

Final Report

Football and Domestic Violence/Abuse in England and Scotland: A Feasibility Study

University of Bristol

Dr. Emma Williamson, University of Bristol

Dr. Oona Brooks, University of Glasgow

Dr. Nancy Lombard, Glasgow Caledonian University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This feasibility study involved consulting with a range of key stakeholders to discuss how we can better understand, measure, and respond to the potential links between football and domestic violence/abuse (dvaⁱ). Current research suggests there may be a link between football and dva but we do not yet have an adequate understanding of this link, or what it might mean for victims/survivors, perpetrators, those who provide support services or footballing organisations.

This study explored the key questions which have arisen in relation to suggested links between football and dva with relevant stakeholders in both Scotland and England. A total of 13 interviews/meetings were held with 26 individuals identified as key stakeholders. This included: representatives of fan's organisations; the police; various football leagues; governing bodies; government; dva service providers; those who work with perpetrators of dva; and survivors, both with and without specific experiences of abuse linked to football. For the purposes of agreed anonymity these organisations are not named in this report.

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analysed, with permission, to facilitate the identification of key themes. Where comparison between England and Scotland is relevant, it is mentioned, otherwise readers should assume that the themes identified relate to both jurisdictions.

The key issues to arise were:

- Confusion about the current state of evidence and the limitations within the quantitative knowledge base. Key stakeholders still don't know with any certainty if there is a link between dva and football, and what that might mean for practice.

- Concerns that football is an incidental trigger and therefore unreasonably targeted in relation to other sports and other ‘triggers’ to abuse and violence more broadly.
- Survivors, in particular, thought football could and should do more to challenge negative attitudes and opinions about women and challenge abuse. [It should be recognised that this may be an issue of communication of engagements which are already taking place].
- Positive commitment from all stakeholders to explore the in depth meanings behind the quantitative data in order to improve that data and our understandings of sport and dva more widely.
- There was a lack of ‘government led’ policy initiatives around the issue in England, when compared to the Scottish work which has already taken place, for example police initiatives to target known offenders and support survivors during ‘high risk’ games.
- In Scotland there was less engagement with the relevant footballing authorities (outside of issues traditionally associated with Rangers and Celtic matches)). The work in England has been led by Women’s Aid, England through their Football United © initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Disseminate, via the key stakeholders, the evidence literature review compiled by the co-authors (Crowley et al, 2015ⁱⁱ).
2. Support joint working between Scottish Women’s Aid, Women’s Aid England, and Scottish footballing authorities.
3. Look, with Football United, and with assistance from Scottish policy makers, at where government led opportunities in England are possible.

4. Assist in the positive communication and dissemination of Football United [appendix.1].
5. Work with the stakeholder group on the submission of one or more of the following research options.

Option A

The research team, with the support of the key stakeholders who have taken part, apply for a large ESRC funded project which looks in more depth, at the issue of triggers to dva (focusing on sport) and how these are understood and mediated. This will include interviews with victims/survivors; perpetrators; different sports fans. On the basis of a more detailed understanding of triggers to violence and the emotional responses of fans to games, re-examine the police and specialist support data.

Option B

Based on an asserted need to know the role of football in relation to dva, whilst quantitative data doesn't give us a definitive answer due to the number of interfering variables, it would be possible to identify the proportion of football fans who are perpetrators of abuse through a self-completed survey. The figures could then be compared with self-reported figures from other settings. It would give football authorities an idea of the scale of the potential to create change.

Given the sensitivities of the data, we suggest that the football authorities fund and control the data from such a study.

Option C

Building on the ideas outlined in B, this option could include a pre-post study (with control group) using the self-complete survey, to test whether the intervention from Football United was successful at changing reports of abuse.

Due to the sensitivity of the data, we would suggest that footballing authorities fund and control this data, and pay for the Football United intervention, at the intervention sites, during this testing phase.

INTRODUCTION

This project emerged from the recent international literature review commissioned by the Scottish Government which confirmed that a link does appear to exist between increased rates of dva and football matches; yet with caveats about the large number of potential variables which undermines any potential analysis of causality (Crowley et al. 2014).

It also coincided with the launch of Women's Aid, England's Football United Campaign which was targeted at football clubs and authorities within England with the aim to tackle dvaⁱⁱⁱ.

