

What should every good local authority area have in place to reduce incidents of domestic abuse?

Extract from the presentation to the Inquiry Panel from Sara Kirkpatrick, Respect's Research & Services Development Manager, supported by inserts from the Respect response to the Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse Bill consultation.

To reduce incidents of domestic abuse every local authority should have in place:

- **Coordinated multi-agency approach which includes statutory and specialist services**

One of the key Respect principles for any response to perpetrators is 'the system counts - domestic violence and abuse cannot be addressed by one agency alone and work with perpetrators should never take place in isolation.' Every area should have local multiagency arrangements such as the MATAC approach currently being trialled in Northumbria, bringing together all agencies – public sector, voluntary sector and private sector – who have contact with perpetrators to agree an action plan to address their behaviour and its impacts, and to reduce future harm.

- **Early intervention**

Every community should aim to address domestic abuse at the earliest possible opportunity when there is most chance of preventing abuse from escalating. This involves all agencies having processes for the identification of perpetrators, such as a 'recognise, respond, refer' model, and referral routes to a specialist organisation which can provide assessment and intervention. Change That Lasts is developing an innovative early intervention perpetrator response for pilot in Lincolnshire and Sussex.

- **Assessment of harm, capacity to change and need for perpetrators**

The diverse cohort of perpetrators described above don't all require the same response. Communities, commissioners and services will want to target the right intervention to the right individual, to ensure the most successful outcome in each case and guarantee that public money is spent wisely. An intervention for someone who is just beginning to be abusive, who recognises they have crossed a line and wants to stop before it gets worse, is very different to an intervention for a perpetrator who has been abusive for decades, is in denial about their behaviour and has no motivation to change.

Assessment and triage processes are needed to ensure that each perpetrator gets the right response based on these 3 key factors:

1. Harm

2. Capacity to change

To what degree is the perpetrator ready, willing and able to change versus being entrenched in their behaviour, in denial and resistant to change?

The capacity to change is made up of a combination of factors, including:

- motivation or willingness to change

- ability to learn and try new ways of relating to others
- resilience
- stake in conformity
- the social supports they have for change

Behaviour change programmes will need to be responsive to these factors and tailor both the intervention and its delivery to address them.

3. Need

Do the perpetrators have additional / complex need(s) which act as barriers to engagement with behaviour change programmes and contribute to the likelihood of a continuation of abusive behaviour? Perpetrators with poor mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), homelessness and/or unemployment, debt may require additional support to stabilise their lives.

A range of assessment tools exist mainly covering risk and harm, including:

- Domestic Assault Stalking and Honour Based Violence' (DASH) Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC), developed by SafeLives to identify the risks victims face, used across England and Wales
- 'Domestic Violence Risk Identification Matrix' developed by Barnardos to identify the risk to children of male to female domestic violence, used in the UK within Barnardos settings

Respect is developing a comprehensive tool encompassing the 3 criteria of harm, capacity to change and need, to aid both specialist and frontline services.

- **A range of responses (Sustainable interventions based on evaluated models)**

Following assessment of harm, capacity to change and need, each local area needs a triage system to decide which response(s) are appropriate for each individual with access to a range of options including the criminal justice system, intensive case management, disruption activities, support for additional needs and behaviour change programmes.

- **Intensive case management**

Perpetrators causing high levels of harm, particularly those with additional or complex needs and/or those who are resistant to change require intensive case management, such as that provided by the Drive project currently being piloted in Sussex, Essex and South Wales and about to expand to London, West Mercia, West Midlands and to a further site in South Wales.

- **Robust civil and criminal justice responses**

Key to the management of perpetrators and protection of survivors is an effective criminal justice system. High quality evidence gathering to ensure a successful prosecution where crimes have been committed is essential, as is appropriate sentencing and robust management of offenders.

- **Behaviour change programmes**

Perpetrator behaviour change is the best long-term solution to domestic abuse. For those ready, willing and able to change there is clear evidence from the Mirabal research findings that Respect accredited programmes have a positive effect, particularly in reducing physical and sexual violence.

These programmes, sometimes called Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPPs), are delivered in a groupwork setting or on a one-to-one basis, according to need.

Every local community should have such a programme as a resource for agencies to refer to and for perpetrators themselves to get help directly.

- **Principles and standards accreditation / external quality assurance of services**

A community's approach to domestic abuse perpetrators should be underpinned by the principles set out in the Respect Standard.

- **Needs led Trauma informed approach for victims and survivors**

Sara Kirkpatrick's response is focused on perpetrator services. The presentation delivered at the 31 January 2019 meeting also referenced a number of initiatives that help to decrease incidents of intimate partner abuse. These included the following:

- Culture / system challenging the conducive context
- Talk about equality- ie it's a long standing problem because DVA is a symptom of VAWG
- Swift consistent justice response
- Reliable supportive victim survivor response for all responding agencies
- Whole community response
- Routine enquiry
- Awareness raising campaigns
- Leadership