

Event report

# MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN LIVING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LONDON

A London Funders meeting in partnership with the City Bridge  
Trust, NSPCC and Refuge

12.04.2012

HOSTED BY

---



VENUE

---

City Bridge Trust  
Basinghall Suite  
Guildhall  
London

On 12 April, London Funders and The City of London Corporation's charity, City Bridge Trust brought together funders in London to discuss the findings of a research project carried out by NSPCC and Refuge on meeting the needs of children living with domestic violence in London.

Jenny Field, Deputy Chief Grants Officer, City Bridge Trust and chair of the meeting welcomed the audience. She explained the Trust's longstanding commitment to supporting victims of domestic violence which had led them to invest in this research, and is the first to investigate service provision across the capital.

Gaynor Humphreys, Director, London Funders thanked City Bridge Trust for their partnership in holding the event. For London Funders, this event was a welcome part of follow-up to a London Funders meeting in October 2011, exploring the impact of changing patterns of funding on children's and young people's services in London (report [here](#)) and how funders might start thinking in radically different ways to tackle the shortage of funding in this area of work. Gaynor congratulated The City Bridge Trust on their consistent funding for work on domestic violence and also noted what insights were to be gained from the NSPCC/Refuge research because it shifted focus to the perspective of children caught up in these problems. She hoped that this chance to discuss the research would lead to fresh thinking and collaboration.



Pam Miller and Jillian Roberts, NSPCC took the audience through the major findings of the research which were summarised as:

- Significant gaps in service provision
- Inequality of access to help
- Children not seen, not heard.

To read the report in full or a summary click [here](#).

### Points of interest to funders

- Current provision is driven more by money available than by identified needs
- Not enough partnership working within and between boroughs
- A lack of early intervention practices and an increase in child protection activity
- People with no recourse to public funds face biggest issues in accessing help
- Time for children to play is vital, achieving positive and practical change (e.g. replacing bad thoughts with good)
- Professionals in many agencies lack confidence in talking to children (police, etc.)
- 

### Outcomes of the research

- NSPCC are now working with the Home Office to set up a young person stakeholder consultation group specifically for victims of domestic violence and the impact of witnessing abuse
- Children and young people are involved in commissioning NSPCC work

- Refuge disseminated the findings of the report to grants officers and other relevant organisations like the Women's Resource Centre.

Pam and Jillian emphasised that there is still much more work to be done. They noted [Project Oracle](#), the Mayor's programme to encourage robust standards of evidence in what works in improving the lives of children and young people in London. Big Lottery Fund and Comic Relief were also noted for their funding of work on domestic violence.

### Key recommendations

- Local authorities should involve children in decisions about services
- The use of appropriate techniques such as arts, play
- Mindfulness of children's previous experiences
- Children gaining insight into workings of local authorities

### Challenges identified:

- Participatory activity with children is resource heavy
- Shortage of funding demands creative solutions.

The research makes recommendations on improved service provision, methods of working with children and the value of funding domestic violence from the perspective of children involved. In particular an emphasis on empowering/shifting the focus to children by bringing them into decision-making environments-poses questions for funding...



### Points from the audience

- There was concern that tackling domestic violence still depends heavily on victims having to leave the situation rather than the perpetrator. There are efforts to offer the alternative (including pilot work where police take out an emergency protection order) but this is not common practice and it may be better to remove children from an environment in which they have witnessed violence. (For more information on this please see [The effectiveness of schemes to enable households at risk of domestic violence to stay in their own homes](#), (2010) Department of Communities and Local Government.)
- Refuge has independent domestic advocates who support victims and give evidence against the perpetrator which has led to an increase in convictions.
- The audience were keen to hear how the researchers gathered information in order to map service provision. Pam and Jillian had used a freedom of information request as many boroughs had proved reluctant to provide information.
- The issue of informal support and what this looks like was raised by an audience member. NSPCC suggested that informal support involved children being able to talk to a trusted adult for instance within their school.



