

## Frequently asked Questions: Information for Referrers

### What is Building Respectful Families (BRF)?

BRF is a service run by SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime. It is for families affected by Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA). The BRF team works with children aged 8-18 and their parents or caregivers. The purpose of all our work is to help young people better understand and manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours; help parents increase their sense of resilience and well-being; reduce family isolation; clarify clear boundaries for behaviour and examine and build strategies for the future, to repair their relationship.

### What is Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) and why does it happen?

*“CAPVA is a form of family abuse where children and adolescents use a range of harmful behaviours towards parents or caregivers in an attempt to get their own way, hurt or punish, communicate distress and/or control their environment.”*

*“Behaviours include physical violence, verbal abuse, behaviours that are emotionally and / or psychologically abusive, and those which damage property and / or hurt parents financially. Abuse can also be sexual in nature, although this is less often discussed.”* (Understanding CAPVA 2021)

There are many reasons why CAPVA can happen; it is a very complex and misunderstood form of family violence and it needs a unique approach.

### As a professional already involved with a family, what can I do to help them?

Parents often tell us that they feel shame and judgement, and sometimes disbelief from people in their lives, when they share what is happening. You can achieve a lot with a family if you keep it simple: listen, believe, do not judge, and go at their pace. Avoiding labelling this issue as being due to permissive parenting or a lack of boundaries on the part of the parent; seek to understand what has happened to the parent or carer and how this impacts them now as a parent. In your work with their child, seek to resist and challenge labels such as abuser, or ‘perpetrator’ but instead, try to build on their strengths whilst encouraging them to talk about what is happening, in a safe way.

CAPVA can appear to be akin to intimate partner violence but try to resist to simply treating it the same way you would if it were happening between two adults. You need to be honest with the family when you have safeguarding concerns and report these, as you have a duty to share. Be curious about the behaviours and consider them as being an expression of an unmet need, this can be a useful starting place with the child and their parent.

### How do I know whether BRF is appropriate for a family?

- Does the parent or caregiver report that the Young Person is using behaviours which are violent, threatening, controlling or coercive?
- Have they found that traditional methods of discipline, such as imposing sanctions or boundaries leads to more difficulties?
- Does the parent talk about ‘walking on eggshells’ around their child to avoid these behaviours?
- Have they found that they have adapted the way they parent their child, just to keep the peace in the home?

***If the answer to these is ‘Yes’, they may be appropriate for BRF.***

### Are there eligibility criteria?

Engagement and attendance from the parent /caregiver and the young person are a requirement for eligibility but are **voluntary**. Parents and young people should understand that the support might ask a lot of them individually, so it needs to be 'the right time' for them to undertake the work. If there are significant changes going on in their lives, consider whether it might be more prudent to wait until these things have settled. Success with the work is possible when both the parent/carer and the young person are **motivated** to change the situation and both are prepared to reflect and make changes. BRF uses restorative and trauma-informed approaches.

We encourage referrals where there is a clear case of CAPVA **and** the following criteria are met:

- The family lives within the Thames Valley area (or the young person is 'on roll' at a school in the region)
- The young person is aged between 8 and 18 years of age.
- The behaviours have been happening for 6 months or more.
- Both the young person and their caregiver consent to taking part in the support

### What does the support look like?

If the referral is accepted, the exact nature of the support will depend on what a family's needs are. We have a specialist team of BRF Workers who can provide one-to-one and group-based support for young people and their parents / caregivers; some support is available for siblings also affected; and work with extended family members where required. Support can be in-person, or online, or a mixture of both.

### Where is the referral form?

If you want to discuss making a referral, please start by contacting the team at [brf@safeproject.org.uk](mailto:brf@safeproject.org.uk). Your query will be allocated our duty worker.

### What happens next?

If BRF is deemed appropriate for them, we will ask you to complete the referral form on behalf of the family. Once this is received, we can give an indication of the timescales for support.

### What else can I do to help a family?

You may also want to consider accessing our Introduction to CAPVA course for professionals. This is a 3-hour interactive training session designed to equip professionals with the knowledge and confidence to support families experiencing CAPVA and equip them with some practical strategies to use. See our web page for more details of upcoming dates and how to book.

### I still have questions, where can I direct my query?

If you want to discuss BRF in more detail, please contact the Team at [brf@safeproject.org.uk](mailto:brf@safeproject.org.uk)