Both of these initiatives, one voluntary sector and the other government led, raised questions about the current state of evidence and how this can be utilised to improve policy perspectives and interventions.

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The overarching aim of the feasibility study was to develop a robust programme of research which builds upon, and meets the needs of, key stakeholders responsible for tackling the possible links between football and domestic abuse, and the needs of those, primarily women, who experience it.

The study involved the use of group consultations and individual 1-1 interviews with the relevant key stakeholders. The specific objectives of this feasibility study were to:

- Work in partnership with national Women's Aid organisations in Scotland and England to ascertain the key concerns of the specialist dva sector in relation to potential links between service use and domestic abuse linked to football matches.

- Coordinate meetings which bring together police agencies and football representatives to discuss the parameters and data access requirements of a larger research project which meets the needs of all stakeholders.
- Work with the key stakeholders to develop a larger research proposal with the objective of collecting data during 2016 relating to local football matches in both Scotland and England, and from the 2016 UEFA European Football finals.
- Examine the contributions and limitations of existing quantitative studies that may document a correlation between domestic abuse and football.
- Contribute to the qualitative research evidence base by exploring the perspectives of practitioners and victims/survivors in relation to how football and football matches impact upon a women's own experience and access to specialist dva services and the police.

METHODS

The study involved the use of group consultations with the relevant key stakeholders: Police; Local football community liaison officers; Football association representatives; Specialist women's DVA services; and Victims/survivors of abuse.

A mixture of different types of 1-1 and group meetings and consultations were held in both England and Scotland as determined by the needs and preferences of the key stakeholders. This enabled us to take all of the stakeholder's views, reservations, and potential barriers to future work on board. The survivors included in this report were recruited from an existing service user advisory group. All members were invited irrespective of whether football or sport had featured in their relationships. From those who volunteered it was possible to interview two survivors. One of these had experienced abuse related to football and the other had not.

All of the meetings/interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The anonymised data was then analysed using thematic analysis. These key themes are presented and discussed below.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bristol University operates to the guidance of the Association of Ethics Associations. Prior to the project start, full ethical approval was given for the project from the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee, University of Bristol. This Research Ethics Committees (REC) is concerned with protecting the rights, dignity, health, safety and privacy of research participants as well as protecting the health, safety, rights and academic freedom of researchers. The REC reviewed the project as a whole including the information sheets and consent forms used within the study. All data will be stored in accordance with Data Protection Legislation behind a password protected server at the host university. All of the participants were offered anonymity.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perspectives of different stakeholders to ensure that their views about existing evidence relating to football and dva were captured. As such, all stakeholders who agreed to participate in the feasibility study were asked about their knowledge of the existing evidence, whether they were concerned about any gaps in that knowledge, and what they considered to be the main problem or concern with regard the potential link between dva and football. The following themes emerged within the analysis and reflect the different perspectives that any future research will need to address.

Knowledge about current evidence/causes

Most respondents believed that there was a potential link or association between dva and football although the depth of this knowledge, and its accuracy with regards to the evidence, varied. One respondent believed that there were specific links to international and FA cup games:

I know that instances of domestic abuse go up during large tournaments like international ... like <the> World Cup and international matches and things like the FA Cup (A01).

In Scotland in particular where old firm games between Celtic and Glasgow Rangers had resulted in a Joint Action Group on violence and football, initiated by the Scottish Government, Glasgow matches were seen as particularly problematic on the basis of sectarianism.

Other suggested factors were: alcohol, mentioned repeatedly by participants although with varying concerns about alcohol being used as an excuse by perpetrators; the weather, potentially linked to increased alcohol consumption if the weather is good; and expectations associated with the importance of the game.

In relation to football it depends on who the teams are. So if you're in a <large city> ... four or five years ago at <team 1> versus <team 2> the actual belief was that it wasn't ... although there's a lot of rivalry between the two clubs, the expectation at the time of the <team 2> fans was that they wouldn't win.... so if it was a really important game, i.e. like in the last couple of seasons it's probably more ... you know both of them are sort of <doing better> and then those three points become really important, and so does it for their supporters as well ... so you will see an increase. But the increase will be more prevalent if the weather's warm (A02).

This idea of violence increasing as a result of the weather was introduced by a number of participants in the interviews in England, one of whom suggested it might be possible to look at somewhere like Sweden to compare levels of violence.

