

Commonly, girls reported that such control was often associated with a partner's wish to restrict their communication with peers they met online, especially males:

Interviewer:	So did you use that [internet] to be in touch with your boyfriend? Or did he use that to be in touch with you?
Natalie:	Well he'd talk to me on MSN but…and he'd look to see if I was talking to any boys on Bebo.
Interviewer:	So he was checking up on you using that as well?
Natalie:	Yeah.
Keira:	He was telling us not to go and it was not even something bad, it's my friend's brother thing, and he used to always like get dead paranoid when I was talking to anyone. And then like say I was talking on the computer and there's other boys like someone said hi to me and I said that to him and he was like just tell them, just block them and I said no. He was like why not, why is that because you want to talk to them and everything, all of that stuff.

This also included restricting communication with their male friends while online:

Interviewer:	Have you ever experienced somebody wanting to know where you are too much of the time?
Stephanie:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Yeah? The person you're with now or previous?
Stephanie:	Well the previous one.
Interviewer:	Yeah. Do you want to tell me about that a bit?
Stephanie:	He just …when I was on the internet and that he'd ask me to delete all the boys' addies [addresses] and everything…'cos he didn't like me talking to other boys and everything…Even if they was only my friends and that.

Social networking sites used by young people provided an additional means by which partners could directly alienate girls from their social support networks:

Interviewer:	So he was either kind of physically there or he was texting you, did you guys use the MSN, Bebo sites as well?
Amy:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	So did he also use that to keep tabs on you?
Amy:	Yeah on MSN.
Interviewer:	So it's hard isn't it, so there's nowhere where you've got a bit of space of your own really is there?
Amy:	No.
Interviewer:	Did you go on MSN a lot?
Amy:	Not really, only at night.
Interviewer:	But then he'd use that to check up on you?
Amy:	Yeah, or he'd go on my MSN and start shouting at my friends so they thought it was me and then we'd fall out about it.

The internet also enabled partners to maintain contact even when a relationship had ended. Often at this stage the control they had previously experienced became more threatening. In some cases these threats were carried through:

Keira:	He told me when I was online he would do it, on the computer, he would do it and he said, because he knows what car my mum and dad have got, he said "I am going to do this, I am going to smash your windows". And I was in the house by myself and I was like, I knew he wouldn't do anything but I was still scared.

In the above instance, new technologies provide the means by which threats can infiltrate the family home, making it seem a far less safe place for young people to be, especially if alone. As with offline experiences, the internet could provide an opportunity of wider sexual harassment to occur in girls' lives:

Leya:	Don't know, probably because like they [boys] always are either texting and it's like "send me a picture" and it's just like "no I am not going to trust you with a picture" and everything like this.

Having detailed each form of partner violence in girls' accounts, we will now move on to consider the impact of these on girls' lives and welfare. Following this, we will examine in greater depth how girls responded to the violence, including their evaluations of possible early indicators of violence, their experiences of remaining in violent and controlling relationships and the consequences of leaving. Finally, we will explore girls' accounts of seeking help, before proceeding to look at boys' experiences.

Impact of partner violence on girls

It was sometimes very difficult for girls to reflect on how the violence had impacted on them, except in the short term while the incident was occurring. As seen throughout the report, many stated how scared and upset they were, especially in relation to sexual and physical violence. Often, regarding issues of partner control, girls also said they were annoyed at their partner's behaviour. In addition, as we have seen, many girls sought to minimise their experiences. A few girls were able to reflect on events to provide important insights into the impact that such violence had on their lives, both in the short and in the longer term.

For some young people, even small conflicts with partners could have a profound effect. If isolated, such conflict had little longer-term impact but, if persistent, the effect could become more pronounced:

Interviewer:	So are there any kind of drawbacks to being in a relationship?
Natasha:	It just distracts you from other stuff.
Interviewer:	It distracts you?
Natasha:	Like school work and other stuff.
Interviewer:	In what way, like it takes up your time?
Natasha:	Arguing can take up a lot of time.
Seraya:	I had an argument with my boyfriend once, remember that was on the Sunday night and I came to school on the Monday and for the whole day I was just angry about it and then he hung up on me. And I thought right, I must have rung him back once…and then the whole week I was like, I thought at least he was going to ring and say sorry, he did ring, he rung on Thursday, but it still kind of distracted me, it was like [interrupted]
Natasha:	It just puts you off work.

Some participants were unable to really understand how this had affected them beyond their feelings of being scared:

Interviewer:	Would you say, was there anything else, or would you say that's the things that stand out the most for you?

Louise: That was really the things, well there were points where I felt I was being forced and stuff [to have sexual intercourse]. That was really scary. I didn't like that.

For sexual violence, the negative impact could be intensified if the girls' sexual history was made public by her ex-partner. It may be that, for teenage girls, sexual reputations are far more important than for adult women and, therefore, such behaviour may have a much greater impact on them (Burton et al 1998; Chung 2005; Stanley 2005, McCarry, forthcoming):

Rebecca: I didn't know what it was, I didn't know what I was doing…And then he told everyone about it afterwards, I said not to tell anyone but he told everyone about it and it went round and he was saying stuff like…
Interviewer: That's hard isn't it?
Rebecca: He was saying stuff like "oh yeah she was proper horrible", [*nervous laughing*] that I couldn't do it and I was like "well I've never done it before".

Often, girls questioned whether they were to blame for their partner's behaviour:

Interviewer: Did it feel like a jealous thing or did it just feel like an angry thing?
Amy: It felt like a jealous thing but I always thought it was because I was doing something wrong.
Interviewer: Did you blame yourself?
Amy: Yeah.
Interviewer: Have you stopped blaming yourself now?
Amy: Yeah.
Interviewer: Good [*both laugh*]. I don't think you did anything wrong at all.

Louise: It was really confusing. Well actually nowadays I'm kind of, you know, I was mainly just really annoyed at myself for kind of being that weak you know as well.

Rebecca: Oh but it's horrible, I can't believe I done that, that's one thing I do regret and…I can't believe I done it…I regret it so badly, that's the most horrible most stupid thing I've done in my whole life, it makes me feel sick as well, because it's not that, it's the fact that I don't know why I done it either?

In the above quote, Rebecca repeatedly showed disbelief at her actions following her partner's persistent sexual coercion. It is important to note that, in this interview, the researcher stated that she felt the sexual violence was not the participant's fault, and instead emphasised the inequality present in this relationship and placed the responsibility for the violence on the perpetrator. Although it is not possible to tell from the above extract, at this point in the interview the participant had become upset and had previously stated a number of times that the violence was her fault. This illustrates the difficulty of balancing the need to listen to young people's experiences

and views without influencing them, while also ensuring that the research interaction did not compound feelings of self-blame and guilt.

For one participant the impact of the sexual violence she experienced was significantly increased due to her becoming pregnant:

> Ann: I was a virgin at the time and then after that, after I got pregnant, I kept having sex with him after. But because I didn't find out to two weeks after because I had to wait for the test and we kept doing it because he wanted it. So I just thought "whatever makes you happy"...I had to deal with that and I ended up having an abortion which I regretted. And I had to have counselling after because I couldn't get over it because that is what he wanted so I did what he wanted but I so regretted it after, yeah.

Ann stated that the sexual coercion continued until she had an abortion. Ann also described the profound impact due to being pressured into an abortion by her partner. Research undertaken by Wood and Barter (forthcoming) looks more closely at how partner control and violence are experienced by pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. Often the impact was described in terms of negative mental health:

> Interviewer: How did it make you feel when you were on the receiving end of it, when he was checking on you all the time?
> Natalie: Horrible. Annoyed and all, it done my head in.
>
> Amy: Sometimes it did but then it got to the point that I just couldn't deal with it any more, I ran away and stuff.
> Interviewer: You'd run away from him?
> Amy: Yeah.
> Interviewer: Where would you go?
> Amy: Anywhere as long as it was away from him?

Amy did not say where she ran away to, but this may have placed her in additional danger if she did not have a safe place to stay. In the longer term, implications for mental health could be serious:

> Interviewer: Do you still feel frightened of him?
> Amy: Yeah, I don't like being on my own.
> Interviewer: Are you still on your own at home in the evenings?
> Amy: No, my mum doesn't go out any more, she knows I don't like it.
> Interviewer: So she knows about him now?
> Amy: Yeah the school said that I had to tell them or they would because he was trying to get into my house and stuff and I was on my own.
> Interviewer: Do you think that's affected how you feel about boys and relationships?
> Amy: Yeah.
> Interviewer: Yeah, in what way?
> Amy: I just don't trust them any more.

This can include beginning to see violence as a normal aspect of relationships:

Interviewer:	…I was talking about the particular violence that's coming from this guy.
Tanisha:	Oh we're used to it. We can take a beating now.
Jasleen:	It's like at school now we can batter people as well because we know what it's like.

Early indicators of partner exploitation and violence

It was not always possible for girls to identify at the start of a relationship the possible warning signs that a partner may be violent, as often the violence started only once a relationship became established. Young people may already be emotionally involved, which could make leaving a relationship more complex. Girls themselves were aware of this. In response, some girls reduced the risk of this by ensuring their partners were unaware of the extent of their feelings towards them:

Interviewer:	So when you are in a relationship then, how does it make you feel, how does it make you feel to have a serious boyfriend?
Natasha:	Happy, it makes me feel happy…yeah, nice.
Seraya:	At first.
Natasha:	When there's no arguments.
Seraya:	Yeah, at first it was like, I don't, I try not to get too close, or allow them to get too close, because I don't want to get too emotionally attached at such an early stage in relationships. And then if it's not meant to be a serious one and then two weeks later it's over and you're hurting, so I try not to get too emotionally attached.
Interviewer:	And how do you do that?
Seraya:	I just don't allow them to get too close to me.
Natasha:	Uum, you do try, girls tend to hide it we don't show our [interrupted]
Seraya:	Because yeah, because if, if the boy knows…
Interviewer:	Why's that?
Natasha:	She'll always come back to me anyway because she likes me.

Girls spoke about their assessments of possible signs that they felt indicated that their potential or new partner may become controlling or violent. Many of these girls stated that they acted on these indicators and terminated the relationship. Ending a relationship very early on also seemed to reduce the chance of their partner reacting to the break-up with violence, something which was not uncommon in more serious relationships, as we shall see later in this section. The most common forms of warnings identified by girls entailed control issues:

Natalie:	Because this boy that was…like this other boy that I was like meeting…he'd phone me all the time as well, I don't like it, it do my head in, so I just turned my phone off on him.
Interviewer:	Yeah. Did he give up then?
Natalie:	No, I'd wake up in the morning, and there would be like 12 missed calls.
Interviewer:	So he wants to go out with you?

Natalie: Yeah.
Interviewer: Yeah. But you're resisting?
Natalie: Yeah…I can't have that.

Courtney: Just that he was phoning all the time, seeing if I wanted to come out all of the time and didn't respect me that I had other friends as well.
Interviewer: Right.
Courtney: So I just kind of split up and kind of go away.
Interviewer: So how did he take that?
Courtney: He was just like fair enough because we were both young anyway, it was like in year 7.
Interviewer: So you realise that it wasn't like he was just like wanting to know where you were…?
Courtney: Yeah he felt a bit obsessive, I think he wanted to be with me all the time or see me all the time and stuff...so what's it going to be like if we were serious?

A few girls said that they had ended a number of their relationships, often within a few weeks, due to how their partners had started to act:

Hannah: They'd just, like you'd want some peace and quiet with friends and they'd always like come in and sit with you and they'd be like, come on and sit down there. I'm talking to my pals about something, and then they'd be like can I listen because it's private, and then that's why I broke up. I broke up with most of them because of that.

In some instances, early risk factors included the use of threats of violence in an attempt to control their new partner's social interactions:

Sophia: I never had someone who's like "Where are you all the time?" and every time you're with a boy it's like oh. Like Oliver was kind of like that, if I went out with him for a long time then it was going to get to that point.
Interviewer: Could you see that, that was in him?
Sophia: Yes…he was always like, when we had a disco and we went to a disco, he was like "If anyone touches Sophia I will beat them up." He can be quite, he has had a lot of personal problems, so he is quite an angry person and can beat up pretty much anyone.

Another common indication of future violence concerned a boy's inability to control his temper. In the situation below, when Seraya questioned her "date" about his temper his reaction further confirmed her initial concerns:

Seraya: You can kind of tell when boys get angry easily because once I was on a double date with this boy and we just argued the whole time and I could tell that he got angry quick.
Interviewer: Right.
Seraya: So what happened then, from when I asked him do you get angry quickly because. And he asked what am I asking that for, and it would turn into an argument and it's just a general question that any girl would ask a boy.
Interviewer: Yeah.

Seraya: And I was like "do you get angry quickly?". And he was like "yeah" so I thought soon as he said "yeah" I thought uum, don't want to see you again.

Rhiannon: …before that it was an ex-boyfriend, and he just used to go mad all the time, like and start shouting and everything. So…
Interviewer: What sort of things made him mad?
Rhiannon: Anything, not answering my phone or whatever. So it only lasted two weeks anyway in the end.
Interviewer: Because of that?
Rhiannon: Yeah. It was like "No I don't want to be with you any more."

Most indicators for sexual violence related to older boyfriends. Girls had to weigh up the benefits of having an older partner with the level of sexual pressure to which they were exposed. Judgements seemed to concern whether girls felt able to protect themselves against the sexual pressure, or if they felt they might relinquish and regret it later (Holland et al 1998):

Interviewer: Did you have an intimate relationship?
Julie: Not really.
Interviewer: Do you think that was something that he was expecting at his age?
Julie: I think so.
Interviewer: Is that one of the reasons that you split up?
Julie: Yeah.
Interviewer: Was it? Was he trying to take things further?
Julie: Yeah, he wasn't like that, he wasn't like being pushy or anything, but like I kind of felt that he like wanted to so, I didn't and I wouldn't do for like quite a while so I didn't think it was fair to him really.
Interviewer: So you didn't think it was fair to him?
Julie: Yeah.
Interviewer: How did you pick up on that then, how did you?
Julie: Like he kept trying to take things further but he wasn't, but I would just say no, but he wasn't like pushing it and pushing it.
Interviewer: OK and how did you feel about it all?
Julie: I don't know, I was really young and like, thinking back I was just, I don't know, I just knew that I wasn't ready.
Interviewer: Yeah because you were only 14 weren't you?
Julie: Yeah.
Interviewer: Do you think if you had carried on going out with him, do you think sooner or later you would of ended up just doing it because...?
Julie: Yeah, that's why, that's kind of why I broke up with him, because I knew I would end up probably and I didn't really want to.

Julie perceived that her refusal to have sexual intercourse was "unfair" on her partner. This reflects a great many other accounts by participants who reported feeling guilty for not agreeing to intercourse. Such feelings were intensified if they had an older partner due to perceptions about their increased sexual experience. Thus, sexual pressure, either overt or covert, was often intensified for girls due to their feelings of responsibility for their partner's sexual needs. Additionally, Julie reported that her

partner repeatedly attempted to initiate sexual intercourse but she does not view this as sexual coercion. This is an important definitional issue. If young people view certain actions as acceptable or "normal" in relationships, they might also fail to recognise the extent of their impact. Julie recognised that his behaviour constituted a risk as it may have resulted in her undertaking something she would later regret. Other girls may not necessarily make the same assessment.

In some cases, although the indicators of potential violence may have been present, some girls failed to act on their early judgements. However, a few girls were able to reflect on the accuracy of their initial assessment:

> Seraya: Once it did when I was with Nathan…I was 14 going on 15 and we'd been going out for seven months and he was always like yeah, I want to [unclear] blah blah blah blah and then I wasn't ready at the time and he's always talking about it like I knew I wasn't ready…And I thought to myself "No I'm not going to give into him" and then when he found he wasn't going to get any at all he was like "I don't think this is working out"...But I knew that he was kind of after that from the first time I met him because he was a bit too touchy-feely and kissing…After we broke up, I spoke to him and he's like yeah I've lost it now [virginity] to this girl, and I was, are you still with her then and he's like no and I thought to myself that could have been me, I could have been that girl.

In a few accounts, although no indicators had been perceived, the very first incident of violence was enough for the girls to end the relationship:

> Sian: He just hit me.
> Interviewer: In the face?
> Sian: No in the arm and in the back, so…
> Interviewer: Did you feel frightened then?
> Sian: Yeah. And then I went out the front and his mam [mother] come out and was talking to me, and then I went back in then. And then we sat down and we were talking through it, talking again. And then I went home. And I didn't see him ever again then.

It is unclear from the interview if the boy's mother was attempting to reconcile the couple after her son's violence or sought to ensure her son was aware of the seriousness of his actions. But this was the only account of an intervention by a parent whose son had initiated the violence.

Occasionally, warnings came from the wider peer group's knowledge about a boy's previous violent behaviour. Thus, certain boys may establish a high-risk reputation as

a boyfriend, generally through their ex-partner's disclosures. However, this "common" knowledge is not necessarily always accepted as accurate or viewed as relevant. Sometimes, the temptation was for girls to believe that the boy would be different with them:

Amy:	I don't really mind talking about it now because it's all out in the open and everyone knows what he's like. I had been warned about him before but I thought "no he can't be like that".
Interviewer:	Other people had said that he was bad news when you started dating him did they?
Amy:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Had he been like that with other girls as well then?
Amy:	Yeah. I just thought he can't be that bad, they must be making it up.

Yet to disregard such peer group warnings may also have repercussions, whereby the girl may be held accountable by friends for subsequent victimisation. This reaction was confirmed in the young people's advisory group's reaction to the above extract. Nearly all female members placed a high degree of culpability on Amy for the violence she experienced as she had ignored the warnings given.

