

Case study: Domestic abuse perpetrator programmes

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REDUCING CRIME, ENABLING DESISTANCE AND SUPPORTING VICTIMS

BARNARDO'S: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTION PROJECT

CASE STUDIES FROM THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR

November 2013



Perpetrator programmes are an essential part of any initiative planned to tackle domestic abuse. They are designed to address the violent and abusive behaviour of the perpetrator: to stop the abuse at source. Many people think it is the most sustainable domestic abuse intervention. Barnardo's has been running their Domestic Violence Protection Project (DVPP) in Newcastle upon Tyne since 2006, with funding from Safe Newcastle, the community safety partnership. This is one of the few community based perpetrator programmes in the North East.

As this case study demonstrates, Barnardo's Domestic Violence Protection Project is highly effective at addressing abusive behaviour; stopping the perpetrators and their offending behaviour. There is a high demand for the service from both statutory services and self-referrals from male perpetrators of domestic violence. This demonstrates that there is a need, alongside the fact that Police reports of domestic violence incidents run in to the thousands. It is time for perpetrator programmes to become a widespread and easily accessible option in approaches to address domestic abuse in our local communities.

What is a perpetrator programme?

A perpetrator programme is accredited group work attended by the perpetrator of the abuse. The ultimate aims of the programme are to stop the abuse, protect the victim/survivor and improve the outcomes for the children. Barnardo's has expressed the objective of their programme as increasing the safety of women and children, through working with men.

Barnardo's says:

"Support services for victims and children are vital. Refuges, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and outreach services save and improve lives every day. And a robust criminal justice system has a crucial role to play in administering justice and protecting current and future victims. But unless communities engage directly with perpetrators, domestic violence will not stop."

This work enables the men to:

Take responsibility for their actions
Change their abusive and violent behaviour
Develop respectful non-abusive relationships.

Participation on the programme is voluntary and the men must be motivated to change and address their behaviour. This is necessary as the project worker says "you can't force or tell anyone to change, they must want to."

“

Thanks for listening and helping me to understand my situation. You actually are there to help not just to tell us what to do ... you're there to help and you've helped me immensely so I'm very grateful for that. Keep up the great work that you do." Man on the programme

The Domestic Violence Protection Project is Respect accredited. Respect (www.respect.uk.net) is the national governing body and standard for perpetrator programmes. This is important as it ensures quality; it means each programme must deliver 64 hours contact time with each man and must cover specific (see right) this also includes providing a womens service which offers a minimum of six support sessions.

It is important to note that Barnardo's DVPP acknowledges and recognises that domestic abuse is an issue for male victims including those in LGBT relationships. However, the DVPP programme is specifically targeted at male perpetrators and female victim/survivors.

Who refers into the project?

Almost half of the referrals into the DVPP come from children's services including Children's Social Care, Family Intervention Programmes, the courts and CAFCASS (men who have made an application to court for contact with their children). Referrals also come from Police, Probation or the local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (20 percent) and from self referrals - people living in the community who recognise that they need help themselves (these make up around 30 percent of referrals).

The approach

Once a referral has been received, the project assesses whether or not a man is suitable for the programme using a motivational questionnaire. To meet the acceptance criteria for the programme he will need to show that he takes responsibility for his behaviour and is motivated to change. It is not sufficient to be attending because someone has told them to or 'to get my kids back', as some say.

Once they are deemed suitable, the next step is a detailed assessment, which takes place over three sessions, each lasting for two hours. At this stage, the project worker and the man go over different types of abuse, the impacts of

the abuse and discuss accountability for that abuse. After the assessment has been completed, the man then joins a group, which runs as a rolling programme with intakes at regular intervals. There is a maximum of 10 spaces available at any one time. The group sessions initially run for four hours each week, for 12 weeks. The sessions start with each man doing a 'check in' at the start of the group - talking about the type of abuse they were responsible for and their behaviour that week; and then a 'check out' at the end of the group - saying one thing they admire about their partner and something they like about themselves.

Each session covers a specific topic, including:

- Signals and time outs
- Violence power and control
- Violence log
- Denial of responsibility and minimisation
- Effects of abuse
- Sexual violence
- Sexual abuse
- Threats and intimidation
- Emotional abuse
- Accountability
- Parenting and the effects of abuse on children
- Gender and abusing male privilege
- Woman's anger
- Jealousy and isolation
- Self talk and winding up/winding down
- Letting go
- Negotiation
- Keeping at it

After the first 12 weeks, each man undertakes a mid term assessment, which is similar in content to the first. Here, they are looking for a reduction in the abusive behaviour and a change in the man's understanding and awareness. Provided there is no ongoing abuse, the man will then continue with another 12 weeks of two hours a week every fortnight, continuing with the areas listed above. This period also ends with an assessment with the same objectives as the previous.

During these six months, Barnardo's also provides support to the men whenever they request it, either on the telephone or face to face. They estimate that this can add up to over 100 hours of support in total (including the group time).

“

It really made a difference ... helping so much to help me understand what had been happening to me and helping me to be stronger." Woman receiving support from the women's element to the programme

Case study: Mike*

Mike was referred to the DVPP by Children's Social Care. They had become involved with his family, consisting of Mike, Joanne and three children, following notification from the Police about incidents of domestic violence.

At the assessment, Mike told the worker that he had been physically violent to Joanne, saying he had punched her, pulled her hair, caused her to become unconscious due to his violence and strangled her. He also said he knew he had a problem and was ready and willing to change. His own history was one of family violence and abuse and he had witnessed his own father assault his mother.