The notion of expectations about winning was also linked to an understanding that emotional investment in the outcome of a game was a normal part of the football experience but one which could then become problematic for some supporters. One

participant said: “You know anecdotally I know of friends whose husbands don’t even speak if the team lose” (A02). This is interesting because in this context, more extreme abusive behaviours are seen as an extension of the emotional responses considered ‘normal’ in relation to football results.

Some participants explicitly mentioned ‘testosterone’ or male dominance of the environment, “there’s a lot of alcohol involved, and there’s a lot of ... quite a lot of testosterone ... then there’s always going to be issues around violence” (A03).

From a police perspective, whilst there were some factors which might influence the classification of games in terms of potential risk of violence, often based on previous experience, there was an acknowledgement that there were sometimes spikes in cases and the reasons were unknown.

Many times I’d come in and I’d go ‘How many DA incidents overnight?’ And the majority of times it’d be in the region of about 15, yeah? But then for some bizarre reason you’d come in one day and go ‘How many DA incidents?’ and it’d be 30, and you just couldn’t understand what had caused that spike. ... sometimes there is a spike and we just can’t understand it ourselves or unpick it, because there’s nothing that we know that’s going on that could have actually impacted on that (A02).

Recognising that there are times when we just don’t understand why there might be a spike in reports of dva is important because it reminds us that we are dealing with a phenomenon that is a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviours rather than specific incidents which follow specific trigger patterns. This raises some interesting questions about how we research and explain the phenomenon of dva more widely. This theme emerged in the interviews with a range of stakeholders, many of whom were keen to dispute the strength of associations between dva and football, or dva and other trigger factors, by recognising that explanations of violence are generally more complex.

Well what we’re taught in the Freedom Programme^{iv} is that alcohol doesn’t create an abuser, it just releases one..... And I think you could argue that football does the same (A07).

So if you pick any major event, if there was a major pop concert there'd be more evidence of drug taking probably in <any city>. It doesn't mean to say that pop concerts are the cause of drug taking. It's that kind of assumption or knee jerk reaction that we've got <to> try and get underneath (C.01).

Consistent throughout the feasibility study was a recognition that whatever reasons were given, that the individual perpetrator was ultimately responsible for their abusive actions.

But again, there's a degree of scapegoating there because you don't abuse just because you've had a drink – you abuse because you're an abusive man who's had a drink (C02).

Football as an incidental site

Evident in responses from a wide range of respondents, was that rather than representing any causal link, football was being identified as an activity with a potential link to dva on the basis of the mere numbers of male supporters who attend games. This, one respondent suggested was due to the issue of violence more widely being linked to football, in the form of sectarianism in Scotland and racism in England, and that as a result violence more widely being associated with the game:

...violence, actually at and around games, but the discussion about things which happen completely away from and separate to games is a relatively new thing ... and this <meeting around football and dva> is clearly part of that (C01).

Within both Scotland and England there was a fear that whilst football may be a possible site for interventions to challenge the general attitudes of male supporters, that this was incidental to the issue of dva which generally happens away from the match and at home.

So I get it that it's an issue, I don't think anyone would accept that it's not an issue - the challenge is trying to say well what can football do to help, and is football causing this. Or is it just ... is it something, another social issue that's happening on a day when football matches are taking place? (C01).

Linked to the theme of football being an incidental site is also the vast number of campaigns which would therefore benefit from engaging with football organisations to get their message across to predominantly male fans whether that be health messages about men's physical or mental health, or social and behavioural issues such as homophobia, racism, and violence.

football is approached by every possible campaign ... for us the <organisation> are directly involved in this, we were getting loads of different campaigning bodies coming to us and you know the policy part of the <organisation> has pulled all that together in terms of actually even identifying a charity that will support each season, you know we just had loads and loads, and it was really difficult ... and we now have a proper process for deciding which charity will be supported by the <organisation> and that's where we concentrate our efforts collectively over a season (A05).

Some stakeholders' views about football as an incidental site, survivors in particular, are discussed below, but there is no doubt that whilst some of the quantitative data suggests a possible association between football and dva, the concern over what that means (Crowley et al, 2014), and what could be done to address it, extended across this study.