A minority of girls who experienced violence were able to discuss with their partner their feelings, which stopped the behaviour occurring. Mostly this concerned sexual pressure or control, which was not underpinned by physical force:

Interviewer:	Do you think, have any of your boyfriends that you have been with ever put kind of pressure on you to take things further like in a kind of sexual way?
Michelle:	One guy did a while ago, I was seeing him for a while but I just told him like "No", because I didn't want to.
Interviewer:	And want did he think, what did he say to that?
Michelle:	He was like "Right OK".
Interviewer:	Was he the same age as you or was he older?
Michelle:	Yeh 17 [older].
Interviewer:	Right, and so did you feel all right about saying to him "No I am not ready"?
Michelle:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Yeah. Did he text a lot?
Natalie:	Yeah. As soon as I had left his house, he would give me like a half hour to get home and then he'd be on the phone, phoning me and that.
Interviewer:	How did that feel?
Natalie:	Annoying and that.
Interviewer:	Was he like that from when you first started going out with him? Or did that sort of change over time?
Natalie:	Well he was like it more at the start and then…when I told him to stop phoning me all the time he did.
Interviewer:	Mm. So it got better?
Natalie:	Yeah.

Partners were not always happy about being issued with an ultimatum:

Stephanie: He just…when I was on the internet and that he'd ask me to delete all the boys addies [addresses] and everything…'cos he didn't like me talking to other boys and everything.
Interviewer: Mm.
Stephanie: Even if they was only my friends and that.
Interviewer: So what did you say to him?
Stephanie: Said no.
Interviewer: Did you negotiate that and carry on seeing each other?
Stephanie: Yeah.
Interviewer: Did he accept that?
Stephanie: He didn't like it really.

However, as we have seen earlier in the section regarding control, it was not always easy for girls to challenge their partners' behaviour. Rebecca planned to use her peer group as a protection strategy due to fears concerning her boyfriend's response:

Rebecca: And he just wants me to be like, like always loved up, lovey-dovey and I'm just like "go away for two minutes" like I just wants, like it's OK to hug me but not to smother me, "don't, I'm not that keen". I'm going to tell him, I don't know I'm going to try and pluck up the courage to tell him, but I'm not going to tell him I'm just going to say like in a group "I don't like it like being in like uum like in each other's pockets". I'm just going to like say it, but when he's there so he realises, I was chatting about that yesterday, 'cos where, he always wants me…

Having looked at girls' evaluations of the possible early indicators of partner violence we will now move on to consider their experiences of remaining in violent relationships. Disconcertingly the majority of girls who experienced violence remained in the relationships for a considerable time. This reflects our earlier survey findings and those from previous research, which suggests that teenage victims tend to stay in violent relationships (Sugarman and Hotaling 1989; Bergman 1992; Jackson et al 2000). Generally, as the relationship progressed so did the violence and the fear. Similarly, Gyrl et al's (1991) work suggests that the actual decision to remain in a violent relationship increases the likelihood that the violence will recur. Bergman (1992) concludes that we know virtually nothing about teenagers' reasons for remaining or leaving a violent relationship. Our interviews provide some important insights into this area. For a few, being in a long-term violent relationship seemed to desensitise girls to the violence they were experiencing and they began to see it as "normal":

Interviewer: Have you ever been in a relationship with somebody who gets angry quickly?
Tracey: Mm…only that one person.

Interviewer:	Did he used to get cross?
Tracey:	Yeah, and I used to like be like "OK I'm sorry". Because he was a boxer as well and you were thinking "Mm, be nice".
Interviewer:	So you used to sort of apologise for things you hadn't done because…
Tracey:	Yeah…But you actually learn to live with it after a while. You just like get used to it and you think "OK".
Interviewer:	How long did you go out together?
Tracey:	Pfff…about six, seven months.

To understand why some girls remained in a violent relationship, it is important to recognise that their boyfriends were not persistently violent. Girls described relationships where their partner's behaviour was acceptable but this was interspersed with violence. In such situations, girls often felt that the last violent episode may be the final incident. This inconsistency led to confusion regarding their feelings towards their partners and how their boyfriends viewed them:

Amy:	He was just…if I was…I don't know what happened he just went through a stage, he'd be all right and then he'd be horrible to me. And then he'd be all right and I just kept giving into him…
Interviewer:	How long did you go out together for?
Amy:	About a year.
Natalie:	Oh yeah he had, he's got um split…one of them split personality things he has.
Interviewer:	OK.
Natalie:	So he got angry easy and that. And…I don't know.
Interviewer:	So sometimes he's behaving one way and other times he's behaving another way?
Natalie:	Yeah he can be really nice sometimes, and then really horrible like.

For others, the violence itself was seen as an indication of how strongly their partners felt about them. In these cases the partner's violent actions were explained as an inability to control their feelings of love and jealousy. Thus, although the girls hated the violence and how it made them feel, they attempted to rationalise it in a wider discourse of "uncontrolled caring".

Interviewer:	So this relationship, do you ever think of ending it when he's shouting at people and hurting you.
Tanisha:	I do, but then I think it's because he love me that's why he does it. It's not because…
Interviewer:	It doesn't sound like a very loving thing to do though really.
Tanisha:	He was really sweet at first, he's just got now.
Interviewer:	Would you say it's getting worse?
Tanisha:	Yeah.

Another important factor in explaining why some girls remain in a harmful relationship involves the status a boyfriend may bring. Much research has been undertaken on the importance that girls place on having a boyfriend and the esteem this bestows in some peer groups (Holland et al 1998). It is unnecessary to rehearse this work here, but it is important that our findings are positioned in this wider context to avoid minimising the barriers that girls face when attempting to leave a relationship. It may be that a girl's desire to have a boyfriend and the social acceptance this brings outweigh their desire to leave violent partners (Hird and Jackson 2001; Bannister et al 2003). Similarly, Green (2005) talks about boyfriends being viewed by girls as trophies, where sex was a fair trade for affection or the status of a boyfriend. In some of the female interviews the importance of having a partner was clearly identified.

Worryingly, sometimes the attributes that characterise a high-status boyfriend (Barter 2006b) may actually be detrimental to girls' wellbeing. Work on "young masculinities" has shown how boys come under pressure, by peers and wider society, to portray a certain form of masculinity, characterised as controlling, sexually assertive and unemotional (Frosh et al 2002; Renold 2005; Sieg 2007). It is therefore unsurprising that in a number of girls' assessments of male partners these attributes were also seen as attractive. The desirability of "hard" masculinities (Frosh et al 2002), found within some girls' evaluations, presents a fundamental problem to girls' safety. As demonstrated both in the survey and in interview findings, a "hard" or "overt masculinity" can be directed towards partners as well as wider peers. For example, in some of the interviews when girls identified partner violence, they also spoke about their boyfriend's routine use of violence and intimidation with male peers:

Tanisha:	More protective.
Interviewer:	More protective in a good way or more protective…
Jasleen:	He used to fight people that said anything to her.
Tanisha:	Yeah, even if it wasn't anything bad, he would just fight them.
Jasleen:	And he's really strong and big.
Interviewer:	How did you feel about that?
Jasleen:	But he can really fight, he's a really good fighter [*spoken admiringly*].
Tanisha:	I know, he climbed over that fence over there.
Jasleen:	Yeah, and when he fights if he fights a boy the boy will be left cuts, bruises, bleeding, the whole lot, dead [*spoken admiringly*].
Jordynn:	Yeah basically yeah but he is supposed to kind of be the man in the relationship and you know.
Interviewer:	What does that mean?

Jordynn: Be able to look out for her and if he can't look out for himself sort of thing, then how is he suppose to look out for her?

Thus, paradoxically, the behaviour that some girls perceive as increasing the desirability of a boyfriend also places them at heightened risk of victimisation. This form of masculinity was often portrayed in interviews as providing them with care and protection, although in many cases the reality was quite different. The earlier work of one of the current authors showed how the kudos of having and (more importantly) retaining a "hard" boyfriend was worthy of praise from female peers, even if the relationship involved violence (Barter 2006b). We have already documented the wider male sexual harassment and violence that underpinned some girls' lives. Thus, a boyfriend who is perceived as "hard" within the wider peer group will provide some protection from this everyday form of sexual harassment. However, this may be at a considerable cost. In addition, we have already seen how older males were often viewed by girls as being a more desirable partner than boys of their own age. Both the survey and interview findings clearly show the significant risk older male partners hold.

The behaviour of violent male partners also more directly impacted on a girl's ability to leave such relationships. We have already highlighted how control was exercised to restrict their friendship support networks. The social isolation this can cause and the subsequent heightened reliance on a partner create a powerful deterrent to ending a relationship, something which it seemed some male partners were well aware of.

However, girls who remained in violent relationships sometimes sought to understand and explain their partner's use of violence. Primarily this concerned the need to remove responsibility for the violence away from their partner and to place it outside the relationship. Often this involved positioning a violent partner as a victim, whose violence and control was a direct, and therefore almost unthinking, reaction to previous negative experiences. This allowed girls to reduce their need to question how much their boyfriend respected and loved them. This also relocated the responsibility for the violence onto girls, as it was a result of their failing to understand their boyfriend's problems that resulted in them using violence:

Louise: It was the older ones [boyfriends] that seemed to be really possessive.
Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Louise: They're not bad people. There's something wrong there. I know for a fact with the first guy [boyfriend]…had a really hard life. You know he was, I could like see it from his point of view 'cos you know like, his parents were just really, they weren't nice to him. Like they didn't like hurt him or anything, but just emotionally. You could see how much he was getting drained when he'd go home and stuff like that. And he just had a really really hard life of it.

Interviewer: So what was he doing, like texting you all the time?
Jennifer: Yeah just like constantly phoning me to see where I was and what I was doing.
Interviewer: Why did he do it so much?
Jennifer: I don't know, it's, well his girlfriend before me like cheated on him a lot.
Interviewer: OK.
Jennifer: So I think he was just kind of like paranoid about it [being unfaithful]
Interviewer: Oh right and how did it make you feel?
Jennifer: A bit like kind of I don't know it felt, I felt like that he just kind of like thought I would do the same [as last girlfriend who was unfaithful].
Interviewer: OK.
Jennifer: Like but although that he knew I wouldn't, he just kind of couldn't help it, it wasn't really his fault.
Interviewer: You don't think it was his fault?
Jennifer: No I don't think I could like stop him from being like, I think that's just the way he was.

Post-relationship violence

It was not always clear if girls had ended the relationship due to the violence, for some other reason or if their partner had actually finished it. It did seem that girls often wanted to portray themselves as ending the relationship, although sometimes in the interview the emphasis on who had actually terminated it became more blurred. Generally, if a relationship ended early, before it became serious, fewer accounts of post-relationship violence were given. As discussed, a number of the girls we interviewed ended a relationship with few repercussions. Often, these partners had been controlling but this was unaccompanied by other forms of violence. This was not necessarily the case for all girls. For those with very violent partners, ending a relationship did not, regrettably, mean that the control or violence stopped; in a minority of cases the violence actually intensified:

Interviewer: Was he not taking no for an answer from you then?
Tracey: Well he was quite like overpowering, 'cos he was a boxer as well. He's like a junior boxer and he was just like…
Interviewer: He was a big guy?
Tracey: Yeah.
Interviewer: So did you try and stop seeing him?
Tracey: Yeah, but…you know what some people are like, they just don't want …they go on…yeah.
Interviewer: So did he keep texting, calling?

Tracey: Yeah. Phoning me like…he was phoning me at 1 o'clock in the morning and I was like "Right, leave me alone".

Rebecca: …there was this boy who I do not fancy at all but he's just a really close friend of mine…the boy I just broke up with got jealous, and like he smokes weed and all that and he was making up a joint where like it was burning, burning for ages. And then he gave me a "smiley" on my neck with it when I was on the bike and then punched me in my face but he was like drunk as well and I was like "oh I can't believe you just done that". I never really done anything about it really, but that was out of order.

Interviewer: So he actually burnt your neck?

Rebecca: Yeah with a lighter where it was like, the metal bit was so hot and then he put it on my neck…he just flipped out and like ripped my belly-bar out of my belly and started beating me up in the street and everything…and he started like hitting me and everything like beating me up…

Interviewer: Were there people around then?

Rebecca: Yeah my two friends.

Interviewer: Did they help you?

Rebecca: No, they were just stood there shocked, and he was going mad, he like flips out…but he started going mad, he was kicking me and hitting me and everything.

However, the physical violence did not have to be aimed directly at the ex-partner to be threatening, and through media technologies threats did not have to be given in person:

Keira: But after we stopped going out like I think he put something on the computer and he said, oh I can't remember what he said…so we would just go back out and then I just couldn't be bothered. So I just kept hanging up and signing off and then I was on the phone to my friend Jody and then he was phoning me and I wasn't answering it because I was on the phone. And I was like I just can't be bothered. And then he started to say all this stuff to me and I was just like ignoring it and laughing at him. And then he just got so angry and then that night I saw him and he was with these two friends and he tried to spit on me and I was like oh…Then I just went home and then…my brother was walking to work and it was him [ex-partner] and his friends…and he jumped him in the street.

Two instances of emotional violence were described where boys attempted to "force" their ex-partner back into a relationship:

Kelly: But with Ben, when he found out I was with Alex he really didn't like it. He went, he stopped eating he just couldn't eat. He was for about four days, he looked ill he would like walk down to [name of road] with us in the morning and he'd be like throwing up. So I'd be looking after him and he'd be ringing me up all the time, saying "Kelly just get back with me". And he actually tried committing an overdose, he actually took an overdose and that was scary because he was round my house and no one was in and he come round to see me 'cos he just wanted a chat and he just collapsed.

Interviewer: Because he hadn't been eating or because he's taken something?

Kelly: He'd took pills, like tablets and hadn't been eating. I ended up saying to him like you've got to stop doing this.

Interviewer: It's quite controlling of you in a way isn't it?

Kelly: I know it was horrible, I was just like crying my eyes out and I've got him crying his eyes out on the phone to me.

Kelly's partner may have been in genuine distress due to the end of the relationship, but his response may be indicative of wider psychological problems. However, Kelly had experienced control from Ben in the past and his behaviour was extremely worrying for her. The emotional intimidation was successful as Kelly did agree to resume the relationship.

The above findings reflect research on adult women's experiences of domestic violence, which clearly demonstrates that often violence can actually increase when a relationship ends, especially if it is the victim who decides to end it. Research shows that adult women sometimes have to completely sever contact with the abusive ex-partner, and in some cases with their own family and friends, to protect themselves and their children from the continuing harm (Abrahams 2007). However, for young people this is rarely an option, especially, as it appears from the survey results, that families were unaware of the violence their children had experienced. In addition, all the young people we interviewed attended school. Some ex-partners were also pupils at the same school, or a neighbouring school, or in the case of older partners knew the location of the school. It was therefore virtually impossible for many of the girls to avoid their violent ex-partners:

Interviewer: So you don't see him any more?
Tasminder: I do, I like see him nearly every time.
Interviewer: You see him out?
Tasminder: Yeah out of school, I seen him at the bus stop once, this wasn't when I was with him sorry, and uum he seen me and he was like running after me, chasing after me, and that was in the park.

Girls' experiences of family violence

The survey results have clearly shown that girls' experiences of family violence are significantly associated with being a recipient of and instigating partner violence. Similarly, in the interviews, the majority of female participants who reported some form of partner violence had also experienced violence in their families. Most often this violence concerned domestic violence, although a few girls also recounted their experiences of child abuse. However, we should state that not all the girls who

experienced violence from their partners said they had experienced family violence, and some who reported family violence had not been victimised by their partners.

Before we look at girls' explanations concerning the possible association between experiencing violence in these two aspects of their lives, that is partner violence and family violence, we initially need to recognise the impact that domestic violence and child abuse have on their lives more generally. The abuse of adolescents still remains an under-recognised area of child welfare, where professional attention still seems to focus more often on younger victims of abuse. This may be due to professional perceptions about the heightened vulnerability of younger children, or the view that adolescents may be more able to protect themselves from abuse. However, as many of the testimonies here show, this is perhaps a mistaken view. The impact of domestic violence and abuse, both physical and emotional, is clearly evident in young people's accounts. For some the violence was still occurring and young people often felt powerless to stop it. The profound effect this had on their welfare was acknowledged by many young people. In addition, adolescents also felt responsible for "managing" the violence and its impact:

Interviewer:	So when your dad's arguing and fighting with you, it is shouting arguments and stuff?
Kiyana:	Sometimes physical.
Interviewer:	Right, so I take it that's him hitting you rather than you the other way about?
Kiyana:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	And can you talk to your mum, can you tell her that it upsets you or...?
Kiyana:	Not really because like it's, I think that if I, well I kind of like keep low-key because like I don't want to ruin what they have. I think that like if I do things, then he do something to me which will make her stick up for me and then they might split up or something.
Chellise:	But my mum hasn't given no reason for him to not trust her but I don't understand that he is still with her like when they are arguing he is like "I hate you" and "you are a slag and you are a bitch". And I am thinking "why are you still with her if you are thinking all this about her", but I think he is just scared to be on his own.
Interviewer:	That must be quite horrible for you to hear that?
Chellise:	It really is, it really is, I am always forever arguing with my mum like "why are you with him" and he has actually inflicted pain on to my mum, he head butted my mum and cracked her nose there. He smashed her mobile phone at her and she dropped to the floor, he chased after my brother with a knife…I am just thinking all this is for nothing and my mum has tried to leave him how many times but he just keep coming back and I just don't understand and my mum's like "I know it's upsetting for you to see but at the end of the day it's my relationship, I still live it the way I can". Yeah right, I understand that because it is your relationship but at the end of the

day I have to sit here and listen to you arguing and all that crap throughout the whole night and stuff.

