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**Statement of Principles and
Minimum Standards of Practice
for
Domestic Violence
Perpetrator Programmes and
Associated Women's Services**

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Introduction

Respect's work

Respect is the UK association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated women's services, with members from the voluntary, private and statutory sectors as well as individuals from England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Respect also has members based in the Republic of Ireland.

The work of Respect and our members reflects the fact that the vast majority of domestic violence is perpetrated by men against women.

Purpose of this document

The "Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice" refers to men's perpetrator programmes and associated women's services only and is primarily concerned with intimate partner violence. However, many of the principles and standards will also be of relevance to those working with same-sex domestic violence, female perpetrators and family violence.

The document aims to:

- Provide guidelines for respectful, ethical and accountable domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated women's services which prioritise increasing the safety of women and children¹
 - Provide a framework for such interventions as part of a co-ordinated community response
 - Enhance public awareness of domestic violence issues and reinforce the concept that violent behaviour is unacceptable
 - Promote best practice amongst service providers
 - Assist agencies and individuals (including funders, referrers and clients) to identify effective interventions and services
 - Contribute to and influence the wider debate about the causes of domestic violence, and to continually review practice in the light of new understanding
 - Enhance public confidence in domestic violence intervention services
 - Influence social policy in relation to domestic violence
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Definition of domestic violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or ex-partner, that includes but is not limited to physical assaults, sexual assaults, emotional abuse, isolation, economic abuse, threats, stalking and intimidation. Although only some forms of domestic violence are illegal and attract criminal sanctions (physical and sexual assault, stalking, threats to kill), other forms of violence can also have very serious and lasting effects on a person's sense of self, wellbeing and autonomy.

Violent and abusive behaviour is used in an effort to control the partner based on the perpetrator's sense of entitlement. This behaviour may be directed at others – especially children – with the intention of controlling the intimate partner.

Social and institutional power structures support some groups using abuse and violence in order to control other groups in our society e.g. institutional racism, heterosexism, parents' violence to children. The unequal power relations between men and women account for the fact that the vast

¹ If you have any concerns that a Respect member is not working in accordance with the 'Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice' (2004) please contact the Respect office for details of our Complaints Procedure regarding members. Respect reserves the right to refuse or cancel the membership of any member where there is evidence that they do not support the aims and objectives of Respect.

majority of domestic violence is perpetrated by men against women rather than vice versa².

Domestic violence in same-sex relationships and from women to men

In a minority of cases, domestic violence does not reflect conventional power relations, for example where there is domestic violence in same sex relationships or where women are violent to male partners. Such cases are neither the same as - nor symmetrically opposite to - men's violence to women³.

There are currently no perpetrator programmes and associated services being run in the UK for same-sex domestic violence or for female perpetrators / men experiencing domestic violence. Further research needs to be undertaken to support the development of specialist services which can provide appropriate, specific and separate interventions for these groups.

Respect intends developing appropriate principles and minimum standards for same-sex perpetrator programmes / associated women's services and for work with female perpetrators / associated support services for men.

Measuring effectiveness

Success of interventions with perpetrators should be measured by whether the safety and well-being of women and children is increased. This is a complex issue. As well as having the potential to increase safety, perpetrator programmes also have the potential to raise the risk.

Ways that perpetrator programmes can raise the risk

1. Perpetrator programmes offer hope to women that their violent / abusive partner can change.

In many cases this is unrealistic. One of the main reasons women give for staying in a violent relationship is that their partner has promised to change. When men attend a perpetrator programme (or any other form of intervention such as counselling or anger management) many women will understandably put their trust in the professionals to protect them and their children.

Women also tend to be overly optimistic about programme outcomes. Gondolf's multi-site evaluation found that 95% of women expected their partners to complete the programme – yet less than two thirds completed 3 months of programme sessions.⁴

The very fact that he is attending a perpetrator programme might lead a woman to have unrealistic expectations and make unsafe choices regarding her relationship that she wouldn't otherwise have made.

2. Perpetrators can abuse their attendance on a perpetrator programme to further manipulate or control their partners and others

Some of the ways they might do this include:

- Promising they will attend as a bargaining chip / way of saving the relationship
- Lying about their attendance
- Lying about programme content / what happened in the group
- Telling her that they do not need to attend because the workers say he's 'cured'
- Telling her that everyone thinks it's she who has the problem and she should stop nagging him / winding him up etc

² 81% of police domestic violence call outs are women attacked by men – Stanko, 2000

³ See separate Respect position statements for more information

⁴ Gondolf 2002

- Using the material on the programme to criticise and control her behaviour
- Using jargon / concepts learnt on the programme to manipulate her
- Learning to “talk the talk” without “walking the walk”
- Using attendance on the programme as a way to influence other professionals’ decisions (Social Workers, CAFCASS officers, Courts)

Ways that perpetrator programmes can increase safety:

1. Changing his behaviour

Perpetrator programmes cannot ‘cure’ violent men or guarantee dramatic transformation, as behavioural change is a long and complex process. However, research⁵ demonstrates that, of perpetrators who complete a domestic violence programme:

- some will stop their physical violence and significantly reduce their abusive and controlling behaviour
- the majority will stop their violence but maintain some level of abusive and controlling behaviour
- some will continue their violence

Although not all men will end their abuse, domestic violence perpetrator programmes can **reduce dangerousness**.

