



**Let's see domestic violence
from a child's point of view**

NSPCC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN BRIEFING 6

6. Domestic violence perpetrator programmes

The NSPCC is calling on the UK Government and devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland to see domestic violence from a child's point of view.

Every year, an estimated 750,000 children witness domestic violence¹. Although not every child is affected in the same way, this can cause serious emotional harm in both the short and long term. More worryingly, in families where there is domestic violence, children may also be physically and sexually abused. Researchers estimate that in 30-60% of domestic violence cases, the abusive partner is also abusing children in the family¹.

Children exposed to violence will react in different ways, and not every child who witnesses abuse will experience long-term difficulties. However **all children have the right to protection from violence and abuse and should have access to support.**

Recommendations

- **The Ministry of Justice and Home Office should adequately resource the provision of innovative perpetrator programmes which meet the standards promoted by the National Respect Network and build on findings from research with perpetrators.**

Introduction

The impact of domestic violence on men and women

Both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence, although women overwhelmingly form the majority of the most heavily abused group and are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence¹. In 2001-02, 47 per cent of female homicide victims in England and Wales were killed by their present or former partner, compared with 5 per cent of male victims². This equates to 2 women killed by their present or former partner each week³.

¹ Home Office Domestic Violence mini-site: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/domestic-violence/?version=2>

² Povey, D (2004) *Crime in England and Wales 2002/03: Supplementary Volume 1 – Homicide and Gun Crime* London: Home Office

³ *Ibid*

Analysis⁴ of the British Crime Survey in 2001/02 found an estimated 12.9 million incidents of domestic violence acts (defined as non-sexual threats or force) against women, and 2.5 million against men in England and Wales, in the year preceding interview. British Crime Survey data shows that less serious violence is broadly gender-neutral, but that the vast majority of serious and recurring violence is perpetrated by men towards women⁵. Research has also shown that 45 per cent of women and 26 per cent of men had experienced at least one incident of inter-personal violence in their lifetimes⁶.

Why are perpetrator programmes important?

In order to help protect current and potential future victims, work to tackle domestic violence needs to include a focus on addressing the violent and abusive behaviour of those who perpetrate it.

There are currently very few avenues of practical support - especially for perpetrators who recognise they have a problem and would like to change their behaviour, and for young people who perpetrate violence in their relationships to challenge their violent behaviour before it becomes entrenched (see NSPCC practice examples below).

Most perpetrators of domestic violence never, or only infrequently, come into contact with the police, let alone the courts and the probation service. The police come to know of less than a quarter of the worst cases of domestic violence⁷, and of those incidents reported, only about a quarter result in arrest⁸. Convictions are even lower. Very few perpetrators have thus had the opportunity to be referred to a perpetrator programme, as the majority of programmes are only available for perpetrators who have been convicted of a domestic violence offence⁹.

Additional resources must be made available for appropriate prevention and intervention strategies that directly target domestic violence perpetrators, whether or not they have been convicted of an offence. These aim to help them stop their offending and contribute to promoting the safety of children and young people living in homes where there is domestic violence.

Perpetrator programmes

Perpetrator programmes provide structured group work for perpetrators of domestic violence. They support perpetrators to address the attitudes and beliefs which underpin their abusive behaviour, challenge, stop and prevent further violence and hold perpetrators accountable for their violence.

A number of programmes have been introduced in the UK, with the aim of helping the perpetrator understand why they use violence, helping them to take responsibility for their violence and teaching them non-controlling behaviour strategies to prevent further abuse.

⁴ Walby S, Allen J (2004) *Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey* Home Office research study no. 276. London: Home Office

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004) *Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: findings from the British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research Study No. 276, Home Office: London.

⁸ Hester, M, Hanmer, J., Coulson, S., Morahan, M. & Razak, A (2003) *Domestic Violence: Making it Through the Criminal Justice System*, University of Sunderland & the Northern Rock Foundation; Hester, M. (2006) 'Making It Through the Criminal Justice System: Attrition and Domestic Violence', *Social Policy and Society*, 5 (1): 79-90.

⁹ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2008) *Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and "Honour"-Based Violence* London: House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

There are currently two types of programme: those run by the Probation Service, for convicted offenders, and community-based programmes run by the voluntary sector. Entry onto a Probation Service programme is possible only through referral from a court or the Probation Service, whereas the voluntary sector programmes take self-referrals, as well as referrals from statutory agencies such as social services, voluntary agencies such as Relate, and health agencies, such as GPs. The Government has supported Respect, an umbrella organisation for perpetrator programmes, to develop an accreditation system for community-based programmes in the UK.

Although there is anecdotal and project-based evidence to suggest that perpetrator programmes are effective in changing behaviour and reducing risk to the victim, there has been no systematic evaluation of their effectiveness in the UK. A joint University of Bristol and Home Office study in 2006 found that, of a sample of 356 domestic violence perpetrators in the North-East of England, half were involved in at least one more incident within the three-year follow up period; one in five of these re-offended against a different partner¹⁰. There is a need for more research into the long-term effectiveness of perpetrator programmes and in particular, programmes which produce the best outcomes for children and young people.

The study recommended that men who are violent towards women need to learn new, appropriate responses to destructive feelings. It concluded that, for some men, a criminal justice sanction, or the threat of one, provided the incentive for help-seeking, while others wanted the police to direct them to perpetrator programmes or provide information about available help because they themselves had concerns about their behaviour.