The majority felt they have little choice but to endure the violence. This may necessitate young people minimising the actual impact of the violence to enable them to feel they can cope, especially in the absence of support from other family members:

Interviewer: So what sort of things do you and your stepdad argue about?
Tanya: Uum, I guess I just see him as kind of a bully, because he just, he makes comments, uum, he kind of gets on with the whole of my family but not me…But my mum knows what goes on, but because she's kind of in the middle, she kind of leaves it…but it's like constant, but it's something that I can handle.

Girls spoke in depth about the violence they had witnessed against their mothers from their fathers, stepfathers and mother's partners, and the impact of this on their own lives. Most spoke to their mothers about the violence and tried to support them to leave the abuser. Thus, girls recognised that the domestic violence was neither acceptable nor inevitable:

Zoe: Uum, it was my stepdad and she wasn't actually allowed a phone for a while and anyone that texted it was like "who was that?". And then she wasn't allowed any friends, then no one used to text and then it just got worse and worse and that's why she ended up leaving him after 12 years.
Interviewer: So was he violent at home as well?
Zoe: Uum, he ended up fracturing my mum's jaw at one point.
Interviewer: That's pretty violent isn't it?
Zoe: …Yeah well I wasn't, it was kind of like when I hit year 5 year 6 that I kind of became really aware of it, like because that was when my mum started to start showing the stresses of it and everything and it was like "this isn't right, mum, what's going on?".

Some girls were very aware of the impact that the domestic violence and child abuse had on their welfare. In a minority of cases this awareness also extended to recognising how this increased their own vulnerability to experiencing violence in their intimate relationships:

Zoe: I'd like to say it does but I'm not too sure like usually I'm kind of like really low confidence. And to say "no" is…real kind of big. You've got to say no because you really don't want to do this and usually in my head it's like I'm going to count down from 10 and then I'm going to say no…because it was like constant put-downs from my stepdad…you're ugly you're fat.

Here Zoe, reflecting on her experiences of emotional abuse from her stepfather, which also included domestic violence, links the effect this had on her self-esteem with her

own experiences of partner violence. However, throughout the interview she did not view the partner violence she had experienced as acceptable or feel that she had consciously or subconsciously sought to recreate a similar relationship to her mother's. Her conceptualisation was more complex, providing an important insight into how child abuse and domestic violence can influence a young person's ability to respond to control and violence in their own intimate relationships. Recent work by Lacasse and Mendelson (2007) also found that low self-esteem was linked to a heightened risk of experiencing partner violence for teenage girls.

For a minority of girls, the violence that their mothers had experienced, and which they had witnessed, made their own experiences of violence seem all too familiar. In these cases girls often felt that they would be able to deal with the violence, due to their previous exposure to it. But, as many realised, this was not generally the case:

Interviewer:	So let's go back to the thing we said at the beginning. Do you think the fact that you experienced, you know, difficulties with your mum and dad, and dad getting cross with mum and stuff, do you think that affected how you dealt with Joel…?
Amy:	I put up with more because I thought I know what's going on and like…
Interviewer:	It was familiar?
Amy:	I knew like how to deal with it because like I'd seen my mum and I'd be stuck, like some of their arguments, I'd be stuck in the middle and I just had to sit there and watch it. And I just didn't know what to do and then when it started to happen to me I thought I've been here before…you think "oh yeah this is easy, I can deal with this" but it's not.

In contrast, some girls felt that their previous experiences of domestic violence and child abuse made them intolerant of any form of "inappropriate" physical contact, even if, as with the quotation below, the actual behaviour was not perceived as violent aggression. In these discussions, it is the reflection of their violent family experiences that was disconcerting, rather than the intent of the behaviour itself:

Rebecca:	Yeah, and now I don't even chat to him [father] because he's an idiot, and that's why I think as well that I really don't like it when people like, when he [boyfriend] grabs me and stuff like...when he's drunk he keeps grabbing me and grabbing me and trying to grab me over here or grab me over there, like not horribly like as in arguing, but "quick come here" and pushing me about and I don't like it.
Interviewer:	And you don't like it?
Rebecca:	I'll be like "oh just leave me alone" and he'll grab me again, like "come over here, do this" and he'll like grab me up and hold me. And I'm like "just get off me, I don't like it", it feels like, I don't know I just don't like it, obviously where my mum's been through it all and everything like that…and then umm…we [father] got in an argument and he started

dragging me around the bedroom…and he's quite big he's a boxer...and holding my arms and I had all bruises up my arms, where he'd made fingerprints…like I get angry really quickly if someone grabs me, like when he [boyfriend] grabs me up, when I don't feel like, they're controlling my body, like they are getting hold onto me too tight or something.

Sophia: I didn't like people touching me very much. Once someone, Oliver [boyfriend] didn't do it do it on purpose, he just grabbed my arm to pull me, I think we were just running away from the teacher when we were in the corridors or something and I just go "Get off me" I don't like people touching me like that. But now, I am not so intense…'cause she did it until I was nine [physical abuse by mother]…it was just like "don't touch me, never ever touch me, like grab me or anything". I will just go flip.

A similar conceptualisation was also applied by girls to their experiences of emotional forms of partner violence:

Interviewer: How's that [abuse by stepfather] affected how you feel about boyfriends…?
Rhiannon: Yeah that did have quite a big effect like…I don't really like shouting, it does make me go a bit mad.
Interviewer: Have you had partners that shouted?
Rhiannon: Yeah. Just want to like smack 'em in the mouth, like keep their voice down. It reminds me of my stepdad and my mam arguing like. So it brings back bad memories and that. But I reckon they should just sit down – shouting don't get you anywhere, arguing like. Sit down and just talk about the situation. I found that out as well.
Interviewer: Yeah.
Rhiannon: …before that it was an ex-boyfriend, and he just used to go mad all the time…and start shouting and everything.

Exposure to domestic violence also created a fear concerning men generally. Girls were unable to specify exactly how they had been affected beyond feeling generally scared and insecure around men. This generalised fear may provide a barrier to entering into intimate relationships or, paradoxically, may actually impede a girl's ability to leave an abusive relationship by increasing their fear of retribution:

Chellise: There are so many things that he has done and that other people have done, why I don't know, I have just got this fear about men now.

Girls also recognised that if someone had experienced abuse, this may affect how they would respond to certain situations:

Zoe: It's like the guy needs to learn like when no is an answer, because they, they don't know what has happened…in the past, she could have had an abusive stepdad or whatever, so fair play to her [girl in vignette story] for having the confidence and everything to do that.

Although the survey results clearly identify an association between family violence and a heightened risk of experiencing partner violence as a teenager, the reasons underpinning this relationship are, as highlighted in the interview data, complex. It did not mean that girls simply sought to recreate their mothers' experiences of violence nor did it mean that they felt that domestic violence was the norm. Indeed, for some, seeing their mothers' experiences of domestic violence reinforced in them the view that they would not allow the cycle to repeat itself:

Rhiannon:	My mam been through an abusive relationship like, and the stories that she told me.
Interviewer:	With your stepdad or with somebody else?
Rhiannon:	Um both. My real dad and my stepdad. And she said "I don't know why I stuck with them for so long" but you never do like, and then it's easy for people to say "Oh you should have left him the first time he hit you", but I understand that she loved him like.
Interviewer:	It's more complicated?
Rhiannon:	Yeah. And she'd say "Oh you wouldn't understand unless you was in that situation". I said to her "Well don't worry because I will never be in that situation. Only one boy has got to lift a hand up to me and that'll be goodbye for ever." And she said "Well that's good to hear".
Chellise:	I know things don't always turn out perfect and things happen for a reason but I want to try my best for that not to happen to me [domestic violence]…Like I have just seen how things have been with my mum…so from what I have seen and past experiences, I am going to try the best so that my kids will have, you know what I mean. But if them things didn't happen in my life, then I wouldn't be the person I am now and I wouldn't think the way I think now.
Interviewer:	And now you want to be a nurse and aim towards that and that will be brilliant thing to do.
Chellise:	Yeah.

But as the survey results illustrate, the belief that they will not experience domestic violence may not necessarily be enough to protect them from such harm. What may possibly act as a protective factor, alongside this self-belief, was identified at the end of the interview with Chellise. Earlier on she had spoken about her career expectations and the importance this had in her life. Arguably, through having an alternative source of self-esteem, the relative importance and status of obtaining and keeping a boyfriend were minimised. This may provide girls with the opportunity to focus on more long-term goals, which may subsequently offer some protection against factors that may impede this ambition, including violence and controlling partners.

This supposition is supported in interviews with girls who had not experienced any form of partner violence. For many of these girls their priority centred on their

education and longer-term career aspirations. Most felt that their education was more important than having a serious boyfriend. Thus, although most had been in a relationship at some point, this was viewed as significantly less important than their education. This provided protection against experiencing partner violence, not simply as they had fewer relationships, but because the ones they did enter were less serious. They also clearly stated that they were likely to terminate a relationship if any concerns arose due to the potential impact this may have had on their educational aspirations. At the time of the interviews, some of these girls had made the decision not to have a relationship so as to reduce distractions due to forthcoming examinations.

Some girls felt that their exposure to domestic violence and abuse had directly affected how they responded to confrontation. This was especially distressing if they felt their behaviour reflected how the abuser had acted.

Interviewer:	Do you think that affects how you are with Ben?
Kelly:	Yeah sometimes because I've got my dad's temperament a bit. So with Dad saying stuff, like I don't know sometimes I might take after my dad the way I think. Like I might get paranoid or just he might say something or look at me or something like that and I'll just go off on one when really there's nothing to go off about.
Interviewer:	So you can recognise bits of your dad and how he behaves in you?
Kelly:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	So does that make you want to change how you are?
Kelly:	My mum before, my dad's never hit my mum but he's grabbed her, he's grabbed her by the throat and stuff like that…And I can remember going back, when I was arguing with my mum at the bus stop in town and I was arguing with her and I grabbed her by the throat and I got home and I just stormed off. She carried on going round town and I took the keys off her and went home and I was like what, I could see like my dad in me then and that was scary.
Interviewer:	You were scared yourself?
Kelly:	I didn't like that, yeah.

It is also important to recognise the support that non-violent male partners provided in relationships where issues of family violence and child abuse were present. As described by Kelly, sometimes girls were seeking to cope with the aftermath of abuse and the implications of this for their own behaviour (Mullender et al 2002). This obviously directly impacted on their partners. Rhiannon described how, with the help of counselling and with her partner's understanding and support, she was able to start to control her behaviour:

Interviewer: So you feel like you manage that in your relationships? When you're angry you manage to sit down and talk about stuff?
Rhiannon: Um…not all the time I can't, no. Sometimes I just go mad or I don't sit down and talk to them. I will eventually, but sometimes I've just got to walk out and I've got to have my own space, my own time to bring myself back together.
Interviewer: So is that what you do, when you feel mad you leave it, you walk away.
Rhiannon: Yeah. But before I used to stand there and just go mad like. But then I started having counselling for anger management 'cos of what I'd been through, and that's where the sort of anger part coming from and the violence.
Interviewer: You've had reasons to be angry haven't you?
Rhiannon: Yeah. I wasn't angry at that person normally I was arguing with, I was angry with him [abusive stepdad] then…
Rhiannon: …it's easier to take it out like on others…
Interviewer: Yeah. So was that with boyfriends, you used to scream at them?
Rhiannon: Yeah. But sometimes with the longer relationship and that it was all right at first…in the first couple of months it was brilliant, we started getting on really good and I could talk to him because he knew about what my stepdad had done [abuse].
Interviewer: Yeah, that's helpful that you can talk about that isn't it?
Rhiannon: Yeah. I mean we never really…we talked about it a few times, but it wasn't summat that we kept going over and over then. And he like sort of respected that.

Rhiannon was able to secure some form of counselling intervention due to her experience of child abuse. This was rarely the case for young people who experienced teenage partner violence, as the following section illustrates.

Help-seeking

We asked young people whom they had told about their experiences of partner violence. In a minority of instances participants had not told anyone about the partner violence, thus the researcher was the first person they had informed. Most frequently, either young people did not recognise their experience as abusive, at least at the time, or they felt they would not be taken seriously. Both these barriers to disclosure are compounded by age as stated by Emma:

Emma: It's harder talking to no one, if you've got like nobody you can talk to…When you're older you might know how to handle it more but when you're like our age you don't know what to do. And if you haven't got people to talk to it makes it harder again.

It has been documented how the control exercised by some boyfriends can prevent girls from seeking help. However, a further barrier to help-seeking is whether the violence is seen as a normative aspect of intimate relationships:

Louise: I think I just kind of have it as like sorting things out on my own…I didn't really know what to do about it and stuff. But um, yeah that was, just felt as if I couldn't really talk to anyone about it. I thought it was normal as well for a while, so I was like "OK I'll just get on with it".

Participants who sought help mostly approached female friends. The request for joint interviews by girls and the level of openness in these interviews testified to this sharing of experiences. Indeed, most girls interviewed had at some point told a friend about the violence, although not necessarily at the time it was occurring:

Interviewer: Could you tell anybody [about the sexual and physical violence]?
Louise: Well I did eventually. I think I told one of my friends. I don't really like to go into details about it with them, but I just said "Well this has kind of been happening", 'cos like people could tell I was acting a bit different. I was just like really kind of on edge.
Interviewer: Have you got friends that have got partners that they're slightly scared of?
Emma: Not now but I have had before, my best friend used to have…
Interviewer: Had a partner that was rough with her?
Emma: Yeah.
Interviewer: How did she manage that, how did she deal with that?
Emma: Uum she stayed with him for a bit and then she asked me what I thought she should do so then…
Interviewer: What did you say?
Emma: I said that she should leave him, there's no point in her being together because if he was beating her up and that he obviously didn't care for her that much.
Interviewer: So did she just leave him?
Emma: Year, she left him now.

Female friends mostly listened and provided emotional support, but also encouraged their friends to leave violent partners. However, some friends provided more practical assistance, such as in one case where a participant accompanied her friend, who had experienced sexual violence, to a sexual health clinic. Most participants recognised the limitations of the assistance peers could provide in protecting friends from violence. In two cases peers acted to support their friends to inform an adult.

Amy: I didn't tell anyone and then I eventually told Libby [friend] and she told Mary [welfare officer]....And then I've been seeing…a counsellor since then. They wanted me to take him to court but I didn't want to because, I don't know I just didn't want to.
Interviewer: Why did you feel you didn't want to?
Amy: Because I thought it would kind of make things worse.
Interviewer: You thought he would become worse if that happened?
Amy: Yeah, well I don't know if that happens again I've promised I will.

In the above instance, and reflecting wider research on adult experiences of domestic violence (Radford 1987), Amy was extremely reluctant to involve the police for fear

of escalating the problem rather than offering any real assistance. Within the UK we have little understanding regarding how the criminal justice system is responding to this child welfare issue. On some occasions informing friends had very serious repercussions for the young person involved:

Tasminder:	I wasn't really happy because like he used to try and force me.
Interviewer:	So he wanted to have sex and you didn't, was it that?
Tasminder:	Yeah and then like I used to tell her [a friend] and she tried to talk to him and then because I told, because she went and told him, he, he come back to me and tried to force it out of me even more.

In other examples peers attempted to provide general advice on protection and "risky behaviour", even if not directly approached. This proactive approach by peers meant that girls did not necessarily have to inform peers about their experiences to receive advice:

Leya:	Sometimes but yeah it's just like, well she is not like really my friend but we sometimes hang around with her, she's really, really flirtatious and like kind of leads the guys on.
Interviewer:	OK.
Leya:	And then, so when she gets touched in inappropriate places we are just like "well don't flirt with them so hard, otherwise they are going to like think that you want to…get off with them".

It is important to note that in Leya's account the responsibility for the sexual violence is placed on the girl's actions, rather than that of the boys who are carrying out the harassment. Thus, although peers represent the main outlet of help-seeking for young people, their responses are not necessarily always beneficial. As illustrated above, peers can hold inappropriate views regarding the acceptability of partner violence in certain contexts (McCarry 2003) and, thus, can play a central role in its perpetuation. However, the role of peer groups requires further investigation, including the role of online peers. The following extracts illustrate how interactions between young people can lead to the minimisation of partner violence, which may inhibit further help-seeking and could encourage victims to view controlling and violent behaviour as acceptable:

Moira:	Uh huh...Everybody does it [control], I thought he was weird and then I talked to my friends and all their boyfriends are the same.
Tanisha:	He bit me on the face, it was horrible, really disgusting…
Jasleen:	Well he does love her a lot he's always talking about her. Never ever stops talking about her ever.
Tanisha :	He's not physical as in fighting.

Interviewer: But biting is physical isn't it?
Jasleen: It might have been a hickey, a love bite.
Interviewer: Did it feel like you had a love bite or did it feel like you were bitten?
Tanisha: It felt like I was bitten.

In the above group interview, Tanisha initially defined her boyfriend's behaviour as constituting violence. In her response, however, Jasleen stressed the positive characteristics of Tanisha's boyfriend (having earlier characterised him as a high-status boyfriend in the interview). Following this reminder from her friend, Tanisha sought to minimise her previous statement by downgrading the significance of her partner's behaviour by saying he was "not physical as in fighting". Jasleen then attempted to further demote the impact of his actions by arguing they may have been a misunderstood sign of affection. Nevertheless, when asked directly by the interviewer, Tanisha was able to resist this redefinition and restated her experience as constituting physical violence.

The group extract provides an illuminating insight into the way in which peer interactions can influence and perpetuate the acceptance of partner violence in teenage relationships. As we have seen, peers can and do provide a valuable and accessible form of support. We should not underestimate the emotional impact that this has on peers, especially if their friends are unable to leave the relationship.

