An Evaluation of the Culturally Integrated Family Approach to Domestic Abuse 2025: Summary

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CIFA is a holistic, culturally responsive and systems-focused domestic abuse intervention operating across ten London boroughs: Barnet, Brent, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. CIFA is an integrated service, working with people who have caused harm and victim–survivors. CIFA includes the bespoke streams FADA (Female Awareness of Domestic Abuse), APFA (Adult to Parent Inter-Familial Abuse), Respectful Partnerships (for LGBTQ+ communities) and all programmes can be adapted for neurodiversity. CIFA places equal value on trauma-informed recovery and accountable behaviour change. In three boroughs – Brent, Haringey and Newham - the integrated VS support is provided internally by RISE Domestic Abuse Safety Advisors (DASAs). In the other seven boroughs, this support is provided through commissioned partners: Cranstoun in Harrow; Solace in Barnet, Enfield and Tower Hamlets; and Advance in the tri-borough of Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

As an intervention, CIFA is unique in its cultural approach and ecological framework, generating significant positive changes in individual, family and community life. The programme serves communities often overlooked or underserved by traditional interventions, including those from minoritised and racialised backgrounds. Its model seeks not only to reduce harm but to catalyse broader systems change.

Over a six-month period, the research team employed a mixed-method approach that included qualitative and quantitative research processes. Grounded in academic literature and following principles of co-production, the team carried out 56 qualitative interviews with stakeholders, attended various meetings, and analysed case studies, reports and a range of relevant datasets supplied by RISE and partner agencies.

Key findings

- The evaluation finds strong evidence of CIFA's positive impact across each of the multiple dimensions of the RE-AIM-C framework, analysing reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, maintenance and cultural integration.
- The evaluation found evidence of personal behaviour change, effective victim-survivor support, professional learning, and positive systems- and community-level ripple effects.
- In line with VAWG strategy, CIFA delivers accountability for harm caused, prevents further harm, and enhances victim-survivor safety by meaningfully addressing harmful behaviour and offering victim-survivor support.
- CIFA is leading a cultural shift in the system towards meaningfully addressing domestic abuse by pursuing behaviour change work with people who have caused harm. The programme is culturally responsive and inclusive. It encourages reflection on the role of culture in abuse without explaining abusive behaviour in a reductive way or suggesting that abuse is synonymous with particular cultures.

This summary will focus on evidence of effectiveness and outcomes, key learnings and recommendations.

Effectiveness & outcomes: Victim-survivors

Quantitative analysis shows that **CIFA is reaching victim-survivors (VS) from marginalised and racialised groups**, and that the **number of victim-survivors** accessing CIFA support has **increased by 34.6%** from 2023-24 to 2024-25. The vast majority of VSs are female (96%, and 100% in the tri-borough). More VSs on CIFA need an interpreter (54%) than on compared programmes. This is **strong evidence** that **CIFA is effective in reaching its desired populations.**

Victim–survivors supported by CIFA described feeling **safer, more informed, and more confident in their decision-making.** They reported improved emotional safety, co-parenting dynamics, and respectful communication from those who had previously harmed them. This includes a **reduction in conflict in the family**, particularly where people who have caused harm had completed more sessions.

"He used to have a lot of anger issues but he is a changed man. I've noticed a lot of change in him and in me too, I feel much less on edge. It has been a positive impact on him speaking with {practitioner name} every week. You have been amazing, I can't thank you enough."

CIFA empowers victim-survivors to understand abuse dynamics, set boundaries and advocate for themselves, seek practical support, and prioritise their safety and their children's safety. Education and empowerment were central to the VS experience of CIFA support. VSs were supported to identify behaviours that were unacceptable, regardless of whether they had previously been excused or justified by cultural or religious norms. VSs gained a better understanding of their legal rights, systems of protection, and the psychological underpinnings of abuse. As a result, they became more independent and acted with increased agency. In the context of APFA, CIFA's work with non-partner family members - particularly mothers - also demonstrated impact in terms of improved understandings of DA and its impact.