Football as a scapegoat and other sports

There certainly exists a perception that football is targeted in relation to the behaviour of its fans and players in a way which other sports are not. This was at times evident in some of the stakeholder responses to this feasibility study and often based on anecdotal evidence.

we had to stop taking our older son to football matches because we used to go and watch <football club>, because of some of the things that were being shouted. Well it was one of the reasons we stopped taking him. Which wasn't all about sort of sexual violence, I suppose it was just racism. But we also watch rugby, so we go and watch live rugby and I never hear it there I just think it's interesting what you hear shouted at football matches and what you hear shouted ... when I sit watching <city> rugby people shout their frustration at a player's performance, they don't shout 'they should take it up the arse'. You know I just find that an extraordinary comparison (A01).

The issue of masculinity in football will be addressed shortly, but the type of sexist and homophobic language used at football matches was something that the majority of respondents had personally witnessed at football matches. Some thought that this was getting better, but nevertheless, was something that was then used to perpetuate certain negative perceptions of football fans.

rugby it's always said that it's much ... it's a much nicer game .. the sport is much nicer. I mean it's a sweeping statement and I'd say the demographics within rugby tends to be ... like a lot of professionals play rugby and maybe the professionals then follow it. But interestingly enough, I think if you look back to recently in the last Six Nations – the England, Wales game that was playing on a Friday night in Cardiff, there were instances of violence, I don't know ... like I think the police were called into action a bit more, so someone then said 'Oh it's getting like football' (laughs) (A04).

Other stakeholders also queried this assumption that rugby is less of a problem than football with one respondent recalling a recent incident involving rugby players which challenged the different ways in which the two sports are often presented.

Without naming any names, we have been asked to talk with a group of rugby players from ... we'll just say a low-level team, because of the way they were reacting one Saturday night when they were out socialising and the way they were reacting to a group of female students. We have been never been asked

to come and speak to a football team because of the way they were behaving to a group of women (C02)

One practitioner recognised, albeit in the context of weather and alcohol, a potential increase in DVA associated with a range of sports.

So the first thing is I think it's not just football, I think it's if you take any sport and hot weather and alcohol – you see a real increase in DA. So if it's the English football team, cricket team or rugby, yeah, it's in summer and there's alcohol involved, then you will see ... or you do see an increase in DA (A02).

As well as identifying possible differences in the culture of different sports, participants also raised questions about whether there were demographic differences in the make up of different bodies of sports fans. This included class, race, ethnicity, and geography. This raises even further complexity when trying to quantitatively establish any potential link between football and dva.

I think with class stuff, that it would be really interesting to kind of bear in mind any intersectionalities, I mean obviously there's race and ethnicity issues as well. But the class stuff for me is really distinct, that kids that do cricket are a really different group of kids to the kids that do football. And there's a small bit of cross-over ...there's some kids that do both, but there are some kids that only do football and they wouldn't dream of doing cricket, in brackets because that's not for the working classes. Now I reckon that's different in places like Yorkshire, and I think rugby is the same, it's different in Wales for example where it's a really working class sport. But here, where we are, it's the middle class kids do cricket and the working class kids do football. And then there's a few in families like ours that probably are straddling both camps (A06).

Alongside class, which was mentioned when referring to different experiences of rugby and football too, ethnicity was also mentioned in relation to cricket fans. In this case questions were raised about whether there might be more silence and underreporting of dva in middle class and ethnic minority communities. The implication here being

that it is working class families where reporting of abuse might take place, the same families who might have strong associations with football clubs.

And the other interesting link from what we've talked about is the whole kind of mental health point – men's mental health in particular. Because you know you look at some of the deprived areas where football, the working class game by and large and supporting your local team, you know there's evidence in those areas where it's tough – people are losing their jobs, people's salaries are coming under pressure, inflation's going up, you know there's pressure to pay the bills at home ... you know it's those kind of factors as well, and it'd be interesting to look at the demographic connections as well about where ... you know when domestic abuse is taking place. What does the social kind of landscape look like of the people that are actually involved in it. Cos I suspect that there'll be some correlation there as well. (C.01)

Finally, in terms of class an interesting point was made by participants in Scotland that when research about football focuses on Glasgow, as opposed to Scotland as a whole, it potentially skews research which might then show a greater disparity between Scotland and England than might otherwise exist.