Reflecting the survey findings, very few young people had informed an adult, and even fewer told an adult who was not a professional. Only a minority felt able to tell their parents or felt they would if it happened again:

Zoe: Yeah, so I've kind of gone home and I was like…how…can I tell mum this. And I ended up like sitting her down and going "mum like what would you do?" and then like she just said "if you don't feel ready tell him" and I'm like "I did but he kept pushing". And she was like "do you feel like you still want to stay with him". And I was like "not really I really actually didn't like that". And then she went well "send him a text or face-to-face" and I…sent him a really long text going "if that's what you want, I care about you and everything but maybe you should get it with another girl". And then he texted back "oh I was going to dump you anyway" and I was like "fine at least I got there first".

Interviewer: What would have helped you in that situation [sexual violence from partner]?
Louise: Well I could have gone to my parents, like these days I feel I can talk to them a lot more than I could when I was younger. I thought I couldn't, I hadn't got a grasp of the fact that they were teenagers once as well. You know so, I think if I'd spoken, or if I'd spoken to anyone really, I think I

could have…got help and somebody probably would have made me realise a lot earlier, just gone "you don't need to do this".

Some mothers had tried to start discussions about relationships with their children, rather than wait for them to divulge. In one case a mother, possibly suspecting something was wrong, attempted to initiate discussions with her daughter:

Interviewer:	Who do you tend to talk to about that?
Lisa:	My friends, I don't tend to talk to my mum because it feels a bit weird.
Interviewer:	Yeah?
Lisa:	Only recently we have really been talking about stuff like this so but…
Interviewer:	Recently you have been talking about this?
Lisa:	It still feels a bit weird.
Interviewer:	So have you started talking to her or has she started talking to you?
Lisa:	She did.

From young people's accounts, it is evident that very few parents spoke to them about their relationships even generally, and only a few, mostly mothers with a history of domestic violence, specifically raised the issue of violence in relationships.

In a minority of accounts, when family members did find out about the violence their reactions could be harmful. In one account this involved the young person being physically abused by her family members:

Tasminder:	But it's all right now because he got battered really.
Interviewer:	Did that make you feel better?
Tasminder:	That did make me feel better because he paid for what he did to me.
Interviewer:	So after he forced you, you went home and talked to your family about it?
Tasminder:	I was just crying, I was just crying, and crying, and crying.
Interviewer:	So they knew something was up?
Tasminder:	…I didn't talk to my dad, I just talked to my oldest brother. Sorry, [crying]…Well he [ex-boyfriend] did get battered for it after because I told my brothers and then my brothers battered him [*all three female participants laugh*].
Interviewer:	So sometimes your brothers…stick up for you?
Tasminder:	But they battered me as well…my dad didn't batter me but my mum battered me and my brothers.

The above group interview also illustrates a specific issue for young people from some minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of the female participants from south Asian backgrounds identified that cultural beliefs about the inappropriateness of pre-marital relationships meant that their own intimate relationships had to remain secret. Girls also raised their fears about arranged marriage if their sexual experience became known to their family members:

Jasleen: I will never tell my parents.
Tasminder: I'll run away, I think I'm just going to have to run away.
Jasleen: I'll tell you one thing I'm not having an arranged marriage.
Tasminder: Because they would want to control me.

The above cultural differences between young people's family beliefs and their own meant that many south Asian girls were unable to seek help from their families or wider community.

Professional interventions

Only a very small number of young people had informed a professional and nearly all of these young people had told a school learning mentor. Learning mentors, a strand of the *Excellent in Cities* (EiC) initiative, work largely in primary and secondary education settings. Their role is to work with pupils to help them address barriers to learning. Thus, their remit bridges academic and pastoral support roles. The central role of learning mentors is to develop and maintain effective and supportive mentoring relationships with young people and those engaged with them (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/learningmentors).

Research participants stated that one of the main benefits of the learning mentors was their position outside the teaching structure, which meant they were not perceived as having any direct involvement in the young people's formal education. Generally, learning mentors were selected from within the school's local community. This appeared to be of central importance to young people as they felt mentors understood what their lives were like. This was felt to be especially important for young people from south Asian backgrounds:

Tanisha: She's really supportive [school mentor], she's the most supportive person I've ever met, and she understands and she knows what our lives are like at home.

Another important factor was that young people could see them regularly, sometimes daily, and did not have a specific problem but could drop in when they wanted to. This enabled a trusting relationship to be developed over a period of time before any major issues were divulged. In addition, the scheme was not seen by young people as stigmatising, as it was viewed within schools as a support in relation to education, rather than concerning child welfare (protection).

Interviewer: So have you not got a learning mentor or anything in school you can talk to?
Kiyana: There is one that I sometimes go and talk to, he is a man.
Interviewer: And does he offer advice or give you support or…?
Kiyana: Yeah he just like lets me get things off my chest and everything.

Interviewer: So you see the learning mentors fairly often?
Rebecca: Yeah Jane, I see her quite often; I think it's, it's like once every day, or once every two days or something like that.
Interviewer: Does that make a difference?
Rebecca: Yeah I can chat to Jane, she's got a really good, me and her have got a really good relationship. I can tell her a lot of things, if you ever need someone she's always there for you, if you needs to come to her and that so it's really good.

Others spoke about the role of learning mentors with their families, whereby the learning mentor provides a bridge between school, young people and their parents:

Tasminder: I told [the learning mentor] everything. She helped me through it; she had a meeting with my parents as well. She tried to say to them that they have got to be supportive. It's nice talking to someone older because they've got more knowledge and they know more. We don't know about it all.

Interviewer: Are there people at school that you talk to if you have problems?
Lisa: At school, probably my learning mentor. My learning mentor because things at home and because my mum's ill at the moment, so things like that.

Not everyone was quite so positive about the role of the learning mentor. Reflecting numerous research findings concerning adolescents' views on service provision, the problem of confidentiality, specifically the perceived lack of it, was identified as a major barrier (Barter et al 2004):

Interviewer: Is there anybody in school that you can talk to?
Chellise: No apart from one or two close friends, no one really, can't talk to teachers because and like mentors. You can't to them because they just talk to other teachers, they say it's confidential but it's not…None of it's confidential, none of it.

However, not all professionals recognised the importance of teenage partner violence in the lives of young people:

Interviewer: That's nice, have you got a social worker you talk to as well?
Rebecca: Yeah.
Interviewer: Yeah, do you get on with her or him?
Rebecca: Her, uum yeah.
Interviewer: So do you talk to her about the stuff, about relationship things?
Rebecca: No I haven't talked to her about that because a lot of things have been going on really.
Interviewer: She hasn't asked you about relationships, you're talking more about…
Rebecca: Family, yeah.

Although Rebecca stated that the emphasis of her discussions with her social worker was on the considerable problems she was facing at home, she was also coping with extensive and repeated experiences of physical and sexual partner violence. We have already shown that young people are unlikely to reveal these experiences unsolicited. Child welfare professionals working with adolescents, especially those with a history of family violence, need to ensure that they systematically inquire about young people's experiences of partner violence. We have already seen the very serious effects such violence can have on young people. If we seek to work within an ecological child welfare framework (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Ugar 2002), we need to ensure that, as professionals, we both acknowledge and respond to all forms of violence in young people's lives. To neglect one area, due to the perceived importance of another form of violence, will reduce the effectiveness of strategies that are put in place to safeguard children and young people.

To conclude our focus on the interview findings relating to girls, one participant had firm ideas about what needed to be done:

Jordynn:	Yeah I think that maybe kids need to be taught about it. I know it's a common thing like sex and health issues and STDs and stuff like that because I don't think that they know, they think they know.
Interviewer:	Would it have made a difference to you if you had known more do you think?
Jordynn:	Yeah definitely because you know, sometimes, you don't know what you are doing and that's when things like this happen and…
Interviewer:	So more sex education really?
Jordynn:	Yeah basically in school and I don't think there is enough of it because the rate of teenage pregnancies is increasing and also STDs as well. So I think that is really important…And I don't think parents really talk to their children about it, they just sweep it under the carpet.
Interviewer:	Parents probably leave it to schools now and assume it all happens in schools don't they?
Jordynn:	Yeah but really I only ever had probably about two lessons in this school about it and it wasn't good [*laughs*]…maybe they should get a professional to come in and they put in on the timetable as a citizenship lesson and maybe from year 9. We had a nurse do it who works here and she did it for us and maybe they could do something like that. But I think it is really important, well I think there is not enough of it because kids don't know anything about it…They teach you about drugs about and everything and the causes but when it comes to sex and things it's not there.

Part 2: Interview findings – boys

Before looking at boys' experiences of partner violence, it is first important to consider how boys actually viewed their relationships and how these perceptions were mediated by expectations surrounding certain forms of masculinity. About half of the 29 boys interviewed presented the main, and in some cases sole, benefit of being in a relationship as the availability of sex. This reflects girls' evaluations concerning boys' preoccupation with the physical rather than the emotional aspects of intimacy:

Nathan:	It's too early for that sort of thing (serious relationship).
Amrit:	It's too early.
Interviewer:	Too early, yeah? So would you rather just see lots of different girls?
Nathan:	Sex.
Interviewer:	Just see them for sex?
Nathan:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Do the girls…are they more serious about you?
Nathan:	Yeah.

Interviewer:	Do you think girls and boys see relationships differently?
Zahed:	Aye.
Interviewer:	In what way?
Zahed:	Some boys they just think about sex.
Interviewer:	So do you think guys are more preoccupied by the sex thing?
Zahed:	Aye.

In some interviews the researchers felt that boys attempted to embellish the sexual aspects of their relationships. This was also recognised in boys' own evaluations of male peer behaviour, which seeks to portray an inflated heterosexuality:

Interviewer:	Do you hear boys talking like that quite a lot in school [about their sexual activities]?
Delmar:	Yeah but most of them are just chatting…It's like "no you haven't, shut up, what you talking about?".
Interviewer:	Do you think they are exaggerating, stuff like that?
Delmar:	Yeah, oh my gosh.

Similarly, boys may also be minimising the importance of the emotional support they receive from girlfriends. However, a small number of boys did state that they valued relationships for a range of reasons, including but not primarily sexual:

Interviewer:	What does it mean…to be in a relationship, what does it give to you?
Callum:	Company, fun, eh, just somebody that you know they're going to be around for a while.
Interviewer:	Right, what's the difference between that then and having pals?
Callum:	They're closer, the girlfriend or boyfriend.

Interviewer:	Do you think boys and girls want the same thing in relationships, or do you think it's different?
Liam:	Dunno. I think it is the same really, but I think that a lot of boys wouldn't admit it, especially to their friends and that.

For some boys the ending of a relationship was especially difficult as they lost a valuable emotional support, which their male peers seemed resistant to provide:

Callum:	I don't know I just felt like the world was coming apart, eh, you've got nobody close to you and that.
Interviewer:	So that's quite serious feelings then isn't it, that's quite intense?
Callum:	Aye, I suppose, I wouldn't really be bothered about the intimate part of it, it was like the trust part of it.
Interviewer:	Right, and did she know you felt bad, like that bad?
Callum:	No, I don't like showing stuff like that.
Interviewer:	No, why not?
Callum:	Must be a boy thing or something.
Interviewer:	In general do you think boys are less likely to talk about their feelings?
Callum:	Uh huh, aye.

As Callum recognised, the ending of a relationship may be especially difficult for boys, due to the need to portray a certain form of "non-emotional" masculinity. Thus, boys' feelings and vulnerabilities remain hidden. Compared to girls' accounts, where female friends provided an important source of comfort when a relationship ended, boys often lost the only person to whom they felt emotionally close. This was compounded for boys who had exclusively male peer networks, often due to their negative views about the benefits of female friendships. Unsurprisingly, boys who portrayed a less "emotional" and more sex-orientated attitude to relationships often also held more negative general attitudes to girls. We will explore these issues in more depth later in relation to the gendered double standard attributed to sexual reputations and the implications of this for partner violence. But some boys did value their friendships with girls, recognising they provided an important source of support:

Interviewer:	Yeah. And if you did have problems, relationships problems, who would you talk to about it do you think, if you did talk to anyone?
Liam:	Either her [a female friend], or this other girl who's like one of her best mates and my best mate too.
Interviewer:	Is it easier to talk to girls than boys about that sort of stuff?
Liam:	I reckon it is, because a lot of boys just laugh and that, take the mick, like even though they'd feel the same if the same thing happened to them.

Thus, male peers are characterised as responding in a manner that seeks to constrain deviations from the accepted "hard" masculinity, where feelings, especially signs of emotional vulnerability, are unaccepted. The use of humour is identified as the

weapon of choice to undertake this demarcation. But it is also recognised in the above quote that these same boys may also experience similar emotions, although these would not be on public (male) display (McCarry 2009). So roles and expectations surrounding relationships are quite different in boys' accounts and not all boys viewed relationships as a means to sex.

A specific relationship issue emerged in interviews with Muslim and Sikh male participants. Many boys stated, reflecting earlier interviews with girls, that their parents' cultural beliefs about the unacceptability of pre-marital relationships placed additional pressures on them and their partners. As with girls, this meant that such relationships had to be kept secret from their parents and siblings, as well as other family members and the wider community:

Interviewer:	And they would probably interfere if they knew about you do you think?
Usaf:	Aye, they would.
Interviewer:	And what do you think about that?
Usaf:	...It's just natural. Like it happens in Muslims a lot…It's just the way it is really.
Interviewer:	OK, what does your family think, do they know about her?
Usaf:	No.

Interviewer:	Are you her first serious boyfriend or has she had other serious boyfriends?
Hardeep:	First.
Interviewer:	Is she Sikh as well?
Hardeep:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Does your family and stuff know about her?
Hardeep:	[*Laughing*] No.
Interviewer:	No? Is it a secret?
Hardeep:	They've all been a secret.
Interviewer:	Oh really. Does her family know about you?
Hardeep:	No.

Harbir:	Our families like, Sikh families, wouldn't approve of like people going out, they're more strict like.

This disparity between young people's own views and experiences and their families' cultural beliefs seemed to represent a commonly acknowledged and disconcerting experience for young people and their partners:

Interviewer:	Right. So are your friends in similar situations as well?
Usaf:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	So have most of you got girlfriends or boyfriends but you don't tell your parents?
Usaf:	Uhuh [yes].
Interviewer:	What do you think about that? Would you like to tell your parents?
Usaf:	Well it'd be much easier.

Interviewer:	Is your girlfriend Muslim?
Ahmed:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Yeah. So is your relationship secret then?
Ahmed:	Kind of. Like my mum and my dad don't know, but I have mates and that, they know.
Interviewer:	Okay. And is that the same for her as well?
Ahmed:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	What do you think about having to do that?
Ahmed:	I think it's kind of weird 'cos I like to be open and that with my girlfriend. But it's all right.

Having looked at boys' perceptions of their relationships, we now move on to consider their experiences of partner violence. As we shall see, some of the issues that have been raised in this section become even more pertinent.

Boys' accounts of physical partner violence

Most boys interviewed stated they had never experienced physical violence from a partner or acted in a physically aggressive way towards them. Only one boy reported receiving physical violence from their female partner, which was not "reciprocal". Alcohol was mentioned as the main factor in explaining his girlfriend's aggression. Although girls also stated that drinking was linked to their male partner's violence, often this was linked to the severity of the violence rather than its actual presence:

Omar:	Once one of my ex's she was so drunk and some girls were calling me all the time. She was round my friend's house and other girls were calling me and my ex was beside me. And she was "who is it", that was my friend and she was like, "pass me the phone". And she heard her and she came over and she [*gestures her trying to hit him*] she said "I am going to hit you" and she threw a bottle and I was like, "calm down"…she was chasing me in the house…
Interviewer:	So she was trying to hit you with it?
Omar:	Yeah.

Although in this instance Omar was portraying himself as the victim of his girlfriend's unprovoked anger, he later described his own use of physical violence. We also had only one account of physical violence to a female partner, which was not portrayed as self-defence or seen by the participant as being "reciprocal".

Interviewer:	So has it ever happened with another girlfriend?
Hardeep:	Yeah, one of them I caught her snogging another boy. So I slapped her and beat him up.
Interviewer:	And how did you feel afterwards, when you did hit her and beat him up.
Hardeep:	I was upset, about that she could do that to me…I had to though, 'cos...
Interviewer:	What do you think about it now when you look back on it?
Hardeep:	Um, I think I was right to do it.

At the end of the extract, Hardeep still believed that his physical violence and its intensity were justified given his girlfriend's infidelity. It is important to remember that this relationship was kept secret from both their families and the wider community in which they lived. This limited the level of support that he and, possibly more importantly, his partner could access and perhaps necessitated further lies to explain her injuries.

We had more accounts of boyfriends using physical violence in a broader context, for example in relation to defending their partner's or, perhaps more accurately, their own "honour":

> Omar: Yeah sometimes I am like what are you doing? Now once I was in a club having a party and someone was walking beside us and he just he touched her from the back you know her arse...She went like this and I was like "what happened to you?". And she like "no no nothing" then I was like "what happened to you? Tell me" and she say "no". And I had see that guy just past and I said if you are not going to tell me I am just going to leave now. She was like he just done that and everything and I went to that guy and I was going to knock him out then. We start pushing each other and everything then she said to me "I don't want to fight" and she pushed him and everything and I said "go back". She stopped fighting and I said OK, after that club and the guy came he was like "I am sorry" and everything. I didn't know she was your girl, I am just sorry and everything I was like "OK whatever just leave it now", because once I start fighting she always cry you know.

Thus, male violence could be used as a reaction to the wider sexual harassment that girls experience more generally in their lives, although such a response may not necessarily be supported by the recipient themselves. Indeed, in the interview Omar discussed his frequent use of violence against other males, which he realised caused distress to his girlfriend, especially as it often resulted in serious injuries. We should not underestimate the impact of such violence in relationships, especially as it often stemmed from jealously and possessiveness. Omar viewed his violence as a way to protect his girlfriend's reputation, even though she did not want him to. It is interesting that the boy concerned did not apologise to the girl, the victim of his behaviour, but instead to her boyfriend. It is therefore viewed as a more significant violation against the male partner than the female recipient. In addition, the context of the apology was not that the sexual harassment itself was unacceptable, but that it had been directed at a girl who was unavailable for sexual harassment due to her boyfriend's status. This example also illustrates how having a boyfriend can provide

some protection for girls from wider male sexual harassment, although the wider implications may be problematic.