The Domestic Violence Intervention Project, a community-based programme running in three London boroughs, states that “outcome evaluations show that 70 per cent of men who complete the programme stop using physical violence”¹¹.

Profile of domestic violence perpetrators

Home Office research on the profile of domestic violence perpetrators found that “they were not a homogenous group in terms of characteristics and criminogenic need”. It concluded that there were two main types of perpetrator: the first group was “emotionally dependent”, with high levels of anger and low self esteem; the other was “antisocial/narcissistic” and hostile towards women. This latter group had the highest rate of alcohol dependence and previous convictions¹². However, this research was only carried out with convicted perpetrators, identified through the Probation Service.

Availability of perpetrator programmes

The current availability of perpetrator programmes falls short of the demand for them. A recent study by the National Audit Office¹³ of the supervision of community orders reported that Probation Services flagged domestic violence perpetrator programmes as a specific area in which they were unable to deliver. The study also identified lengthy waiting lists to enter programmes, and that data on order completions were

¹⁰ Hester, M., Westmarland, N., Gangoli, G., Wilkinson, M., O’Kelly, A., Kent and A. Diamond, *Domestic Violence Perpetrators: Identifying needs to inform early intervention*, April 2006

¹¹ *Information Re: DVIP*, Domestic Violence Intervention Project factsheet

¹² Domestic violence offenders: characteristics and offending related needs, Home Office RDS (2003), p 4

¹³ The supervision of community orders in England and Wales, National Audit Office, January 2008

not gathered, meaning that it was not possible to say whether perpetrators had fulfilled their sentences. A separate report by the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) also reported a lack of capacity to respond to perpetrators effectively.

Perpetrator programmes run by the community sector thus serve a large group of perpetrators who are not provided for by the statutory sector. However, community programmes suffer from some of the same problems as Probation Service programmes, in particular under-capacity, and a lack of sustainable funding.

Section 1 of the Children and Adoption Act 2006 came into force in autumn 2008 and enables courts to direct or order parents to attend activities to help them improve or maintain contact with their child or children. We welcome the Department for Children, Schools and Families and CAFCASS tender¹⁴ for perpetrator programmes which support/intervene with parents where successful completion of such a programme may assist the court in the consideration of future contact between a child and a perpetrator.

¹⁴ http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/news/2008/dcsf_dv_opportunities.aspx

Making Safe Scheme

The Making Safe Scheme is a multi-agency project involving the police, the probation service, housing, domestic violence services and the NSPCC. The scheme received the Butler Trust for Protecting Communities award in 2007. This is a national award that recognises work undertaken with offenders.

The scheme supports victims of domestic violence to remain safe in their homes whilst challenging the perpetrators' abusive behaviour and encouraging them to change it. The Making Safe scheme is an initiative developed by the Scarborough, Whitby, Filey and Ryedale Domestic Abuse Forum and aims to address the needs of victims and their children who experience and witness domestic violence and reduce the level of repeat offending across the Borough of Scarborough and District of Ryedale. All contributing agencies have the overarching aim of public protection.

The perpetrator must leave the family home before they can participate in the scheme. This helps to minimise disruption to a child's life and enables them to remain at their school. The perpetrator of the violence is required to attend the Integrated Domestic Abuse programme (IDAP) which challenges their behaviour and encourages them to change it.

Initial evaluation shows a 10.8% re-offending rate by domestic violent offenders compared with the national figure of 47%.

Role of NSPCC Making Safe Worker

The NSPCC Making Safe provision was established to assess the impact of domestic violence on children and young people, to ensure action is taken to safeguard their welfare and to minimise the incidence of domestic violence in the future.

The NSPCC practitioner works with children and young people who live with domestic violence to ensure that their priority during an assault on their parent /carer is to protect themselves. Providing children and young people with the skills and permission to call the police helps them to protect themselves better.

The work involves:

- Individual assessment of each child young person
- Identifying areas of risk
- Identify strategies for keeping safe
- Assessing the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse and ensuring risk issues.
- Agreeing with the child or young person an individual safety plan.

The NSPCC worker works with the child to:

- Discuss how the child or young person can help keep themselves safe.
- Identify safe places to go, a safe network, who can help and strategies for reducing any identified risk.
- Map areas of life and identify risks and strategies for reducing these
- Ensure young person knows when and how to use 999.
- Discuss having "safe" numbers in mobile phone
- Agree who this plan will be shared with.
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NSPCC PETITION

The NSPCC is calling for the UK Government and devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland to tackle domestic violence from a child's point of view.

We want to see:

- Adequate support services for children and families affected, so that when they are brave enough to speak out, they be safe and supported. (Current government funded provision is not enough)
- Training for professionals to identify children living with domestic violence so that whenever adults are working with domestic violence, they think about the children affected.
- Education about domestic violence in schools and other youth settings so all children learn that the violence is not their fault, and how to stay safe.

To support this campaign, please visit www.nspcc.org.uk/dvcampaign

HELPLINE NUMBERS

ChildLine: If you are a child or young person, for confidential advice and support from someone you can trust, call 0800 1111 or go to childline.org.uk

NSPCC helpline: If you have concerns about the safety of a child please call the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000. It is free, confidential, and our advisors are there to help 24 hours a day.

National domestic violence helpline: Domestic violence can happen to anyone. If you or someone you know is affected you can contact: 0808 2000 247 – this is the Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge.

Contact information

For further information about this campaign please contact :

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