Entitlement and masculinity

Recognising that dva is primarily about power and control within a pattern of abusive behaviours, as opposed to a one-off incident, concerns about entitlement and specific notions of masculinity were raised by a number of stakeholders. Concerns were raised that whilst football might not tolerate violence, that abusive behaviours might be an extreme version of behaviours which are tolerated within the culture of football, and in some cases encouraged.

Now for better or worse, the allowed behaviours within football culture includes a level of aggression, racial yelling, violence, you know historically it's got that. So in a sense you put a man into a football environment and he feels allowed

or entitled to behave perhaps in a way that he would not do in any other scenario. And that is ... that possibly is a key, cos somebody who's a perpetrator it's all about what they allow themselves to do, what they give themselves permission to do if you like. we go and watch a football match, suddenly it's okay that we're racially chanting or it's okay that we're talking about violence ... because in that context it's become normalised that's that what you do, so that's what they do. And of course that's a dangerous murky area for a perpetrator because all they need is to be feeling like they've been put into a situation where they've got permission to let go of these impulses and they're going to do it. So yeah possibly those ... there's something to do with football there that might allow a perpetrator to let himself off the hook you know (A07).

If you were to look at a perpetrator, what separates somebody who perpetrates domestic abuse to someone who doesn't, given all the other opportunities there? So, why would one person do it as opposed to another one? And some of that is linking to very traditional male role ... or ideas and ideologies about what men should be like and what women should be like, and that's kind of fairly set – the masculine model. And so, I suppose, then it's like, if we can get an understanding of that and build ... you know, it's almost like a building block, and then, if you've got a football match, to what extent would that contribute to that ... sort of play into that, maybe, or ... and then continue to build up (C.02)

It was recognised, as mentioned already, that the stereotypical view of football fans as traditionally working class was changing, with some stakeholders suggesting that this was due to an increase in cost and a subsequent change in the demographic profile of fans.

that might be quite interesting because one of the things that's generally happened I think is that more women going to watch games has had a very positive effect on fans' behaviour at the games (D01).

As well as suggesting that women have influenced the game as fans, the stakeholders also recognised the role of women as players and role models. There were concerns

however that the behaviour of individual players, and the subsequent media coverage, could undermine the efforts of women in the sport.

Survivors' perspectives

This feasibility study included interviews with a range of survivors as well as practitioners who work with and support victims/survivors. This section includes some of the key issues which they raised. For one of the survivors in particular, football was a key area of disagreement within her previously abusive relationship. As such, her views of football itself were impacted by the associations which she made between football and that abuse.

Because how would he manage the football. That takes priority - which is hurtful. But yeah, no, football takes priority, his life runs around football, not anything else. If it meant don't see the children he won't see his children (A05).

Referring to the causes of abuse raised previously and the frequency that key stakeholders mentioned alcohol, it was interesting that the only account of an abusive man using football as a trigger of that abuse didn't actually drink: "He wasn't much of a drinker. I've got to say that did take that serious because his job was driving" (A.05). When asked about different responses she experienced when teams won or lost, an issue discussed in the wider quantitative literature, this survivor reported that she was more likely to experience physical abuse if a team lost, and sexual abuse if the team won.

I would say not the violent side, but maybe the sexual side abuse did ... I'd say that went up. But not the violent side, but that's still abuse and it's still wrong behaviour. I'd say if it was winning it would be that ... so it'd be sexual abuse (A05)

This survivor reported that these experiences meant that she didn't like to listen to the football on the radio as it made her fearful of what was going to happen when her

partner returned home. Other stakeholders with experience of working with survivors questioned what actions women might feel it was necessary to take in order to stay safe and keep the peace.

The other thing I was going to say – obviously sexual violence is a massive issue around this I think – either within a relationship or not. And I think that is to do with masculinity as an entitlement, but it's also to do with women making choices in terms of their safety that might involve them having sex when they don't want to. So if he comes back from a match and he's in a foul mood, the easiest thing might be to have sex. So it's not exactly rape or even coerced sex, it's because there's ... because there's domestic violence in the relationship anyway, or because ... or maybe even not, maybe it's just he comes home in a foul mood, but you know there is that ... the way to cheer him up (A06).

This view was also evident in the police responses to dva in Scotland where police took a proactive stance on the premise that women would already be implementing safety planning around football if that was a trigger for them. For example, arranging to stay with relatives during and following specific games.