In other situations the violence was directed at an object rather than directly at the male's partner. Andrew viewed this as a way of attempting to control his anger:

Interviewer:	How did it make you feel then when you were arguing and stuff?
Andrew:	As if you just couldn't be bothered with anything and you'd go away and just sit by yourself.
Interviewer:	Right, did it make you feel bad then?
Andrew:	Angry.
Interviewer:	And then how would you act?
Andrew:	I remember one time I was arguing with her so bad that I grabbed the telly and I threw it off the ground.

Boys more frequently portrayed their violence towards their girlfriends as being in self-defence. But it was often difficult to determine if their interpretation of events was accurate. Often the severity of the violence used by boys seemed disproportionate to the attack from which they claimed they were protecting themselves:

Interviewer:	…Did she hit you first?
Hardeep:	Yes.
Interviewer:	And were you shocked when it happened or, did you think she was going to do it.
Hardeep:	I was a bit shocked…'cos she didn't stop did she and you can't not hit a girl if she's attacking you.
Interviewer:	Right. And did that put an end to it then, did you stop it then?
Hardeep:	I think I let it happen again a few more times and then I hit her forehead and she got knocked out and we broke up.
Interviewer:	Did she tell anybody?
Hardeep:	She called the police…and then I got a GBH [conviction].

It may be that boys felt that portraying their use of violence in this way made it more acceptable, even if the injuries were severe enough to warrant a criminal conviction. However, as Hardeep later continued, his physical violence was not used to protect himself but due to being annoyed:

Interviewer:	And so how did you feel when she hit you?
Hardeep:	I was annoyed.
Interviewer:	And did it hurt you physically, or did it just make you annoyed?
Hardeep:	Yeah it made me annoyed and a bit hurt.
Interviewer:	And so do you think when you hit her, did it hurt physically or get her annoyed?
Hardeep:	I think it hurt her. She was hurt.

There was no consideration in the above account that he could simply have avoided the violence by leaving. In another incident Omar also used physical violence in response to his partner's behaviour. Unlike the above account, where the physical violence was positioned as self-defence, Omar instead projected his actions as reciprocating his partner's initial physical attack. Again alcohol was presented as a mitigating factor:

Omar:	Yeah. Once I was so drunk…I came to her I was like "why did you hit me?". And she was like "I didn't hit you" and "you was just talking to that girl" and I slapped her so hard.
Interviewer:	You did?
Omar:	Yeah she was crying then I said "I am sorry". After that but you know when you get drunk you don't know what to do.
Interviewer:	…Where did you hit her?
Omar:	I just slapped her on the face…I felt bad when she cried.

The above illustrates how female control, even if this includes the use of physical violence, is unlikely to be tolerated by a male partner. At the end Omar stated that he felt bad after he struck her, perhaps acknowledging that this "reciprocal" violence may have been disproportionate. Such incidents lead us to question if the term "reciprocal", which is often used unquestioningly in the wider "dating" violence literature, is an accurate or indeed appropriate term to use. Reciprocal implies some level of equal or mutual impact, but given the accounts here and the girls' own recollections this does not reflect what is occurring in young people's relationships. It is important that the terms we use do not serve to further confuse or conflate existing power relations. We are not attempting to say that girls are not physically violent or that girls' violence does not affect their partners. But, given the greater physical strength of most boys, girls' ability to cause injury, and therefore fear, may be considerably less. Obviously, the emotional impact of experiencing physical violence is not simply related to the physical hurt caused. Yet, as we have seen, fear and control are. This position also reflects our survey findings although, as already stated, it is possible that boys minimise the impact of such violence due to peer pressure concerning depictions of certain masculinities.

In most boys' accounts, the only acceptable form of physical violence in relationships concerned play-fighting. In these discussions, boys seemed very certain that the boundaries of acceptable physical force were never breached. All felt that if these

were ever crossed, their partners would make their discontent clear. However, the greater male physical strength means that boys often perceived themselves as being in control of such fights:

Callum:	She tries to batter me and that just for fun but…
Interviewer:	Just for fun?
Callum:	But she doesn't batter me, I'm too strong.
Interviewer:	Do you ever think it's going too far?
Callum:	No, she knows when to stop. I don't say anything to her. She decks me or whatever, pushes me, but that's it, nothing.
Interviewer:	Do you do it back to her?
Callum:	No. I chuck her back on the bed that's all. But not in a sexual way.

Here Callum stressed that in such encounters he did not use the same level of physical force as his partner. He positioned his greater strength as the determining factor in these "fun" confrontations. Unlike some of the girls' accounts, there was no indication that boys perceived "fights" as ever becoming uncomfortable, either for them or their partners.

Boys' accounts of partner sexual violence

Most boys felt that girls could not be sexually violent towards boys or pressure them into unwanted sexual acts:

Fraser:	It's a bit different with girls you see somebody who's sluttish you go with to try and get sex but you never hear a girl go with a guy to get sex.
Interviewer:	Do you think it happens this way round with boys pressuring girls or equally with girls pressuring boys?
Bobby:	I think it's mostly boys pressuring girls.
Interviewer:	Do you think it could ever happen the other way about, that like it's the girls pressurising the boys into doing it?
Callum:	I don't think so no.
Interviewer:	No?
Callum:	No, I think boys [unclear] they're probably be up for anything.
Interviewer:	So they can't be pressured into it?
Callum:	Aye.

Only one boy spoke to us about an incident where they felt they had directly experienced sexual harassment from a girl:

Interviewer:	Do you want to tell me about that?
Josh:	…I'd just turned up with my friends [at a party] and like there was people who'd already been drinking and stuff and then, a girl who goes to this school, she's in most of my lessons, she's a good friend of mine, and uum she come over to me and she's grabbing me and tried to kiss me and stuff and I just stopped her and said "you'll thank me for it in the morning".
Interviewer:	Had she had a few drinks?

Josh:	Yeah, and then she just started talking a load of rubbish and stuff saying she liked me, but that she was drunk…
Interviewer:	So was it all right in school now, is it still comfortable with her?
Josh:	Yeah, because I could have been an idiot and like took advantage of her but I'm not like that I can't stand it, it's stupid.

In the above account there is no indication that Josh felt in any way under pressure or threatened by the girl's behaviour. Indeed we may question whether this constitutes sexual harassment or direct sexual behaviour. Josh did not perceive himself as the victim but instead saw the girl, due to her use of alcohol, as vulnerable. In another instance and recounting the experience of a male friend, Harbir identified female sexual pressure in a relationship:

Interviewer:	Do you think, it usually happens this way around, that boys are wanting more and girls are saying hold on a minute, or is it the other way round too?
Harbir:	It's both really, you can't say it's just one because I know a girl who went out in a relationship but the boy didn't really want to do nothing but she was like "yeah come on" and all of that.
Interviewer:	How did he handle that?
Harbir:	…He stormed out.

We had no accounts from boys of sexual violence involving physical force. All boys stated they would never act in this way. But some interviews with boys did touch on their use of sexual coercion, although they did not explicitly use these terms. Instead, discussions generally concerned how boys used their "skills" to "manipulate" girls into undertaking sexual activities. Sometimes it was difficult for researchers to determine if these discussions were in fact an attempt to portray an exaggerated account of their sexual maturity, skills and conquests. We know from previous work that boys may feel pressured into portraying a sexually knowing and aggressive *persona* (Frosh et al 2002). An indication of this process is found in the work of DeKeseredy (1988) and more recently Lavoie et al (2000) and de Bruijn et al (2006), who show that male adolescents who communicate their use of partner violence to their male peers often appear to receive support for it. Similarly, research evidence from a joint interview with boys did suggest that sexually coercive tactics were viewed with mutual admiration. Boys provided a number of examples where they sought to coerce girls into sex, mostly though the use of lies:

Interviewer:	So do you think guys are more preoccupied by the sex thing?
Zahed:	Aye…Guys can tell girls they love them just because they want sex.
Interviewer:	Ah.
Zahed:	Guys say what they want to hear.

Interviewer:	Yeah, do you ever act like that?
Zahed:	With other girls but not with my girlfriend.

Reflecting Zahed's conceptualisation, most boys differentiated between how they behaved with their "serious" girlfriends and how they treated casual partners. It is interesting that throughout his interview Zahed did not view his casual relations with girls as being disrespectful to his girlfriend. Rather, he seemed to imply that by having casual sexual relations outside his "serious" relationship he was thereby protecting his girlfriend from his own sexual frustration:

Amrit:	No not sleeping with them we just you know a quick thing.
Nathan:	Getting a quick shag.
Interviewer:	So do you think there's pressure on girls, why would girls go with the boys if they know that's what they're saying?
Amrit:	Some of the girls enjoy it, but like some of them, some of them could be getting forced into it like. I ain't like that personally myself.
Nathan:	No, not really forced really but like [interrupted]
Amrit:	When the girls have the reputation then they are a slag. Some of them are just like; I've got the reputation so I might as well do it.

Here Amrit stated that he did not use physical force but, in response, Nathan then started to imply that he did use some level of coercion, although he was interrupted. Again, as with Zahed, different rules seem to be applied to girls depending on their alleged sexual reputations. Nathan added another way he attempted to manipulate his female partners:

Nathan:	I ask like did you have sex with them (ex-partner), and when they like say yeah, like you go oh, so when, how long did it take and that. So like if they say like it took four months, you look up, you work out roughly four months since you've been seeing them and you say, oh I reckon it would be a good idea if we done it like…imagine if it like was in March now, you done it in June…it's kind of seems...a long way. So she'll be thinking, oh at least he wants to be with me for another three months.

Boys spoke about the pressure on them from male peers to be sexually active, or at least to present themselves in this way:

Interviewer:	So you don't feel any pressure from male friends to have a girlfriend?
Bobby:	No but I've seen other people have that but not me.
Interviewer:	In what way, can you explain that a bit more?
Bobby:	Well it's like, if you've not been out with someone for a long time you get people going, you've never kissed anyone a lot of that going around, but…
Interviewer:	So you get teased?
Bobby:	But since we've gone into fifth year and grown up a bit that's stopped.

Fraser: No I don't think it is 'cos they can talk about it more easily 'cos one of my pals is a girl, she's a virgin still and she talks about it all the time as if it's like in front of pals. And no one will laugh or say anything, so I think it's different for girls.

Some boys admitted their own part in this form of peer pressure.

Interviewer: Did you have pressure on you [from peers]?
Amrit: Yeah.

Nathan: No, I know I've put peer pressure on people.
Interviewer: Oh have you, like saying what…?
Nathan: Oh you haven't done it, you haven't done it? All the time...
Interviewer: So why do you do that then?
Nathan: Because it's funny.

Boys may, therefore, be more susceptible to using sexual coercion in their serious relationships or with more casual partners, in order to counteract male peer pressure by being able to demonstrate their sexual conquests. However, some boys, as illustrated in the following quotes, did indicate which girls were viewed as more "deserving" of sexual coercion: those with a "bad" reputation. Girls who had a known or, more accurately, perceived history of sexual activity were viewed as being more appropriate for coercion. The labelling of girls and boys in relation to this double standard of sexual reputations primarily based on gender is widely reported in previous research on teenagers (Holland et al 1998; Stanley 2005). In our interviews boys were aware of how this gendered process resulted in very different outcomes for girls compared to boys, although many boys stated they did not agree with this:

Interviewer: Is there any difference do you think in the pressure on girls to be in relationships or boys to be in relationships?
Bobby: I think there's probably more pressure on boys, but if a girl goes out with a lot of people she's called like a slut or a slag or something but if a boy it's just one of the lads if he does it.
Interviewer: What do you think about that?
Bobby: I think it's actually pretty bad.

Usaf: Like if a girl has sex with a guy she's the one that gets all the abuse and that.
Interviewer: Right. From other girls or from other guys?
Usaf: Both.
Interviewer: Both. And what do guys get?
Usaf: Nothing.
Interviewer: What do you think about that?
Usaf: In a way it's not fair…'Cos everyone is equal.

Harbir: Well, if a girl slept around and people found out then they will start calling her a slag, a ho', all that.
Interviewer: What do guys get called?
Harbir: Nothing, a player.

Interviewer: It's not quite as bad is it?
Harbir: No.

Boys recognised the inequalities present in the heterosexual construction of sexuality and, while they acknowledged that it was unfair, viewed it as inevitable:

Interviewer: Why do you think that happens [double standard]?
Bobby: Well I think there's a lot of history probably involved because of like girls and all that.

Daniel: I don't think it's fair but I don't think it's going to change.
Interviewer: Really?
Daniel: I don't think it will ever change?…It's always been the same, I can't really see it changing…it's no different from a boy doing it and a girl but it's just the label…It is unfair but I don't think it's going to change.

A few boys thought it was acceptable, although they were unable to elaborate on their reasoning:

Nathan: If a boy sees lots of girls that's good innit, but like if a girl sees lots of boys, like she gets a bad name and bad reputation.
Interviewer: Do you think that's fair?
Amrit: Yeah…
Nathan: Yeah, I do.
Amrit: Yeah…Like you might still be in touch like with people that you still knew from school and that and when they see you like you've married her she used to be a slag, it doesn't look nice does it.

Implications of this double standard were particularly problematic for girls who acquired a "negative" reputation. Even though boys often stated they did not agree with it, this labelling still held substantial implications regarding how girls were viewed and specifically how much sexual coercion could be used:

Delmar: Well you have got good girls and you have got ones that are looser. So obviously with a loose girl you would talk to her different, you would treat her different because you would know that you would get something easier. But a decent girl you would treat her with more respect, innit? And try and be like, you wouldn't say certain things to her. Because you know she is decent.

Research from the Netherlands by de Bruijn et al (2006) suggests that male adolescents with traditional gender role expectations were more often associated with sexual coercion than those with more positive attitudes to sexual equality. Sears et al (2007) also argue that their research indicates that boys who use traditional gender scripts, which suppose that boys initiate and vigorously pursue sexual involvement

irrespective of their partner's wishes, will view sexual coercion as a normative aspect of a relationship.

In our research, female sexual reputations were further demarcated in some boys' accounts due to cultural beliefs and perceptions, specifically ethnicity and religion:

Ahmed:	'Cos I wanted one like in a relationship and then the rest were just for wee little flings and that.
Interviewer:	OK, so the girl that you're with in the relationship, would you see her, she's different to the girls you would see for flings?
Ahmed:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	In what way then?
Ahmed:	In what way like, the ones that I have a fling with, a bit of fun, and other ones be serious with.
Interviewer:	So what do you mean by having a bit of fun?
Ahmed:	Like doing stuff…Like kissing and that whatever, do other things.
Interviewer:	So do you not do that with your girlfriend, like the more serious one?
Ahmed:	With the serious one I like to wait with her, when I've been with her a long time, before I do stuff like that with her. 'Cos like she's not ready or something like that.
Interviewer:	OK, but the other girls that you do do stuff with?
Ahmed:	They're like up for it, whatever.
Interviewer:	Are they Muslim girls, those other ones?
Ahmed:	No, not Muslims.
Interviewer:	So the serious one is more likely to be the Muslim girlfriend?
Ahmed:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	…Is that quite a common way to behave?
Ahmed:	Aye, I think a lot of boys do that.

Tariq stated that alcohol may be a factor:

Tariq:	No, just the thing is with white girls and that, some are involved in a serious relationship, like I know a couple of my mates who are involved in a serious relationship and they have been going out for like a couple of years and some are just like a week or two and then that's it [they have sex]. And it's just the main cause is drinking and that.

So, girls are positioned into two distinct categories, based on cultural differences. Although this divide does not imply sexual coercion, such perceptions do have important implications for relationships in some communities:

Interviewer:	Do do you think boys and girls are treated differently then?
Ajeet:	Yeah, I think they are.
Interviewer:	Yeah, in what way?
Ajeet:	…I reckon boys do because the parents for Indian girls, like…the parents look after the girls because they know what they are going be and stuff if they go out like tartish and like the boys, I don't know it's just…
Interviewer:	…So for your girlfriend, if her parents found out about you, do you think she would get a harder time?

Ajeet: Yeah, she would get a harder time, maybe she should stay at home a bit more with the family and like just maybe stay away from me for a bit.

Boys' experiences of emotional partner violence

As with girls, boys stated that arguing and shouting in the context of an argument was a common experience of relationships. This reciprocal antagonism was often depicted as a normal, although still irritating, aspect of teenage relationships:

Andrew: Screaming and shouting, just starting petty arguments for nothing.
Interviewer: Really, so she would be starting them with you or you would be starting them with her?
Andrew: No, both ways.
Interviewer: So what would you be arguing about?
Andrew: Uum, the stupidest of things like if I was 10 minutes late for going to meet her "why are you late?" I'd be like 'cos I am. And if I walked down to meet her I'd be like "why are you not here?". We used to just get in moods with each other.

Interviewer: Do you think arguing and stuff is quite common in relationships with young people?
Denzel: Yeah, yeah.

Daniel: She keeps it, like every time we have an argument she'll keep it going, do you know what I mean? Like I can go without talking to her but she will come up to me and like start a conversation…but I can go for ages without talking to her.
Interviewer: Oh really?
Daniel: She'll be in a mood, but she'll come up to me and sort it out, it used to be worse at the start, but now it's not that bad.
Interviewer: So you used to argue and stuff more?
Daniel: We used too, all the time.

In contrast to the girls' accounts, very few boys suggested that name-calling happened in their relationships. Where name-calling was identified, it was presented in interviews as constituting a joke, where both parties were unaffected.