Some VSs described the support as transformational, helping them not only to process past abuse but also to regain self-worth and agency: *"My DA support advisor helped me work through a wide range of problems…I felt much more able to cope thanks to my DA support advisor…CIFA helped me to realise the abuse wasn't my fault. This was the biggest issue I had."*

Effectiveness & outcomes: Service users

RISE's Outcome Star data demonstrates **significant improvements among CIFA service users (SUs) across all measures** between the first and second assessment. The measures assess behavioural change across the following dimensions: taking responsibility, thinking and attitudes, safe action and reaction, communication, parenting, and wellbeing. The majority of service users moved from being rated as 'stuck' (the lowest rating) in the first assessment towards being 'respectful' and 'learning new ways' (the highest ratings) in the second and third assessments.

Improvements amongst those who need an interpreter, a key population for CIFA, are particularly striking. In the first assessment, this group represents a higher percentage of SUs rated as 'stuck.' However, in the second assessment, we see a large positive change for this group, where the majority (66.7%) of those scoring 5 in 'being respectful' need an interpreter. This is strong evidence of the positive effect of CIFA. The evaluation also found a **significant improvement among racialised minorities**, in particular among 'Other Asian' and 'Other European' groups, further strengthening the evidence of effectiveness of CIFA. This progress among SUs who need the support of interpreters and racialised minorities reinforces the importance of CIFA's inclusive practice.

The data shows **strong engagement with CIFA among minority religious and racialised groups, who are often stigmatised or underserved by other DA interventions**. Qualitative data demonstrates that through the programme, SUs develop **greater self-awareness and insight into the impacts of their behaviour.** They are supported to explore the roots of their harmful behaviour and **learn emotional regulation and effective tools for behaviour change**. Change is evidenced in big and small ways: the cessation of abusive behaviour, the ability to de-escalate conflict, more presence with and empathy for partners and children, and helping around the house. SUs develop greater insight into their abusive behaviour - in terms of harm and legality - and its impacts. CIFA creates a non-judgmental, trauma-informed space for SUs to challenge deeply ingrained assumptions about masculinity, patriarchal gender norms and culture.

Qualitative data shows profound personal transformation in service users, leading to improved communication and behaviour in the home, a reduction in conflict and improved, more attentive parenting, sometimes leading directly to the de-escalation of Child Protection cases and reduction in safeguarding concerns. CIFA requires that SUs must be ready to accept that they have caused harm and willing to reflect on and explore their behaviour. CIFA practitioners make significant efforts to get SUs to a place of readiness, working closely with referrers. CIFA helps SUs develop a broader understanding of abuse, including emotional and psychological harm, and challenge inherited gender norms and cultural beliefs that shaped their behaviour.

System change & ripple effects

Through culturally informed practice, integrated delivery, and delivering accountability for harm through behaviour change and DA prevention, **CIFA is reshaping families and creating ripples of change in the systems and social norms that surround them**. These 'ripple effects' act at personal, relational, institutional, and cultural levels. CIFA is opening space for culturally nuanced conversations that **destigmatise help-seeking, challenge silence, and disrupt normalised violence**. CIFA is a valuable referral pathway for people who have caused harm, particularly men and fathers, bringing specialism and capacity to the system. Working with people who have caused harm is not only a form of DA prevention but **a necessary shift towards accountability and systemic change**. As one social worker said: *"Working with VSs alone doesn't drive change…we want men to take responsibility. We need them to be willing to change."*

CIFA's offer is defined by cultural competence, **meeting the needs of communities not otherwise served through existing provision**. CIFA's transparent, collaborative and culturally-informed way of working adds enormous value to the DA system, particularly in working with historically neglected groups. Partnership Meetings are valuable forums for stakeholders across the ten boroughs, fostering a sense of professional community and allow practitioners to learn from one another. There is strong evidence that practitioner stakeholders are more reflective, open to challenging biases (including their own), and adopting more nuanced, culturally competent approaches.