Well women certainly would start to plan way before it (the game), just the same way as they would plan for Christmas, birthdays, anything else. So you know ... but that would'nae be in terms of getting in touch with <support services>, that would be about making sure that you know she had a bolt hole, or she was going away for the weekend or something like that. And it would be then when after the incident came through that we would be told 'Well aye you know it always kicks off' and 'I had arranged to go to my sister's but you know ...' The other reason that we knew that was when ... <police> did start to visit known offenders during the period prior to a game. And what happened at that point was they gave us the names of the victims and we would phone the victims and they <police> would contact the accused. And again throughout that period we still ... you know people were saying 'Oh that's great, I'm really pleased that you're keeping an eye ... you know pass back to the cops that I appreciate it' and stuff like that (C03).

Unsurprisingly, the participant who had experienced abuse linked to football had a negative view of football, “I mean I’ve got no respect for football – it’s a game” (EW05), but she did raise suggestions about how football clubs could do more to challenge men given the influence they have.

Well if <the manager> told <the fans> to stand up and bounce they’d stand up and bounce, and he’d demonstrate this really happily. But he would do it – whatever this <manager> said ... If he said bounce, these grown men would bounce. You’ve got to see it (laughs) ... And I wanted to say to <the manager>, could you just say ‘Please don’t go home and do this to your wife.’ If he’d respect that yeah whatever he <the manager> said was gospel (A05).

Even where survivors had a negative view of football because of their experiences, their perspectives seemed to link in with the notion that whether football was directly or indirectly ‘linked’ with abuse, it was an ideal opportunity for football as our national sport to challenge behaviours and influence cultural change.

Social responsibilities and social change

As mentioned already, there is a recognition by those organisations which govern and influence football, that because it attracts large numbers of male supporters it is an ideal incidental venue to engage with that captive audience. We need to recognise and give credit for the range of social, health, and mental health projects that football and other sports engage with. It is also important to recognise that where it is possible to do so, footballing authorities have engaged with a range of social issues to try to influence positive change.

Alongside these positive actions, however, were concerns about the influence which footballers themselves can have through their status as role models for young men in particular.

you know footballers whether you agree it or not are often seen as role models. So if it's okay for someone else to do, is it okay for a young guy to do. And what I also find is the level of sexism and misogyny on social media" (A03).

For some stakeholders issues of abuse couldn't be separated from wider representations of women in relation to football.

And I know that particular fans can get removed from games and things like that, but I still feel they need to have more teeth around this and make some stronger noise about it. And that also you know key celebrity footballers could also say things that would be really helpful. Because they are role models for boys and it is disgraceful. This isn't specific to domestic abuse but it's around the culture of violence that encompasses all of that around ... and gendered stuff, you know all the stuff that you hear about footballers going out drinking and then sort of sex parties afterwards. And it's just it's there in that culture of you know women are there to be had sex with in a hotel room with my footballing mate next to me ... which you know is very bizarre (A01).

Whilst recognising that it isn't possible for footballing authorities to control the behaviour of all individual footballers there was some feeling that more needs to be done to sanction those players who might bring the sport into disrepute. In this sense challenging sexism, one of the contributing causes of dva, was considered alongside other high profile campaigns such as anti-racist and anti-homophobic initiatives.

for young boys growing up particularly.... I mean they're trying to eliminate racism particularly, they've tried to eliminate hooliganism. And you know they <football authorities> can't really just say 'oh we're only about football', because football has such a wide impact on culture generally. I mean they're not just a sport existing in isolation from the culture in which it's embedded, it's a major part of the British culture if you like but they can't just say 'oh we're just football in isolation', because actually they're letting down everybody, because they're such a major linchpin in our society I think. And that's speaking as somebody who has no interest in football whatsoever, does not watch it, and does not particularly like it. But I can quite clearly see how it is embedded in

our culture and how important it is. So yeah I wouldn't be happy <if> they would just turn round and try to wash their hands of it because I think they've got a role to play I can't think of a better way to do a cultural shift in this country at all around domestic violence – there just isn't a better way than through football. Because it's our national game, it's what our men do if you like ... you know if you're looking at sheer numbers of involvement it is the thing ... I can't think of a better way of getting a cultural shift about domestic violence than getting the Football Association on board (A07).

This quote reinforces the views discussed previously in relation to football as an incidental site, but presents a powerful argument about why football might have a role to play irrespective of whether an association exists between it and dva or not. This view wasn't limited to those outside of football.