Interviewer: Does that happen in young people's relationships [name-calling]?
Andrew: Uh huh. Say things to see how people react.
Interviewer: Really?
Andrew: Aye, but sometimes you don't, don't think until you've done it. I think I've done it, as well. Everybody must have done it before in their life, they say it before thinking about it just to see what they'll react like.
Interviewer: Is it something you would do in your casual relationships more than your serious ones?
Andrew: Both.
Interviewer: Has it ever happened to you?
Andrew: I've done it.
Interviewer: How did you feel afterwards?
Andrew: Nothing, I didn't, no because they knew it was a joke, but I wouldn't do it if they thought I was being serious…it's in a sarcastic tone.
Interviewer: And how do you think they felt when you did it?

Andrew: Every time I've done it, they've always knew it was a joke, it was just laughing about.

However, given the findings from the survey and girls' interviews, this presumption may be incorrect. Girls may laugh in response but this may not necessarily actually mean they are enjoying this behaviour. In this context, it is obviously difficult for boys to know if they are acting in a way that may cause distress and the presumption illustrates how boys may not necessarily always recognise the impact of their actions on their partners.

One form of emotional violence that boys did frequently speak about was control. Boys usually claimed that girls were being controlling. But it did seem that, in some cases, a qualitatively different pressure was placed on boys by girls and this involved emotional control. Such control centred on not wanting to hurt their partner's feelings and the awkward position in which this placed them:

Interviewer: So how would she feel then if you said to her "right on Tuesday night I'm actually going out to play football so I won't see you"?
Callum: I don't know, I think she's like, I think she takes it to heart sometimes.
Interviewer: Do you feel like pressured just to see her instead?
Callum: Aye sort of. I try to like, but I miss all my pals.
Interviewer: And does she not miss seeing her pals,
Callum: Don't know she doesn't, no...
Interviewer: So the possibility is you'd lose your pals groups because you are going to spend all your time together?
Callum: Uum.
Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?
Callum: I don't know, I never really thought about it like, uum, because I'd rather have my old pals and that because one day me and Tracey might split up and then I'd have nobody about me.

Here Callum realised that his peers were more important than his partner but at the same time wanted to remain within his current relationship. The loss of her peer group may have compounded her wish to restrict his interactions. In many instances it seemed that girls' control concerned wanting to spend a greater amount of time with their partners. Consequently, this often involved girlfriends insisting that boys see less of their own friends. Control by girls also often involved specific demands to try to restrict their boyfriend's contact with female peers:

Interviewer: So…and what were you arguing about then that was so bad?
Andrew: She accused me of cheating on her, that's what it was. I was so raging.
Interviewer: So was she quite jealous then?
Andrew: Aye.

Interviewer: Yeah? In what ways, like how?
Andrew: Like see if I was to, if a lassie was to text me or phone me or if I was talking to somebody to such and such today, she'd be like what are you talking to them for.
Interviewer: What did you think about that?
Andrew: Get a grip. I'm allowed to have lassie pals as well as boy pals. [unclear]
Interviewer: So did that not bother you then, if she was hanging about with other boy pals?
Andrew: No.

In a few cases girl's attempts at control received violent responses from their partner. This type of response was absent from girls' accounts. In other respects boys responded pragmatically to control through the use of mobile phones by turning them off:

Hardeep: So I have to turn my phone off
Interviewer: Oh really! So does it get on your nerves then that she phones you? so much?
Hardeep: Yes.
Interviewer: And do you phone her back or do you do the same to her?
Hardeep: No.
Interviewer: And what do your friends say when she's always phoning you?
Hardeep: I have my phone on silent.

Josh: It depends like because sometimes, like I was going to a party and I was going out with someone and they've like been ringing me and stuff.
Interviewer: Uum, because you were out and they weren't? So you've experienced that?
Josh: Yeah.
Interviewer: How did you deal with it?
Josh: Turned my phone off.

For most boys, if the attempts to control their movements or limit their peer interactions did not stop, they threatened to end the relationship. If these ultimatums were unsuccessful, then they acted on them:

Andrew: Aye. No I didn't think she trusted me at all.
Interviewer: Really? And why do you think she was thinking that?
Andrew: Because she knew that I'd never actually been in a serious relationship before…because I didn't like long-term relationships.
Interviewer: And then how did that make you feel?
Andrew: Annoyed, just annoyed, 'cos I knew she didn't trust me.
Interviewer: And could you convince her that you could be trusted?
Andrew: Aye. I'd just say fine, then if you don't trust me then just leave it, we'll just go our ways but she's be like that, oh no, I do trust you I do trust you.
Interviewer: So, it's only when you threatened to split up then?
Andrew: Scare tactics.

Ryan: Like, I don't know, she was just annoying me…She was really annoying…at first she was really safe. But then when I got with her and got like that, she just got *really* [emphatically] annoying. She started like, so I had enough like, and I just walked away.
Interviewer: Did she want to see more of you than you wanted to see of her?

Ryan:	Yeah, I wanted to go out with my mates, she wanted like, every time I went out with my mates she'd be like "oh I'm coming", and I'm like, "no, you're not".
Interviewer:	And you couldn't explain that to her?
Ryan:	No, I'd just be like "well why do you have to come out, don't you trust me?". And she'd be like "well yeah I trust you I just like, can't be bothered to stay in" and I'm like "well go out with your mates then" and she was like "I can't be bothered". So we just ended.

Thus, the position of male and female victims may be very different in relation to how threatened they feel by attempts to control their lives. It is not that girls did not wish to control their partners and evidently many did. What is apparent is that they largely lacked the power, or the mechanisms, to enforce their demands. It is clear from many accounts that boys simply would not tolerate their partners telling them what to do.

In a number of cases, although boys complained about their partner's surveillance, some girlfriends were justified in their concerns regarding the boy's behaviour:

Interviewer:	So we mentioned the nice things about being in relationships, what do you think are the negative things about being in a relationship?
Denzel:	Girls watching over you like, like always calling checking up on you and all that.
Interviewer:	So is that what your ex used to do?
Denzel:	Yeah, yeah yeah big time…phoning me and texting me and that all the time
Interviewer:	How often?
Denzel:	Every day, about three times a day.
Interviewer:	And what would she say?
Denzel:	Asking me where I am and what I am doing and all that. Who I am with and everything.
Interviewer:	Ah, and why do you think she was doing that?
Denzel:	She probably thought I was with the next girl or something.
Interviewer:	Ah, had you ever like been with someone else?
Denzel:	Yeah one time.

Interviewer:	Yeah. So do the girls not trust the boys? Have they got reason not to trust the boys?
Ahmed:	Probably…
Interviewer:	Have you ever done that to your girlfriend?
Ahmed:	Yeah?
Interviewer:	And does she know?
Ahmed:	No.
Interviewer:	How would she act if she found out?
Ahmed:	She'd probably start screaming at me, going crazy.

In a few instances boys stated that their friends acted in a controlling way towards their girlfriends and they felt this was wrong:

Interviewer:	Yeah, is that your experience, have you seen friends behaving like that?
Zahed:	Aye I have got friends that are like that.

Interviewer:	Right.
Zahed:	They are always texting their bird wondering what they are doing all the time.
Interviewer:	Right.
Zahed:	Telling them not to go there, to go there.
Interviewer:	And what do you think when they are doing that?
Zahed:	I think that's not right.
Interviewer:	Right.
Zahed:	Because I have got a friend who tells his bird you can't go to that shop, you can go to that shop.
Interviewer:	Really?
Zahed:	You have to tell me when you go in and that, text me if you go to a shop and that you know if you go and get a packet of crisps and that tell me.
Interviewer:	Why is he like that?
Zahed:	He just wants to know what she is doing, he probably doesn't trust her.
Interviewer:	And does she do, does she let him know?
Zahed:	Aye, she lets him know.

There were very few accounts of boys' use of emotional violence:

Interviewer:	Is that what you do when you're cross?
Liam:	Yeah, sometimes I get [hit] like a wall or something.
Interviewer:	What sort of things would make you angry like that...?
Liam:	…if a girl would rather be with one of her mates who's not even that close to her than like me, stuff like that.
Interviewer:	OK. And so you felt jealous when your girlfriend was talking to those boys on the internet?
Marck:	Yes and I really don't like it.
Interviewer:	And do you think it's OK to be jealous or do you think it's wrong to be jealous?
Marck:	If someone is jealous that mean he really care about someone.
Interviewer:	OK and how did your girlfriend think about you being jealous, what did she think?
Marck:	She don't like that.
Interviewer:	No?
Marck:	Didn't like that.
Interviewer:	So do you think you were justified in acting jealous, do you think it was acceptable?
Marck:	Um, maybe I was too jealous but I don't know.

In the only example of online control, Marck reflected on his behaviour to determine if his actions were acceptable. Eventually Marck's response was to finish the relationship rather than try to control his jealousy.

Boys seemed more willing to acknowledge that they controlled a certain aspect of their girlfriend's behaviour: how they dressed. It seemed that this form of control was viewed as a legitimate component of being a boyfriend. Often this control was explained in relation to how other boys would perceive their partners and consequently they were protecting them from the risk of sexual harassment. It may

also be that boys worried that their girlfriend may attract another partner and sought to restrict this possibility (McCarry 2003):

Interviewer:	Does she ask your advice about clothes and stuff, or do you offer it?
Daniel:	Yes, she asks me advice, sometimes I lie to her about clothes…like today she'd be wearing a [school] skirt and that skirt should be down to our ankles.
Interviewer:	Why?
Daniel:	She shouldn't wear them that short.
Interviewer:	Do you not like her wearing short skirts and stuff?
Daniel	...I've told her not to wear short skirts so she knows, but it weren't that short.
Interviewer:	But you told her not to wear short skirts and stuff?
Daniel:	She knew what I was on about and she said I won't wear that it's too short; I don't tell her what to wear but if it's bad I'll tell her it's bad.
Interviewer:	Bad in what way..?
Daniel:	Too short.

In other examples it appeared that boys felt it was the male's role to be dominant in the relationship, even though their justification for this was often rather confused:

Interviewer:	When you were with your girlfriend, who made decision about what you did?
Delmar:	I did.
Interviewer:	You did? And why was it just you, why wasn't it her?
Delmar:	Because I feel that, because I read in a book that a boy should make the decisions so I just took it on by myself to make the decisions. I am not really, oh I don't know, I like to plan things and stuff.
Interviewer:	Right and what happens if she doesn't want to do what you want to do?
Delmar:	That never happened.
Interviewer:	Did it not? Did she always just agree with what you decided and go along with it?
Delmar:	[Nods].

Older boyfriends

Most boys stated that their girlfriends had been the same age or slightly younger, mostly a few months. Boys recognised the potential dangers for girls if they had an older boyfriend:

Callum:	I think you should try and stick with people your own age.
Interviewer:	Really?
Callum:	Uumm, because some lassie could end up getting herself some bother one of these days.
Interviewer:	Because of the older guys?
Callum:	Uh huh. And they know and eventually they end up pressurising.
Liam:	Yeah that would make a lot of difference, because well that's just like wrong I reckon anyway. Like what at that age, like three years' difference, I think as you get older, age difference isn't as bad. Like your parents and that, like most parents, most people's dads are a lot older than their mums are.

Liam made an interesting distinction between how age differences in adult relationships become less significant. Some boys also recognised the benefits and status that older boyfriends could bring:

Ajeet:	Like some girls, they like older boys and because I know a girl in our class, she like goes out with older boys and stuff.
Interviewer:	Why does she prefer older boys?
Ajeet:	I don't know because maybe they drive and stuff and got money, I don't know.

Andrew:	She [girl in vignette] should realise older boys do expect more.
Interviewer:	Really, do you think that is true?
Andrew:	Aye.
Interviewer:	Why do you think older boys go with younger girls then if they're expecting more and they're wanting more?
Andrew:	Because they think the younger lassies will be easier.
Interviewer:	Do they?
Andrew:	Because they look up, because they know that younger lassies, they look up to older guys, oh that will make me look good, that will make me look good, like he's got a motor and all that so…

Help-seeking

The vast majority of boys who reported violence, either as a recipient or an instigator, had not told anyone about their experiences except, in a small number of instances, female peers. This perhaps reflects the fact that most stated that the violence had little impact on them, or that they were able to sort out the problem by themselves through ending the relationships. In addition, boys may not want to disclose their own use of violence due to contravening wider beliefs about the unacceptability of male violence to women. Indeed, boys only informed friends about their partners' attempts to restrict their peer group interactions:

Interviewer:	If there was anything happening that was upsetting you, could you talk to, would you tell anybody about it?
Zahed:	No.
Interviewer:	No, not your brother?
Zahed:	I don't trust anyone, I don't trust anyone else except for my girlfriend. I wouldn't tell anyone about it.
Interviewer:	There isn't even another adult that like a teacher or...?
Zahed:	No, I wouldn't talk to anyone about it.

A few participants spoke about their response to friends' use of partner violence, although sometimes this had little effect:

Jonathon:	Any time that's ever happened [emotional abuse in a relationship] they've, the group as a whole, has spoken up and said to them. Not even said to them, spoke to the other person said "they're treating you badly and there's

no way you can actually be happy like this. You have to seriously address the situation with them."

Tariq: Well see when he's [friend] in a normal mood he will be normal, but when he takes drugs and that, he gets heavy para [paranoid]. He just starts swearing at her, at his girlfriend and then, and then later on he will text her to say sorry and stuff.
Interviewer: Right, and what do you think when you see that going on?
Tariq: I don't really bother, it's between them two so. I did tell him like, not to do that, but he just doesn't listen.
Interviewer: So does no one else say to him, like "What...?"
Tariq: Yeah, other people say to him but he just doesn't listen.

As in girls' interviews, sometimes peer responses can act to minimise the significance and impact of partner violence, especially if the aggressor is female:

Andrew: This boy that goes to this school and his girlfriend, his whole arm, all scratched and black.
Interviewer: And what did you say?
Andrew: And I said what happened to you and he was it was that bitch that done it''.
Interviewer: Really, so is it quite common then?
Andrew: Aye.
Interviewer: …What do people say then?
Andrew: Nothing. It's nobody else's business; it's between the boy, the boy and his girlfriend.
Interviewer: You think?
Andrew: I just don't like the fact, I think it would be different…it wouldn't bother me if like a lassie was battering her boy pal but I think it's different when a boy is hitting a lassie.
Interviewer: Why?
Andrew: I don't know because boys are like…it's just different. I just wouldn't like to see a boy hitting a lassie, it would be the worst thing I could see in my life…I don't know, because, I would say, I know it sounds sexist, but I think women are more vulnerable than guys.

In his justification, Andrew argued that girls are more at risk of victimisation than are boys. Ryan reflected on the problematic position he faced due to his friend's violence towards his girlfriend:

Interviewer: Do you think people think it's not OK to hit girls, is that still something that people would say?
Ryan: [Long pause] I don't know, one of my mates gets angry with his girlfriend…
Interviewer: Uum.
Ryan: Does anybody ever hear this, or is it just…
Interviewer: The only people that ever hear this is me and the other researchers. What were you thinking about?
Ryan: My mate upstairs he gets angry with his girlfriend, he doesn't do nothing or anything, but he does get angry quite a lot.
Interviewer: What does he do when he's angry?
Ryan: Grabs her hard, he does it in school, but I don't want to say nothing because like, he's a good mate.

None of the boys interviewed had discussed their experiences with adults. The only form of professional intervention was in relation to Hardeep's criminal conviction for grievous bodily harm (GBH), although he was reluctant to discuss this in any depth with the researcher. Even a conviction had not altered his belief that he was not responsible for his actions, as is illustrated in his response to being asked how he might act in the future with his current girlfriend if they started arguing:

Hardeep:	I'd probably lock her in a cupboard or something.
Interviewer:	Lock her in a cupboard?
Hardeep:	Yeah. 'Cos then uh she'd be able to calm down that way. Yeah.
Interviewer:	So was it because she was going so mad then that you think that it led up to that [his violence]?
Hardeep:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Who do you think was more to blame?
Hardeep:	Her.

Section 8: Discussion and implications

Zoe: *That's cool someone's fighting our corner*.

This research represents the first national UK study to systematically document the incidence rates and dynamics associated with both experiencing and instigating partner violence in young people's intimate relationships. The level of teenage partner exploitation and violence identified testifies to the significance of this issue in the lives of many young people. In addition, due to the multi-method approach, the research has not only identified the incidence of such violence in teenagers' lives but also, and just as importantly, explored the meaning such violence has for young people and the ways in which young people's actions impact on their experiences. Findings from the study have important and far-reaching implications for policy and practice across a range of professional disciplines, including education, social work, youth offending and youth work. The research clearly shows that intimate domestic violence often starts at a much younger age than previously recognised and that teenage partner violence deserves the same level of acknowledgement as adult experiences of domestic violence.

Recognition of teenage partner violence as a significant child welfare issue

The research findings highlight partner violence as a significant concern for young people's wellbeing, providing unequivocal evidence for the need to develop more effective safeguards in this area of child welfare. The survey identified that three-quarters of girls in a relationship experienced emotional violence of some form, a third reported sexual violence and a quarter experienced physical violence. For one in 10 girls the physical violence was defined as severe. Half of boys in a relationship reported emotional violence, 18 per cent experienced physical violence and 16 per cent sexual violence. Thus, a substantial number of young people will experience some form of violence from their partner before they reach adulthood. Such levels of victimisation are worrying enough. However, if we consider only high-impact violence the picture becomes even more disconcerting, although primarily for girls. Taking into account all three forms of violence – sexual, physical and emotional – *one*

in six girls reported some form of severe partner violence. However, compared to adult experiences of domestic violence, this area has received very limited policy, practice or research attention in the UK.