A powerful indicator of CIFA's ripple effects, **many SUs described actively encouraging others in their community to seek support**: *"His behaviour is very bad to his family, so I often tell him to get in touch with this programme because it's going to be really helpful."* Another SU reflected: *"People like me… keep things to themselves. This programme helps open them up. I'll definitely recommend it…so people know these things exist."* This willingness to promote CIFA indicates strong perceived value and suggests potential for community-led amplification of its principles and reach, particularly among men who may otherwise struggle to seek help.

Across interviews, case studies and reports, **improved parenting** emerged as **one of the most consistent ripple effects**. This has a potentially enormous impact on children, their safety and wellbeing. Moreover, children were a powerful motivator for positive change among many SUs.

Effectiveness & value for money

The CIFA evaluation's value for money analysis shows that **compared to 'No Intervention,' CIFA generates substantially more quality-adjusted life years** (QALYs), at 18.47 versus 17.9 for 'No Intervention.' It also demonstrates the highest net monetary benefit across comparative interventions. A return on investment analysis shows that **for every £1 invested in CIFA, an estimated £39.16 is saved**. CIFA is both more effective and less costly than 'No Intervention.' Overall, it not only reduces the number of domestic abuse incidents but also leads to substantial savings across health, criminal justice, and productivity losses.

Key learnings & recommendations:

CIFA fills a critical gap in holistic, cross-borough responses to domestic abuse, with its **dual focus on people who have caused harm and victim–survivors** and its **culturally-informed delivery model**. Demand for this approach goes beyond CIFA's current provision, particularly related to follow-up and long-term support. Both service users and victim-survivors expressed a desire for continued engagement to build on CIFA's offer. There are also racialised communities currently not well represented in the CIFA data, which is an area for improvement. **More resources would enable CIFA to build on ongoing, significant efforts in outreach and awareness-raising** of the programme in the boroughs and to **generate more referrals**. There is a strong strategy in place to increase referrals to FADA, APFA and Respectful Partnerships, including key partnerships, training and the creation of tailored outreach roles.

In a system built around safeguarding VSs, those who have caused harm (often men), tend to be neglected and excluded from the support of social services. CIFA is doing essential work to ensure that there is **a referral route for people who have caused harm**. This is a route to **accountability, non-repetition, meaningful support and prevention**. This essential and seismic shift within the system will require resource and upskilling, with training and support offered to social workers and other referrers. This training has begun to take place. Further investment would help to raise referral numbers and **ignite a culture of responding to DA by meaningfully addressing the behaviour of the person who has caused harm**.

The language of 'perpetrator' can be a barrier to engaging SUs. Men in particular can feel that their experiences and perspectives are not heard or believed and expect to experience automatic blame, especially where they have experienced discrimination in previous interactions with the system. By using language that does not automatically block participation in behaviour change, there is an increased possibility of accountability and personal and relational transformation.