I mean your point about how could we use the research – I think that's an interesting area to look at. You know we want to try and get away from this perception that football is the root of all evil, and that you know football is to blame for many of the problems that society has. You know any research that can demonstrate that we'd be interested in. And maybe looking at how the clubs themselves and their fans groups use that research to kind of break the myths, to kind of dispel the myths (C01).

Needing to balance the role of football in any campaigning around dva was summarised by one participant who said:

Certainly, where we've been involved with football teams, they're quite happy to be ... you know, it's the kinda positive side they're looking at – you know, that we are against domestic abuse, we're against violence against women and we're prepared to stand up and say so. It's slightly different if you're put in the position where what they're doing is defending the assumption that they're somehow causing it. I think it depends on the approach in terms of how they see themselves and the link ... if they're getting linked in terms of, "We're role models and therefore there's a positive image we can portray here," then that becomes something they're more likely to buy into (C02).

Potential sources of police and other data

We discussed access to, and use of, different types of data with all participants. There were some significant differences in the response of the police in England and Scotland, partly due to on-going proactive campaigns in the Glasgow area. In terms of what reported data shows us however, there was a general consensus that police data shows us reported incidents but doesn't tell us if these are new incidents or 'pre-emptive' reports^v. As with data reported in other research, when prompted to think about what that reported data might tell us, there was a renewed interest in the implications for practice, "we're just going off the incidents that are reported" (EW02). Another area of interest in relation to police practice was the decision making processes around risk assessment as well as whether a strong police presence might have an impact on the number of cases reported as a result of increased visibility.

we're out at matches – not every match, but we're out at selected matches based on a risk assessment. (C.02)

All participants agreed that we need to understand more about the current evidence and that asking wider questions about triggers to violence would help to increase this understanding. Whilst many linked to football were still keen for definitive answers as to the role played by football, this was in the context of recognising that other variables made identifying evidence difficult.

almost all the research that has been done has been looking at incidents of physically violent behaviour, and that's where the connection has come in, but what we know about domestic abuse is that it's a pattern of behaviour, so if you only rely on a particular incident, you're not capturing the whole story anyway. So, this is only like a piece of an entire puzzle ... One of our major concerns is that it's not fully understanding about the pattern of behaviour that constitutes domestic abuse and then, given that, even with that relationship, with the correlation is that not understanding about whether there are some other extraneous or spurious connections that are happening – so, what else might

be happening? Is it about ... something about the individuals who attend football matches, or is there something about the culture of football that actually increases the likelihood of certain behaviours to happen, or society's heightened awareness of what's happening around the football matches that actually encourages more active reporting – contacting the police more often or being much more aware or alert of things that might be happening. So, it's just ... kind of for us it's this real big thing around what is actually going on (C.02).

There was a generally positive view of conducting further research but within a number of specific caveats. There was concern that the research questions need to be wide enough to not start from the premise that 'football' is necessarily a problem. Whilst some within football were interested in whether evidence showed a causal link between dva and football, others thought the issue was too complex and multi-layered to allow for casual explanations. Further, it was recognised that where positive messages could be found, these should be more widely reported. And finally, a plea from those with experience of abuse, that irrespective of the nature of the link, that football use its influence to change attitudes more generally to challenging abuse.

[R1] And if we're now getting to a stage where rather than reviewing lots of other people's work and aggregating it etc, we're actually going to do some initial work - I think that's progress. [R2] I agree, I agree. I really do think that's progress (C.01)

Summary of findings

- Confusion about the current state of evidence and the flaws within that quantitative knowledge base. People still don't know if there is a link between dva and football and what that might mean.

- Concerns that football is an incidental trigger and therefore unreasonably targeted in relation to other sports and other ‘triggers’ to dva.
- Survivors, in particular, thought football could and should do more to challenge negative attitudes and opinions about women and challenge abuse. [It should be recognised that this may be an issue of communication of engagements which are already taking place].
- Positive commitment from all stakeholders to explore the in depth meanings behind the quantitative data in order to improve that data and our understandings of sport and dva more widely.
- There was a lack of ‘government led’ policy initiatives around the issue in England, when compared to the Scottish work which has already taken place, for example police initiatives to target known offenders and support survivors during high risk games.
- In Scotland there was less engagement with the relevant footballing authorities (outside of the old firm ‘issue’). The work in England has been led by Women’s Aid, England through their Football United © initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Disseminate, via the key stakeholders, the evidence literature review compiled by the co-authors (Crowley et al, 2015).
2. Support joint working between Scottish Women’s Aid, Women’s Aid England, and Scottish footballing authorities.
3. Look, with assistance from Scottish policy makers, at where government led opportunities in England are possible.
4. Assist in the positive communication and dissemination of Football United.

