



'All Jumbled Up': A Spotlight on teacher and child experience in evaluating Operation Encompass

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New research centres the voice of children in how schools can provide support for domestic abuse situations

"You never really know what someone is going through, even if they look happy, you have to ask."

While no official source collects data on children affected by domestic abuse, research suggests as many as one in five children experience domestic abuse in their lives. This equates to around six children in an average UK class size of 30 pupils. Education settings are often the service in closest and longest

contact with children and young people experiencing domestic abuse, and so teaching staff can play a crucial role in both identifying and supporting them on a daily basis.

During the Summer of 2024, researchers at Northumbria University worked with staff and children at a large primary school to undertake case study research on the implementation and impact of [Operation Encompass](#), a police and education setting information sharing partnership enabling staff in those settings to offer immediate and ongoing support to children experiencing domestic abuse. Established in all 43 police forces in England and Wales, as well as other countries, Operation Encompass aims to safeguard and support children experiencing domestic abuse, and to reduce the long-term impacts of domestic abuse by providing early intervention.

The research was co-led by Northumbria academics Sarah Ralph-Lane, Assistant Professor in Sociology and Criminology, and Amanda McBride, Assistant Professor in Children and Young People. Their report, entitled *'All Jumbled Up': A Spotlight on teacher and child experience in evaluating Operation Encompass* emphasises the importance of the voices of children both through the comments they received from the teachers interviewed and as a result of the creative workshops carried out with the students themselves.

For Sarah Ralph-Lane the report is a natural continuation of her work on the ['Girl-Kind' programme](#) which also gave a voice to the young people at the heart of the issues she was examining:

“Unfortunately, the voice of the child is still so often missing from work around domestic abuse, and for Amanda and I ensuring that children’s voices are part of the conversation around how children should be supported is key to our research ethos and approach.

This report demonstrates the importance of education settings taking a universal, child-centred and individualised approach to supporting children experiencing domestic abuse. However, to be equipped to do so school staff require quality training and guidance. Operation Encompass already offer free online training and have a guidance helpline. However, embedding training at professional development stage is key to making sure teachers can recognise and skilfully respond to children experiencing domestic abuse from the moment they enter the classroom.”

The report will be shared by Operation Encompass with a wide range of professionals including the Home Office, Department for Education, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and other professional bodies working with children.

Following the publication of the report Ralph-Lane and McBride hope to be able to continue their research on the impact of the Operation Encompass initiative through engagement with additional schools across the UK. They will also use this as an opportunity to create additional supportive resources for trainee and newly qualified teachers which will explore issues of domestic abuse within educational settings.

The founders of Operation Encompass, Elisabeth Carney-Haworth OBE and David Carney-Haworth OBE, have responded to the report by saying:

“In England and Wales alone, there are over 2,000 Operation Encompass notifications being sent on a daily basis from police to school staff, this research emphasises the crucial role of those members of educational staff following that notification.

When Operation Encompass achieved, after eleven years of campaigning, the recognition of children as victims of domestic abuse in the DA Act, this was a watershed moment. Now, as it approaches its fifteenth year, Operation Encompass is a legislative requirement for police forces in England and Wales.

We were pleased to support this informative research as it clearly reinforces for anyone who may not yet understand the importance to educational settings of police forces following the key principles of Operation Encompass. The research quotations from the school staff, alongside the powerful children's comments, emphasise that a culture of trauma responsive care and nurture can support the healing process for our children experiencing domestic abuse.

Listening to our children's voices has been at the heart of Operation Encompass since its inception, and the compelling voices of the children within this research remind us how important children's relationships with staff and the physical environment in their school are to their emotional health and well-being, strengthening our understanding of the need for educational settings to provide safe, secure, nurturing relationships in a safe,

secure, nurturing environment for all children.”

Operation Encompass: wherever there is domestic abuse, wherever there are children, no matter where they live. It is simply every child’s right.

The full report is available to read online – [All Jumbled Up’: A Spotlight on teacher and child experience in evaluating Operation Encompass.](#)

Find out more about Operation Encompass and their work by visiting their website -www.operationencompass.org

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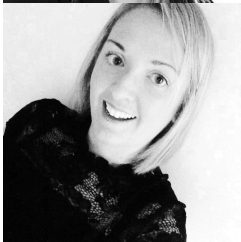
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