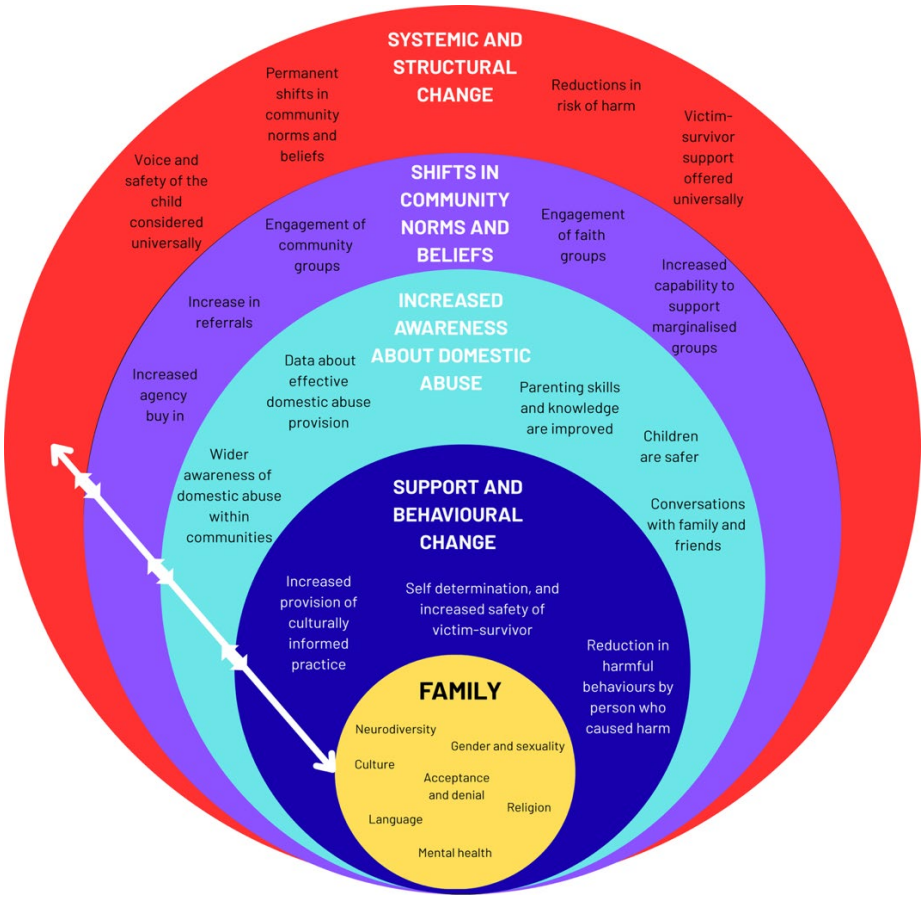
The established referral process is based on **excellent, consent-based practice that prioritises victim-survivor safety**. However, referral pathways and criteria must be clarified repeatedly and directly to referrers to ensure that referrers understand who is appropriate to refer to CIFA. This includes more training on the denial criteria and offering external motivation for SU participation.

Coordination with wider system stakeholders at assessment stage, and excellent feedback and recommendations, mean that **CIFA is valuable even before the person is accepted on the programme, or if they do not start at all**. Ongoing funding models need to allow for **flexibility in delivery** (e.g. session pacing, cultural adaptations, neurodiverse needs) and support the infrastructure required for safe, multi-agency collaboration. **Measures of 'success' must also include pre-intervention work** such as risk planning, feedback and collaboration with stakeholders.

The **APFA and Respectful Partnership programmes are both groundbreaking** and in their infancy as interventions and areas of concern within wider systems. Recorded statistics on both types of abuse are low because of data collection issues and social norms such as silencing and shame. Both will take time to embed, and for RISE and others to break down barriers in social norms and systems that are obstacles to help-seeking.

There is **much to be learned from CIFA's nuanced, intersectional cultural approach**. As well as training, sustained and regular feedback on the cultural approach in practice should be offered to individual referrers. **The adoption of this model across the wider DA system would be transformative.**

The **'ripple effects' of CIFA's work are crucial and potentially extraordinary**, given proper resources and space to develop.


SYSTEMIC AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE
Permanent shifts in community norms and beliefs
Reductions in risk of harm
Victim-survivor support offered universally
Voice and safety of the child considered universally
SHIFTS IN COMMUNITY NORMS AND BELIEFS
Engagement of community groups
Engagement of faith groups
Increased capability to support marginalised groups
Increase in referrals
INCREASED AWARENESS ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE
Data about effective domestic abuse provision
Parenting skills and knowledge are improved
Increased agency buy in
Children are safer
Wider awareness of domestic abuse within communities
SUPPORT AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE
Conversations with family and friends
Increased provision of culturally informed practice
Self determination, and increased safety of victim-survivor
Reduction in harmful behaviours by person who caused harm
FAMILY
Neurodiversity
Gender and sexuality
Culture
Acceptance and denial
Religion
Language
Mental health