5. Work with the stakeholder group on the submission of one or more of the following research options.

Option A

The research team, with the support of the key stakeholders, apply for a large ESRC funded project which looks in more depth, at the issue of triggers to dva (focusing on sport) and how these are understood and mediated. This will include interviews with victims/survivors; perpetrators; different sports fans. On the basis of a more detailed understanding of triggers to violence and the emotional responses of fans to games, re-examine the police and specialist support data.

Option B

Based on an asserted need to know the role of football in relation to dva, whilst quantitative data doesn't give us a definitive answer due to the number of interfering variables, it would be possible to identify the proportion of football fans who identify as perpetrators of abuse through a self-completed survey. The figures could then be compared with self-reported figures from other settings. It would give football authorities an idea of the scale of the potential to create change.

Given the sensitivities of the data, we would recommend that the football authorities fund and control the data from such a study.

Option C

Building on the ideas outlined in B, this option would include a pre-post study (with control group) using the self-completed survey, to test whether an intervention from Football United was successful at reducing reports of abuse.

Due to the sensitivity of the data, we would suggest that footballing authorities fund and control this data, and pay for the Football United intervention during this testing phase.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Original outcomes	Progress	Date
Ascertain the views of different key stakeholders in both Scotland and England.	Conducted 13 consultation/meetings with 26 individuals from the key stakeholders groups. All groups represented.	Completed
An on-going network of key stakeholders to guide the research agenda forward.	The team holds the contact details for the key stakeholders in both Scotland and England, all of whom have expressed an interest in being involved further.	Completed
An accessible briefing paper which collates existing research evidence about domestic abuse and football, current stakeholder and survivor concerns, and recommendations for future research.	The executive summary will be distributed on-line and have link to literature review (Crawley et al, 2015). Will be forwarded to key stakeholders to disseminate on our behalf.	January 2016.
Development of research tools and design for future research	This work will be taken forward once funding for future research has been secured.	Once funding secured
A fully designed research proposal to be submitted to relevant funder.	Outline bid to Nuffield Foundation ESRC proposal	Completed February 2016
An academic journal article based on the issues of key relevance to the stakeholder groups in relation to football and dva.	Draft to be completed by the Spring 2016.	Spring 2016
Dissemination activities including attendance at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant third sector conf • European Conference on Domestic Violence in Belfast (2015). • Annual conference of the European Network on Gender Violence, Istanbul (2016) 	Will present at Women's Aid Conference 2016. Discuss at ECDV in Belfast – September 2015. Attending ENGV 2016.	July 2016 Sept. 2015. June 2016.

APPENDIX 1: FOOTBALL UNITED

The Football United Against Domestic Violence campaign launched in England in June 2014. Women's Aid is working with national footballing bodies, sports media, football clubs, the police, players and fans to send a clear message that domestic violence is always unacceptable. The campaign aims to call out the sexist behaviour that can underpin violence towards women, using the global platform and vast power of the football community to do so. It provides an opportunity for those working in football to engage with Women's Aid to raise awareness of domestic abuse and to educate about healthy relationships, with the long-term aim of reducing the number of abusive relationships in the future.

<http://www.womensaid.org.uk/page.asp?section=0001000100100030§ionTitle=Football+United>

ⁱ We use the phrase domestic violence/abuse, or dva, in recognition of the different terminology used in Scotland and England.

ⁱⁱ http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Football-and-Domestic-Abuse_Literature-Review_25-NOV-2014.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/page.asp?section=0001000100100030§ionTitle=Football+United>

^{iv} The Freedom Programme is an intervention which helps victims of abuse recognise the different controlling aspects of abusive behaviours, and how to recognise these behaviours in future.

^v Research (Hester, 2012) tells us that some women use police reporting as a way to manage their risk and safety. A pre-emptive call to the police may well be a strategy used by some women who believe, from experience, that abusive behaviour may escalate.