Mike completed the programme and has made really good progress since starting the group work. He has been able to explore what constitutes as abuse and identify with most of the subject matter. At one point Mike said that he felt very down while doing the group work. When asked about this, Mike said that he was "starting to realise that he was not the Man he had thought he was". Mike went on to say that "always thought that I was doing what was right for my family but now I can see that I was acting out of anger. I suppose I let anger rule my life and my family's life".

Joanne also received support from the women's service, where, at assessment, she disclosed that she had been a victim of domestic violence in another of her relationships. She received support around self confidence and self esteem, safety planning and communication. At the mid assessment, Joanne said that she and Mike do argue at times but this has never resulted in violence since starting the programme and that he now uses 'time outs' which has improved things. With regard to Mike's attendance on the programme Joanne reported that he is more patient now and careful about what he says to her. There have been no incidents between Mike and Joanne since.

*Not his real name.

The women's service

Barnardo's Domestic Violence Protection Project also provides support for partners and ex-partners of men on the programme. This is also a voluntary service and women are able to choose the level of support they want. This can include:

- Sharing information with the woman about the referral and assessment process
- An option to participate in the man's assessment process and share information regarding the historic/current abuse
- Risk assessment and safety planning
- Weekly updates regarding the man's attendance on the programme and the topics covered
- Ongoing emotional and practical support including how to support their children
- Support around child contact issues and the court process.

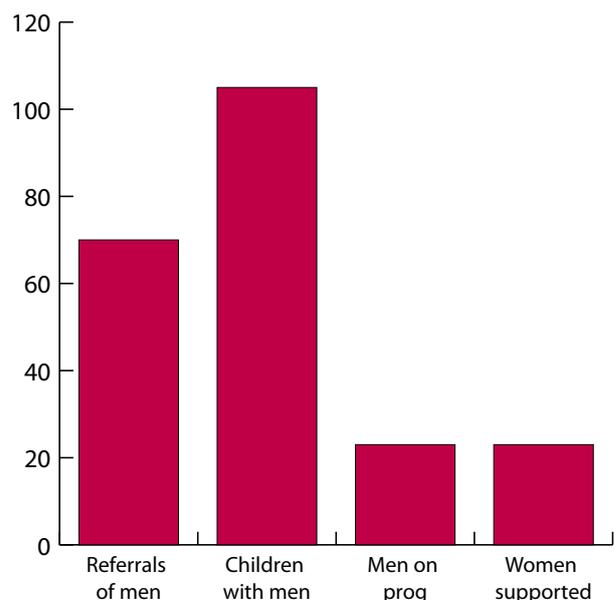
Unlike other domestic violence support services available

in the community, the work specifically focuses on supporting women around the man's attendance on the programme and the impact that this may have on women and their children. This is an important part of the intervention and introduces an inevitable level of honesty and transparency to the work. The women's service works in conjunction with the men's service to continually assess risk and to evaluate men's progress on the programme.

Outputs

The project has received referrals of 214 men in the three years between 2010/11 and 2012/13; an average of 70 each year. As space is limited because of capacity and because others are unsuitable (i.e. not ready to change and be accountable), they accept an average of 24 men each year onto the programme. The men who are referred to the programme have a high number of children (or are associated with them, i.e. their partners' children), averaging over a 100 children each year. The project has supported an equivalent number of the men's partners (an average of 24 a year).

Men and women on programme each year*



*2010/11 to 2012/13 averages.

Outcomes

The project closely monitors the impact that the programmes have on men, women and children, using a variety of measures including the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. The outcome measures have shown that, for the men on the programme:

- 100 percent understood the impact of their behaviour
- 100 percent reduced their emotionally abusive behaviour
- 100 percent reported that their relationship had improved
- 100 percent reported not using physical violence at end of programme.

For the women on the programme:

- 100 percent reported that there was no physical violence at post assessment stage
- 100 percent reported improvements in their relationship
- 100 percent of felt safer.

(These figures are based on one full programme and its participants).

We can also see the impact that the Domestic Violence Protection Project has on children. For example, between 2012 and 2013, at the children's point of referral to the programme, 31 percent were looked after and 42 percent were subject to a child protection or child in need plan. Once they had been through the programme, only 11 percent were looked after: a total of 20 percent had been reunited with their families; and two thirds had no Children's Social Care involvement.

“

People have said I'm a changed man, I think differently about myself and how others see me ... the programme has changed my life". Man on the programme

the programme

Barnardo's also recorded a very high compliance rate. Once the men had been judged suitable for the programme and had completed the assessments, most of them stayed the course, despite its voluntary nature.

Conclusion

The availability of any work which addresses abusive behaviour is very limited, to the extent that if you are a perpetrator and you recognise the need for help, it is difficult to get any. The skill set needed to run perpetrator programmes is also very specialised and there are not many people in the North East who are Respect trained or programmes that are Respect accredited. We need more trainers and more programmes.

There is a need for more programmes and there needs to be a recognition that people can change. As one Barnardo's project worker said "people must realise that people can change and there has to be support available to allow that to happen". Perpetrator programmes mean that men are held accountable for the abuse and, as Barnardo's say "until you hold men accountable then nothing will change".

It is also important to recognise that the support for male perpetrators is balanced with support for women who are victims.



FURTHER INFORMATION

These case studies are part of a series which showcases the work of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in the North East in reducing crime, promoting community safety and reducing reoffending. Clinks supports, represents and campaigns for the VCSE sector working with offenders. Clinks aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders. Clinks' work in the North East is funded by the Northern Rock Foundation and is delivered in partnership with Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE). The Local Development Officer for the North East, Natalie Maidment, works with the VCSE sector, supporting their work to reduce crime, promote community safety, and reduce reoffending. For further information, please contact Natalie at natalie.maidment@clinks.org

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