The audience split into groups to discuss questions relating to addressing gaps in service provision and giving children and young people the opportunity to have their voices heard. Their thoughts are summarised below:

1. In a climate of public sector cuts how can statutory and independent funders work together to address the significant gaps in services addressing the needs of children and young people affected by domestic violence?
  - In Haringey, a domestic violence commissioning group has been set up as whilst there is less money, there are attempts to co-ordinate services.
  - Localism is a challenge for domestic violence and demands better co-ordination across boroughs.
  - General feeling that these discussion need to be held at London Councils level for efficiency and consistency.
  - Each local authority is addressing this differently
  - Each local authority planned for different funding/outcomes
  - A DV working group across borough services can make sure all frontline staff are aware of all services
  - Need to look at a continuum of need and links from children's perspective.
  - Use resources smarter.
  - Family Justice Centre is now joining up with other support services such as drug and alcohol services. Developing a multi-agency response to issues around domestic violence.
  - Advice taken from across authority services.
  - More local authorities need to speak with third sector who could deliver preventative work.
  - A family's needs are not being met until they reach crisis point; early intervention is not occurring.
  - Need for longer-term funding between the statutory and voluntary sector as sometimes good partnerships end prematurely.
  - An open-bid process by statutory services for the third sector may be problematic? Balance of knowledge between sectors.
  - It is not just about funding children's workers. Support at earlier stages, for instance in schools, is proving effective where it is happening.
  - Please see here for more information on the Against Violence and Abuse [Community Groups Project](#) which runs programmes for children, young people and their mothers who have experienced domestic violence and provides a community based setting for them to share and talk about their experiences.

London's complexity creates challenges – while there is a funding gap, there is also a lack of co-ordination and, as yet, insufficient attention to early intervention.

2. How can funders work to ensure children and young people are given opportunities to express their own views and experiences?
  - Sharing best practice.
  - Local authority participation workers should be doing this.
  - Which is harder to hear from, teenagers or younger voices?
  - Look to organisations with mechanisms for participation (YMCA, Barnardo's, Youth Council).
  - Co-ordinated approach is necessary.
  - Ask in application stage how they involve children and young people in the planning of delivery services.
  - Domestic violence remains a sensitive issue-need to tread carefully in consulting those affected.

Much of the thinking on ensuring children's voices are heard reflects the research outcomes which have brought children into decision-making

environments. There was little innovative thinking from funders on this point, which largely reflects the sensitivity of the issue at hand. London Funders will continue to explore these issues through its members meeting and, in the autumn, will be holding an event with John Lyon's Charity on supplementary education.

A final comment from an audience member stressed the danger of localism in addressing London-wide issues, and ensuring the bottom-up voices of the voluntary and community sector, local authorities and children are heard.

Jenny Field closed the meeting, thanking the audience and panel for their participation and stressed that whilst resources are important, it is also about how we work: demonstrating our practice and joining up working is now more important than ever.

**With thanks to City Bridge Trust for hosting this meeting**

#### Attendance list

Shaista	<b>Afzal</b>	City of London Corporation
Sally-Ann	<b>Bell</b>	BBC Children in Need
Sarah	<b>Bright</b>	London Borough of Croydon
Alison	<b>Buchanan</b>	Solace Women's Aid
Lai	<b>Chong-Siltola</b>	London Councils
Bill	<b>Clarke</b>	Osborne Partnership
Anna	<b>Clemenson</b>	John Lyon's Charity
Ntokozo	<b>Dlova</b>	Bede House
Jenny	<b>Field</b>	City Bridge Trust (chair)
Katie	<b>Higginson</b>	BBC Children in Need
Sophika	<b>Houck</b>	London Borough of Camden
Manju	<b>Lukhman</b>	London Borough of Barnet
Liz	<b>Marnham</b>	London Borough of Haringey
Joan	<b>Millbank</b>	London Borough of Lewisham
Pam	<b>Miller</b>	NSPCC (speaker)
Joyce	<b>Nash</b>	City Bridge Trust
Charlie	<b>O'Doherty</b>	NSPCC
Jenny	<b>Oppenheimer</b>	The Pilgrim Trust
Catherine	<b>Phillips</b>	Refuge
Ciaran	<b>Rafferty</b>	City Bridge Trust
Jillian	<b>Roberts</b>	NSPCC (speaker)
Tarj	<b>Sehangera</b>	London Borough of Barking & Dagenham

Gaynor Humphreys and Catherine McLoughlin  
Secretariat

London Funders

#### Apologies for absence:

Zoe Pullman, London Borough of Merton; Brian Wheelwright, Wates Family Charities