The incidence rates found in the survey are broadly consistent with those identified in earlier US research. There is some suggestion then that adolescent gender relations are an international problem. However, in the US and in contrast to the UK, the issue of teenage partner or "dating" violence has received sustained research and professional attention over the past 20 years. We have been slow to follow this example. The findings from this research show that a similar level of professional and academic commitment is now required in the UK. However, this research also provides new and important messages for policy and practice in this area, as well as a number of challenges to the current theoretical standpoint adopted in US research, not least in relation to the gendered nature of impact.

Impact of teenage partner violence – the gender divide

Looking at incident rates only (as have many previous US studies) suggests that, although girls report each form of violence more frequently than boys, levels for victimisation appear somewhat comparable. However, to base our understanding of intimate violence on these figures alone, without taking into account the meaning that partner violence has for those who experience it is, at least, misleading and may actually serve to maintain the inequalities that underpin intimate violence. The impact of partner violence, as demonstrated in the quantitative and qualitative components of the research, is indisputably differentiated by gender. As we have already stated, why this disparity exists remains open to supposition. Nevertheless, what is clear is that girl victims report much higher levels of negative impact than do boys. Three-quarters of girls who experienced physical or sexual violence stated a negative impact, while nearly a third reported a negative impact due to emotional violence. In contrast, around one in 10 boys reported a damaging impact due to physical or sexual violence and only 6 per cent due to emotional violence. Thus, for the majority of girls, physical or sexual victimisation was associated with a detrimental effect on their wellbeing, while for the vast majority of boys no adverse effects were reported. Similarly, with

emotional violence, although both genders reported a significantly lower level of negative impact, for boys the level was negligible.

These findings are further elaborated on in the interview data where girls consistently described the harmful impact that the violence had on their welfare, often long term, while boy victims routinely stated they were unaffected or, at the very worst, annoyed. These results provide the wider context in which teenage partner violence needs to be viewed.

We have previously acknowledged the possible influence that forms of young masculinities may have on a boy's ability to recognise and report a negative impact resulting from their victimisation. As Seidler (2006) states, reflecting many other commentators, "within a dominate culture that defines masculinities in heterosexual terms it can still be difficult to discover spaces in which young men can safely explore their emotions" (page 84). Boys may therefore minimise the impact of partner violence, perhaps especially emotional hurt. Nevertheless, interview data showed little evidence of this process. Some boys did recognise the pressure they were under to portray a certain non-emotional form of masculinity and the impact of this on the acceptability of showing emotional hurt in front of male peers. However, this was reported primarily in relation to their personal feelings following the end of a relationship. Boys did not report experiencing emotional harm as recipients of partner violence, except for being annoyed. Indeed, although many of the girls who experienced violence said their partner's behaviour scared them, this fear was completely absent in boy's accounts.

It is interesting to note that boys with a same-sex partner were generally more likely to report a negative outcome than boys with an opposite-sex partner. It may be that boys with a same-sex partner feel less pressure to adhere to a non-emotional hegemonic form of masculinity. Conversely, it may be that intimate violence by a male, regardless if this is against a female or a male partner, is more likely to have a detrimental effect.

It is clear that the wider context in which partner violence is experienced by young people requires careful reflection. This research has demonstrated that a fundamental

divide exists in relation to how girls and boys are affected by partner violence, and this divide needs to be a central component in the development of professional responses to this issue. Most previous research in this area, although not all (see Banister et al 2003; Chung 2005; Hird 2000; Jackson 1999; Sears et al 2006; Silverman et al 2006; Próspero 2006), has failed to consider this wider context. Consequently, past research evidence has provided a persuasive argument for the existence of gender symmetry in relation to perpetration of teenage partner violence. In other words, girls are seen as likely as boys to use partner violence and in some cases more likely. Thus, boys' and girls' victimisation is viewed as being equally problematic.

This gender neutrality has had important consequences for the development of theoretical understanding, as feminist theories of domestic violence based on gender inequality have been largely ignored in US research. Instead, commentators have argued that, although gender inequality may be an important theoretical construct for understanding adult experiences of domestic violence (although this is by no means a universally accepted theoretical position), it is less salient in respect to understanding teenage partner violence. Unfortunately, researchers working within a feminist or a gendered power framework have, until relatively recently, concentrated exclusively on adult experiences of domestic violence. Consequently, their theoretical understandings have not widely impacted on this area, although some noticeable exceptions do exist (see Banister et al 2003; Chung 2005; Jackson 1999; Sears et al 2006; Silverman et al 2006; Próspero, 2006). Feminist understandings have however influenced the development of some teenage intervention programmes in the US. Nevertheless, our research findings demonstrate that without accounting for impact the real meaning of such violence is obscured. Consequently, the gender symmetry debate needs to respond to how violence impacts on welfare, rather than to focus exclusively on the physical act alone.

If boys view the impact of their victimisation as negligible, they may also apply this understanding to their own actions. Thus, they may believe that their partners are also unaffected by their use of violence. These observations were upheld in discussions within the young people's advisory group. Many male members of this group were shocked that so many female survey respondents reported a negative impact for

behaviour that, based on their own experiences, they presumed was uneventful. Thus, there appears to be a fundamental need for boys to be made aware of the negative consequences of their behaviour within relationships. This is not to imply that boys' experiences of victimisation should be ignored. It is important to recognise that, at least for a minority of boys, their experiences resulted in a negative impact. For these boys, the impact of the violence may be especially difficult to deal with due to the attitudes of their peers. Recent developments in the domestic violence field have recognised the position of men as survivors of partner violence and a number of refuges for men have now been established (see Nadeem 2009). Nevertheless, we need to be cautious that attention on this small minority of male teenage victims does not detract from the much wider experiences of girls.

Intervention programmes need to reflect this fundamental difference by ensuring that the significant impact of violence on girls' wellbeing is recognised and responded to, while enabling boys to recognise the implications of partner violence for their partners and themselves. Thus, professionals developing intervention programmes need to recognise the gendered nature of impact, while assisting boys to recognise the consequence of their actions and possible barriers to acknowledging the effects of their own victimisation.

Different forms of partner violence

The importance of recognising all three forms of partner violence is clearly shown in the research findings. In comparison, US research primarily focuses on physical and, more recently, sexual forms of partner violence. Our research demonstrates that young people's exposure to all three forms of partner violence requires an integrated approach to prevention, which recognises these specific forms of violence, both in isolation and as they relate to each other in young people's relationships. The research findings also show that each form of partner violence requires considered attention.

Physical violence

As previously stated in the introduction to this report, previous research in this area has identified the presence of "mutual" or shared physical violence in teenage relationships. However, our findings provide some challenges to this

conceptualisation. The interview data showed that such definitions of physical violence as "mutual" or "reciprocal" become problematic when applied to situations of intimate partner violence. We have therefore questioned if the term "reciprocal", which is often used indiscriminately in the wider "dating" violence literature, is an accurate, or indeed acceptable, term to use. Reciprocal implies some level of equal or mutual impact. However, given the research findings, it appears that this term does not reflect what is occurring in young people's relationships. It is important that the concepts we use do not serve to confuse or conflate existing power relations. In interviews, some boys justified their own use of physical violence as reciprocal or mutual, even though the violence they used was vastly disproportional to that of their partners. Indeed, in some instances, it was unclear if their girlfriends had actually used physical violence at all.

We also need to remember that nearly half of girls' physical violence was undertaken in self-defence. This represents a fundamentally different use of violence, as self-preservation, which should not be conflated with acts of initial aggression.

Nevertheless, girls' use of violence does need to be responded to by professionals. However, given the greater physical strength of most boys, girls' ability to cause injury, and therefore fear, may be considerably less. Obviously, the emotional impact of experiencing physical violence is not simply related to the physical hurt caused. But as we have seen, fear and control are.

In many of these discussions play-fighting was depicted as being fundamentally different to physical violence. The context was one of mutual understanding concerning the limits of the play-fight, which seemed to provide an opportunity for physical closeness between couples. Such incidents also provided the opportunity for issues of trust to be explored within a relationship.

The existence of play-fighting in teenage relationships has also been found and questioned in a previous US study (Lavoie et al 2000). Foshee et al (2007) also found that consensual violence was viewed as an accepted and playful aspect of "flirting" in young people's relationships. If play-fighting is equally and freely entered into, with no coercion or negative impact on either party, then such behaviour can be part of a

healthy relationship. However, if the level of force increases or a partner breaches the boundaries of acceptability, then such behaviour can become problematic. Concerns are also raised in relation to the normalisation of such behaviour, whereby a young person could come to expect play-fighting to be a part of all their subsequent relationships, irrespective of their partner's wishes. Indeed, as shown in our interviews, such precise boundaries of acceptability were, in practice, often breached. Thus, for many young women the line between play-fighting and actual physical violence was not so well defined or adhered to by partners.

Over half of boys in the survey stated that their "violent" behaviour was due to messing around. Similarly, Foshee et al (2007) identified in their research that in many of the young people's accounts, and in a slightly higher proportion of boys' reports, violence was often perceived as a playful and accepted aspect of relationship behaviour. However, as our research shows, behaviour that is viewed as playful by one person may not necessarily be viewed the same way by another. Young people who view physical violence as "only joking" or messing around will have little motivation to stop, irrespective of its consequences (Sears et al 2006).

Sexual violence

Girls' experiences of sexual violence were associated with the highest rate of negative impact compared to other forms of partner violence. The impact of sexual violence was unrelated directly to coercive pressure or physical force, although all girls who were physically forced into sexual intercourse (which would constitute rape) reported a high range of negative impacts. Similarly, interviews with girls showed how sexual violence through pressure can be as detrimental to welfare as sexual violence using physical force. Often girls' perceptions around "giving in" to the pressure, and their subsequent feelings of blame and responsibility, resulted in long-term and serious consequences for their wellbeing. Professionals need to recognise that sexual pressure can be as detrimental as sexual violence through physical force and in some cases more harmful long term.

The interview data also showed that teenage relationships often contained both consensual sexual experiences and coerced sexual experiences, including intercourse. The difficulty for girls of experiencing consensual (and enjoyable) sexual experiences

alongside sexual violence was often very confusing. This disparity needs to be clearly acknowledged in interventions aimed at reducing sexual violence for teenagers.

Many girls in the interviews stated they felt guilty for not agreeing to sexual intercourse, especially if a refusal to have sexual intercourse was "unfair" on their partner. Such feelings were intensified if they had an older partner due to perceptions about their partner's increased sexual experience and needs. Thus, sexual pressure, either overt or covert, was often intensified for girls due to their feelings of responsibility for their partner's sexual needs. Previous work has identified that girls are often held responsible for their partner's sexual desires (Holland et al 1998). Intervention programmes will need to take into account how feelings surrounding guilt and responsibility, especially in relation to older male partners, may increase a girl's susceptibility to sexual coercion.

Furthermore, a lack of recognition that pressure constituted sexual coercion was evident in some interviews with girls. This is an important definitional issue. If young people view certain actions as acceptable or "normal" in relationships, they will be less likely to challenge these behaviours or recognise their impact.

Emotional violence and coercive control

Although some previous studies have included emotional forms of violence (Hird 2000; Lavoie et al 2000; Sears et al 2006), this remains the least researched and acknowledged aspect of teenage partner violence. Working from Stark's (2007) construct of coercive control, our findings provide evidence that this form of violence is not restricted to adult relationships. Indeed, this was the most common form of partner violence experienced by young people. As we have seen in the interviews, its impact on girls' welfare was considerable.

The role that coercive control plays in underpinning other forms of violence was clearly demonstrated both by the survey and interview findings. The interview findings also showed that the presence of control was difficult for some girls to identify due to confusion around the boundary between care and control. What was clear from the survey and interview data was that coercive control, not underpinned by wider power dynamics of intimidation and fear, was fundamentally ineffectual. Thus, while the

negative impact of coercive control on girls' welfare was considerable, this was not the case for boys, where the majority reported little effect. Although some boys worried about hurting their partner's feelings by confronting their controlling behaviour, unlike girls, they did not fear repercussions. Therefore, coercive control becomes meaningful in young people's lives only when it is accompanied by wider power dynamics (Stark 2007). The gendered nature of control, especially the isolation from peer support networks this may entail, needs to be recognised within policy and practice initiatives aimed at prevention or intervention. It is also imperative that PSHE lessons also include this important aspect of partner violence and do not focus exclusively on the physical or sexual forms of partner violence.

However, findings from the survey showed that, while emotional violence was the most commonly reported form of partner victimisation, it also received the lowest negative impact rating from both girls and boys. This provides a dilemma for professionals. Our analysis showed that, if emotional violence was experienced in isolation from other forms of violence or was a one-off incident, few negative consequences were reported. Most often these evaluations concerned being shouted at or called names. It seems reasonable to assume that these limited experiences do not necessitate professional attention. It may be unrealistic to expect teenagers, or indeed adults, never to shout at their partners due to a specific argument or a conflict. If professional responses sought to "problematise" actions, which the vast majority of young people view as insignificant, this may result in young people viewing the intervention programme as inappropriate and unrealistic. Indeed, doing so may further alienate young people.

However, professionals also need to assist young people to question if some aspects of emotional violence, which are viewed by young people as a normative aspect of teenage relationships, may hold implications for their welfare. This is a difficult balance to achieve. Practitioners need to ensure that young people do not feel that their experiences and views are invalidated or ignored, while at the same time challenge normative expectations around relationship behaviours. It was interesting that in interviews girls often began to question behaviours that they had previously viewed as an acceptable or at least an expected aspect of teenage relationships. Thus, it appears that the actual process of describing experiences, which may initially be

viewed as normal, may enable girls to begin to question the acceptability of their partner's actions and intentions.

New technologies

A central mechanism for partners to extend their exploitation and control was through the use of new technologies. This research provides new and important insights into this under-recognised area of partner violence. New communication technologies are a central aspect of young people's social lives, including their intimate relationships. However, as our research shows, new technologies also provide a mechanism by which exploitation and control can be extended into all aspects of young people's lives, including their families and peer networks. Many girls were under continual surveillance and control through mobile telephones and the social networking sites. Although previous studies have identified other forms of peer abuse using new technologies, such as "cyber-bullying" (Rivers and Noret 2007), and a growing body of evidence now concerns child abuse and new technologies (Gallagher 2005), this is the first time this issue has been identified in relation to teenage partner violence.

New technologies pose particular challenges for those charged with the welfare of children and young people (Home Office Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet 2008). *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government 2006) addresses the risks accorded to information communication technology (ICT), acknowledging the need to reconsider a range of child abuse definitions and concepts within an ICT environment (para 11.58). The main focus remains on risks posed by *adults*, such as grooming, although the guidance acknowledges that children themselves can engage in text bullying and the capturing and distribution of violent incidents on mobile phones. All local safeguarding children boards are instructed to raise awareness regarding safe internet use, although little evidence exists on which to base their response. Recent research has begun to look at the ways in which new technologies and child abuse are more broadly linked, and alongside research such as ours, will provide a firmer understanding on which responses can be based.

Family and peer violence

Family violence was significantly associated with all forms of partner violence for girls. However, the regression analysis for boys showed that, although family violence was a predictor for victimisation, peer violence was found to be the strongest predictor of both experiencing and instigating partner violence

Consequently, child welfare professionals working with adolescents who have a history of family violence will also need to ensure their experiences of partner violence are also routinely addressed. Brown et al (2007) suggest that professionals working with abused adolescents should routinely include a range of questions relative to their lives, including peer violence. Furthermore, given that our research shows that teenage partner abuse is rarely reported to adults, including professionals (Ashley and Foshee 2005; Brown et al 2007), it is important that social workers routinely include this issue in their overall assessments of young people's needs. However, we know very little about the degree to which this form of abuse is recognised in practice, how assessment frameworks are being applied for adolescents generally and, specifically, what work is being undertaken to gauge the extent of partner violence within at-risk groups, what thresholds are being applied and what multi-agency responses are being enacted.

In addition, the association with peer groups characterised by intimidation and violence also required attention. Thus, professionals working with a range of young people who use violence will need to be aware of the implication this may have for partner violence. This research highlights how violence often impacts on many aspects of young people's lives and supports the need to take an ecological approach to child welfare. Tackling one form of violence, family- or peer-based, will be ineffectual if violence in another area is left unrecognised. These issues require addressing in future research.

Older boyfriends

Perhaps one of the most disconcerting findings concerned violence from older partners, especially much older partners. Although we did not ask survey respondents the age of their partners, interviews with girls indicated that a "much older partner"

was generally perceived to be someone at least two years older than themselves. The logistical regression analysis showed having an older partner was a significant risk factor in accounting for girls' victimisation and instigation of partner violence. Victimisation rates for girls with a much older partner are extremely concerning. Over four-fifths of girls with an older partner experienced emotional violence, three-quarters experienced physical violence and as many as three-quarters also experienced sexual violence. It is clear from these figures that many of these girls experienced multiple forms of violence from an older partner. The interview evidence showed how the age differential greatly increased inequalities between partners in relationships. It is also important to recognise that some of these violent partners were adult men.

The dynamics contained in these relationships with older adolescents, and even more so with adult men, appeared similar to those found in research on the sexual exploitation of girls (Pearce et al 2002). This work demonstrates how some girls are coerced by their older "boyfriends" into sexual exploitation, including selling sex for money. However, none of the girls we interviewed said their boyfriend had made them undertake any sexual act with other people. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that this risk may be present.

This research shows that the vast majority of girls in a relationship with a "much older" male partner will experience multiple forms of partner violence, resulting in significant damage to their wellbeing. The level of exploitation and violence in these relationships was so pronounced that, in our view, any girl with a "much older" partner should be viewed as a child in need. Guidance on this issue, such as that contained in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government 2006), needs to emphasise that older partners, especially "much older" partners, routinely represent a significant risk factor in professional assessments of harm.

Disadvantage

Across all three forms of teenage partner violence, no association was found with social deprivation. Indeed, two of the schools in the most socially deprived areas reported the lowest level of both physical and emotional forms of violence. This finding is contrary to previous UK research, which identified social deprivation or

"class" as representing a significant risk factor for teenage physical partner violence (Hird 2000). In our research we did not ask young people directly about the social class of their parents. This was due to the complexities of gaining an accurate account of social class from young people and the extensive range of questions required. It may be that our gauge, based on free school meals, was too rudimentary. Levels of deprivation in each school may differ substantially between pupils and such variations would not have been reflected in our analysis. In addition, as described under "Research aims and methodology" on page 11, we were unable to secure participation from schools from the independent education sector or schools in highly affluent areas. Inclusion of more affluent schools would have provided a greater element of comparison in the sample and may have influenced our analysis in relation to the influence of social deprivation. Future research will need to address this limitation. Alternatively, it may be that social disadvantage is not directly linked to partner violence. However, it is noteworthy that incident rates for sexual violence were significantly higher for all three rural schools.

Ethnicity and religion

Our findings regarding the association between ethnicity, religion and the different forms of partner violence seemed somewhat difficult to untangle. In relation to victimisation, ethnic group and religion were associated with partner violence only for boys. As we have already stated our caveats concerning boys' experiences of sexual victimisation, we will not rehearse these again here. Thus, leaving this aside, a significant association remained for religion and physical violence, with Muslim and Sikh boys reporting the highest levels of victimisation.

For instigation, ethnic group and religion were associated with boys' use of physical violence. Thus, Muslim or Sikh boys were most likely to use physical violence. In relation to emotional violence, Sikh male and female participants reported increased levels of instigation compared to other groups. To complicate issues further, the logistic regression analysis showed that minority ethnic group was a significant indicator for boy's sexual violence instigation.

Thus, it seems that little consistency regarding the association between ethnic group, religion and partner violence exists in our data. In many ways this inconsistency reflects previous findings, where different studies provide different and sometimes conflicting findings regarding the influence of ethnicity (Vézina and Hébert 2007). However, these findings are primarily from US-based studies.

No previous studies have looked at religion, although some theorists such as Modood (2007) state that religion may be a more powerful factor than ethnicity in understanding the dynamics of modern "multi-cultural" society. This message needs to be responded to in future studies of teenage partner violence.

However, we need to remember when viewing these results that many of the minority ethnic and religious affiliation categories contained quite a small number of cases. Thus, their generalisability is severely restricted. What these results seem to indicate is that Muslim and Sikh young people may be more at risk of violence in their relationships than are other religious or non-religious groups. In addition, the interview findings show that the cultural beliefs held in some Muslim and Sikh families restricted young people's ability to be open about their relationships. Indeed, for a few girls, fears around forced marriage (Gangoli et al 2008) make any level of divulgence impossible. Interviews also indicated that a sexual double standard, applied to girls generally (Holland et al 1998), may be further reinforced through cultural beliefs held by some south Asian young men. These beliefs around sexual reputations and ethnicity may reinforce the acceptability of sexual coercion in relation to white non-Muslim or non-Sikh girls. Unfortunately, little work exists on the interface between masculinity, reputations, ethnicity and religion (Kimmel et al 2004). What work does exist generally surrounds the theorising of white and black masculinities, rather than the consideration of ethnicity more widely. As Edwards (2006) concludes, "the task of colouring in questions of masculinity or, in short, rendering them something other than black and white, remains a job to be done" (page 78). So we have little wider evidence with which to compare our results. This is obviously a sensitive and complex area which requires further research so as to understand how these different factors impact on teenage relationship experiences.

Same-sex partners

Young people with a same-sex partner were significantly more likely to experience all three forms of partner victimisation compared to those with an opposite-sex partner. Similarly, except for physical violence, respondents with a same-sex partner were more likely to report using violence than those with an opposite-sex partner. This pattern held true for both boys and girls with a same-sex partner. Consequently, same-sex relationships seemed to contain very worrying levels of shared violence, where both partners were simultaneously instigating and receiving violence. As we have already stated, although there is little research in this area, recent work by Donovan et al (2006) on mainly adult same-sex couples demonstrates comparable incident levels.

However, it is important to place these same-sex relationships in the context of wider indicators of violence. Young people with a same-sex partner were also more likely to experience family violence and peer violence, and to have an older partner and be over 14 years of age. Each of these factors was strongly associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing partner violence. Thus, we cannot be certain if the same-sex relationship itself increased the possibility of violence, or the combined influence of other associated factors, or perhaps and more plausibly, a combination of both. It is also important to recognise that young people with a same-sex partner may also experience wider homophobic prejudice and violence, which may consequently impact negatively on their relationship experiences.

As only 50 young people in the survey had a same-sex partner, we need to be cautious in making any firm conclusions. In addition, little research exists on teenagers in same-sex relationships to enable comparisons. However, what does exist seems to broadly support our findings. Freedner et al (2002) found that half of the bisexual or gay adolescents in their research reported some form of partner violence. Fineran (2001) identified higher levels of sexual victimisation in same-sex relationships compared to heterosexual adolescents. More recent work by Fineran and Bolan (2006) found a gendered distinction, where “questioning”, lesbian or bisexual girls were more likely to report victimisation than young gay male adolescents, who were more likely to perpetrate sexual harassment. As Levy and Lobel (1998) suggest, growing up

gay may involve a unique set of circumstances, which compound the relationship difficulties that many young people face, irrespective of their sexual orientation.

Teenagers with same-sex partners may be especially reluctant to report partner violence, fearing that a homophobic response will question the validity of their relationship rather than focusing on the violence itself. Adult studies on same-sex relationships provide contradictory findings with regards to help-seeking, with some suggesting these groups are more likely to seek professional help (King et al 2003), while others found no difference in reporting patterns for same-sex domestic violence compared to heterosexuals (Donovan et al 2006). Similarly, we found little difference in reporting levels in our survey between respondents with same-sex compared to opposite-sex partners.

The reasons surrounding why young people with same-sex partners experience such heightened vulnerability to partner violence requires further clarification through research. What is evident is that young people in same-sex relationships should be viewed as being especially at risk. This group of young people will require a response targeted to their particular situation. We do not know how many of these young people were open about their choice of partner. In addition, only a very small minority of young people from each school reported a same-sex partner. It is clear from previous research that school environments can be extremely homophobic (Rivers and Cowie 2006; Rivers and Noret 2008). Thus, the possibility of including issues around violence in same-sex relationships in a general school intervention programme, in any meaningful way, may be limited. Non-school-based strategies may be more productive.

Enhancing help-seeking

One of the most consistent findings, across all three forms of violence, was the use of peers as a source of advice and help. Nearly all young people who had told someone about their experiences of violence chose to inform a peer. However, as the interviews demonstrate, young people’s responses were not necessarily always very helpful or appropriate. In addition, the ability of peers to actually assist friends was often very limited.

This sustained pattern of help-seeking, which favours peers, needs to be acknowledged in school-based intervention programmes aimed at reducing teenage partner violence. Peer support and counselling schemes have been established in a number of UK schools, although their remit is sometimes limited to bullying. Peer support enables young people to access advice and support from other young people in a designated service. While results from evaluations of such schemes have been varied (Naylor and Cowie 1999), overall they do seem to provide support and advice in a way that young people feel able to use more readily than if delivered by adults. In addition, such schemes enable young counsellors to gain training in appropriate ways of responding, thus reducing the risk of normalising violent behaviour. In addition, peer counsellors are assisted by professionals who are able to provide support: a structure from which friends do not benefit. Nevertheless peers, including peer-based support schemes, are limited in the protection they can provide. In situations of persistent or serious partner violence, adult-based interventions are essential.

Yet, as our findings show, very few young people approached an adult, and even fewer a professional, regarding their experiences of partner violence. Young people were very resistant to talking with adults due to fear of not been taken seriously and having decisions taken away from them. Some were very concerned about their parent's reactions and what they may do to their partners.

In the interviews some young people identified learning mentors as a source of appropriate support and advice. Learning mentors, a strand of the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, work largely with children and young people in primary and secondary education settings. Leaning mentors are not teachers, but members of the local community whose remit is to provide additional support to pupils to help them address barriers to learning. Thus, their work bridges academic and pastoral support roles. The central role of learning mentors is to develop and maintain effective and supportive mentoring relationships with young people and those engaged with them.

In the interview sample young people from the three schools where learning mentor schemes were in place spoke very positively about the support they provided generally, and specifically in relation to their experiences of partner violence. In these circumstances, learning mentors were perceived as being distinct from the educational

aspect of school and, as they were recruited from the local community, young people felt they could understand the issues they were facing in their lives. This was especially important for young Asian girls if their families disapproved of any form of intimate relationship.

Learning mentoring schemes are not available in all schools and, where they have been established, they are specifically targeted at assisting young people who require additional support to remain in the educational system, generally (although not exclusively) due to familial problems, including family violence. However, what our interviews show is that this form of support can be very effective in enabling young people to speak about other issues in their lives, including partner violence. This form of school-based support provided an accessible and valuable source of help and assistance. The service was not viewed as stigmatising by young people due to its remit of learning support rather than child welfare. Young people felt comfortable using this provision. Our findings provide an important indicator of the success of these schemes, at least in the three schools in our sample.

Unfortunately, this positive picture was not reflected in relation to other forms of professional assistance. Young people rarely approached other professionals and it is, therefore, not possible to comment on their response. Very few US studies (but see Brown et al 2007), and it appears none in the UK, have addressed professional responses to this area of child welfare. This may be due to the emphasis in child-welfare research and practice on adult–child interactions, be they neglectful/abusive or in a professional context, as well as a focus in much social work policy and practice on pre-teen children. There is an important potential role here for organisations such as the NSPCC.

Governmental guidance in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government 2006) has officially recognised the need for professionals to safeguard children from harm arising from their experiences of partner violence. This emphasis will need to expand. The guidance states that, in cases involving sexually active children under 13 years of age, there is a *presumption* that the case will be reported to children's social care (para 5.25). For young people under 16, *consideration* must be given as to whether there should be a discussion with other agencies regarding the need for a referral,

including where both parties are below this age and in a consensual relationship (para 5.26). We have no information regarding practitioners' awareness of this guidance, how it is being interpreted and operationalised, either nationally or locally, or what inter-agency decision-making models and protocols are in place.

Conclusion

The high level of violence in young people's relationships testifies to the need to develop and initiate professional responses aimed at safeguarding children's and young people's welfare. Domestic violence in adult relationships has, over the past 15 years, come to be defined as a major social problem in both policy and practice agendas. Violence in young people's own relationships has not been recognised to the same degree. This research provides a firmer evidence base on which child welfare, education, youth work and domestic violence services can develop more effective and accessible prevention and intervention services for children and young people. Building on young people's existing help-seeking behaviour, the role of peer counselling schemes within schools, although generally perceived as a response to bullying, should be considered as a potential source of support, once additional training has been received by peer counsellors. Indeed, given the incidence figures in this report, partner violence may be a more commonly experienced problem for teenagers than bullying, although it has received nowhere near the level of recognition or attention.

In addition, as our research shows, teenage partner violence does not stop when a relationship ends. Post-relationship violence was a major issue for many of the girls interviewed. Indeed, in many cases the level of violence often intensified after the relationship was over. As victims rarely spoke to parents or other adults about the violence, their ability to protect themselves was limited due to their ex-partners knowing where they went to school, their movements and who their friends were. What is clear is that ending a relationship does not necessarily protect a young person from violence unless further safeguarding strategies are also put in place.

The research findings provide clear evidence that some teenage girls, especially those with a history of family violence or with an older or much older boyfriend, are at

serious risk of harm due to their partner's violence. These young people require a multi-agency response that recognises their vulnerability and works with them to acknowledge the risks they are experiencing. However, girls' perceptions of the status of having a boyfriend, particularly an older boyfriend, also require attention. Professionals will need to support girls to improve their self-confidence through the development of wider goals, such as education or career aspirations, thus providing improved life choices independent of male influence. Much can be learnt from the very positive example of learning mentors in schools.

Teenagers' use of violence requires careful consideration and a gendered approach which recognises the greater impact on girls is needed. Nevertheless, both girls' and boys' use of violence requires addressing, although the findings indicate that it is older boys, and probably those who have left school, who are instigating much of the more severe forms of violence. The role of violent peer groups in supporting partner violence needs to be addressed in intervention programmes and wider initiatives working with violent boys, including young offenders.

It is essential that young people are protected from partner violence. How this is achieved is still open to debate and interpretation. There is a void in service delivery. Nevertheless, what is clear is that the impact of this form of violence on the lives of teenagers can no longer be disregarded. This research testifies both to the extent of the problem as well as its very harmful consequences for young people, especially girls. A range of associated factors and risk indicators have been identified, which will provide a firmer basis for the development of both universal and more targeted responses across a range of professional disciplines, including social work, education, youth work and domestic violence services. By undertaking this research, we hope that we have provided a greater awareness of the issues involved and enabled young people's own experiences and views to inform policy and practice developments in this disregarded area of child welfare.

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Appendix I: Logistic regression – methodological note

Linear regression estimates the coefficients of the linear equation, involving one or more predictor variables, which best predict the value of the outcome variable. Binomial (or binary) logistic regression is a form of regression, which is used when the predictor is a dichotomy (experienced some form of partner violence versus did not experience some form of partner violence) and the outcomes are of any type.

In our research, we carried out a series of forward stepwise logistic regressions to predict those boys and girls (separately) who had been victims and perpetrators of three types of partner violence (the outcome variables) from predictor variables such as age group, ethnic group, religious group affiliation, history of family and peer violence, and partner's age. In order to carry out the logistic regression analyses, several of these predictor variables were re-coded to make interpretation of the results more easily understood. For example, ethnic group affiliation was re-coded into White and BME/other due primarily to cell sizes (if the cell sizes are too low, spurious or non-interpretable statistical outputs may result).

The odds ratio for a given predictor variable represents the factor by which the odds of an event (in this research this equated to specific types of partner violence) change for a given categorical change in the predictor variable. In our research, we wanted to find out, for example, whether the odds of certain types of partner violence in teenage relationships increased or decreased according to a set of predictor variables, while controlling for other variables in the model. By default, binary logistic regression predicts the likelihood of the outcome variable, being a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence in a teenage relationship.

When interpreting the results of the binary logistic regression analyses (the odds or odds ratios), the results are all interpreted in relation to the reference category, for example, BME/other compared with White ethnic group (the reference category or group). The same procedure holds true regardless of the number of categories in the nominal or classification variables. We took steps to ensure that the reference categories made interpretative sense. For example, research suggests that those boys and girls with a history of family or peer violence are more likely to be victims or

perpetrators of partner domestic violence, so variables were re-coded as 0 “No experience of *xx* violence” and 1 “Yes had experience with *xx* violence”. Thus, when interpreting the findings of the regression models, we can state that the odds of experiencing physical partner violence, for example, are much higher or lower (statistically speaking), depending on one’s personal history of domestic violence.

Another key output from logistic regression equations is the pseudo R-squared, which approximates ordinary least squares (OLS) in linear regression equations but is not the actual percentage of variance explained (it is considered a strength of association between predictor variables). However, pseudo-R squares such as Nagelkerke’s R-square can be interpreted as an approximate percentage of variance accounted for by the predictor variables and moreover tells us something about their predictive power.

The odds ratios and approximate variance accounted for by the predictor variables in the various logistic regression models are shown in appendix II.

Appendix II: Summary of logistic regression models

Odds ratios for victim of violence

	Physical		Emotional		Sexual	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Age group						
13 (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
14	.535	.535	.862	1.053	1.115	.729
15	.467	1.023	1.284	1.841	.917	.687
16+	.754	.911	1.786	.980	1.229	.609
Ethnic group						
White (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
BME/other	1.600	1.132	.835	.738	***2.682****	.787
Religious group						
No (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Yes	.722	.850	1.274	.909	1.094	.837
Family violence						
No (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Yes	1.728	***2.765****	***2.058****	***1.801****	***2.766****	***2.363****
Peer violence						
No (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Yes	***2.301****	***2.221****	***2.212****	***2.464****	1.691	1.595
Age of partner						
Younger partner (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Same-age partner	***.409****	2.000	***.444****	.674	.833	.862
Older partner	.469	***4.910****	.640	1.564	.794	1.990
Total number in sample (N=)	***376***	***461***	***373***	***461***	***373***	***463***
Model variance (R square)	***.123***	***.203***	***.125***	***.154***	***.129***	***.137***

Note: Significance level of Exp(B): $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Odds ratios for instigators of violence

	Physical		Emotional		Sexual	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Age group						
13 (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
14	.289	1.264	1.689	1.173	.846	1.106
15	***.180****	1.843	***2.888****	***2.762****	1.415	1.565
16+	1.193	1.864	***4.587****	2.295	1.997	.683
Ethnic group						
White (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
BME/other	2.247	1.607	2.095	***2.541****	***2.791****	1.522
Religious group						
No (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Yes	.488	.971	1.059	1.107	1.421	1.928
Family violence						
No (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Yes	1.940	***2.183****	1.915	1.662	1.677	***3.971****
Peer violence						
No (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Yes	***3.124****	***2.691*****	***2.168****	1.563	***3.059****	***3.832****
Age of partner						
Younger partner (reference category)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Same-age partner	.854	1.141	***.451****	.736	.736	1.101E8
Older partner	.373	2.921	.721	.903	.646	3.359E7
Total number in sample	***374***	***463***	***255***	***347***	***369***	***463***
Model variance (R square)	***.239***	***.191***	***.188***	***.126***	***.181***	***.165***

Note: Significance level of Exp(B): $^{*}p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$ $^{***}p < .001.$

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