2. Monitoring men and holding them to account

When men regularly attend a perpetrator programme, their behaviour is under scrutiny. As well as following a curriculum of material designed to help them stop their violence, programmes require men to disclose any violence or abuse they have used during the last week.

To assess risk, perpetrator workers can use:

- men’s disclosure and / or changes in how they behave in the group
- men’s use of blame, minimisation and denial
- information from the man’s (ex)partner (which should be treated with care to ensure that her safety and / or confidentiality are not compromised)
- information from other professionals, such as the police or social workers

The fact that perpetrator workers are focussing on men and holding them to account on a week to week basis for their behaviour towards their (ex)partner and children, can mean that **risk factors are picked up and acted upon more quickly**.

3. Supporting women partners and ex-partners

Perpetrator programmes are worth doing because they are successful in changing the behaviour of some men. However, they can also raise the risk as outlined above.

Therefore, perpetrator programmes should **never** be run in isolation. They should always be integrated with specialist, pro-active, associated women’s services.

These services can help off-set some of the risks mentioned above by helping women to:

- develop realistic expectations about their partners’ behaviour change
- monitor the degree to which their partner is changing and make decisions accordingly
- assess risk and safety plan

The perpetrator programme and associated women’s services should be integrated and work hand in hand, sharing information in order to increase safety (see 2.6).

High quality perpetrator programmes and associated women’s services that adhere to Respect’s standards and principles have a significant part to play in increasing the safety of women and children experiencing domestic violence.

⁵ Dobash & Dobash 1996; Burton et al 1998; Gondolf 2002

Glossary

There is much debate in the domestic violence field about the use of language. Without repeating these debates here, we have chosen the following terminology which is used throughout this document:

Associated women's service

A service for women whose partners or ex-partners have been referred to / are attending a domestic violence perpetrator programme

Domestic violence

Includes violent and abusive behaviour - see definition p6

Men

Of course not all men are domestic violence perpetrators – many men choose to treat women with respect and equality. For shorthand, in this document 'men' refers to men who are domestic violence perpetrators.

Perpetrator programme

A structured groupwork programme for domestic violence perpetrators

Pro-active contact

Unlike many women's services which are reactive – i.e. they provide services to women who have contacted them – associated women's services are given the contact details of women whose (ex)partners have been referred to the perpetrator programme. These women are known to be experiencing / have experienced domestic violence. Instead of waiting for the woman to call, the associated women's service will pro-actively contact her (see section 4.6).

Projects

Integrated perpetrator programmes and associated women's services (not just perpetrator programmes)

Women

Refers to women experiencing domestic violence

Section 1

Principles and Philosophy for Working with Men's Violence to Partners and Ex-Partners

1.1 Domestic Violence is unacceptable and must be challenged

There are an estimated 525,000 incidents of domestic violence reported to the police in the UK every year⁶. A woman is killed every three days in England or Wales by a current or former partner as a result of domestic violence.⁷

Domestic violence is a violation of human rights which causes a wide range of physical and emotional effects on both those experiencing it directly – usually women – and those witnessing it – particularly children.

Women and children have a right to live their lives free from violence and abuse. Domestic violence in any form is never acceptable. Projects and individuals should ensure that they do not collude with, condone or remain silent about domestic violence. When they become aware of domestic violence occurring they should challenge it in ways that prioritise increasing women and children's safety.

1.2 Social context

All attitudinal and behavioural change work with men must be done with an awareness of the social context of men's violence to partners and ex-partners. Such violence is largely about the misuse of power and control in the context of male privilege. It is a direct consequence of the inequalities in relationships between men and women, rooted in the patriarchal traditions that encourage men to believe that they are entitled to power and control over their partners.

From this perspective, men's violence is defined as learned and intentional behaviour rather than the consequence of individual pathology, stress, substance use or a 'dysfunctional' relationship. Violence often involves an attempt by men to get what they see as rightfully theirs. A man using violence does so to impose his will regardless of the wishes of the other person. In the context of domestic violence this means using violence to control women and children.

Although many people have been working for change for some time now, our social history has largely been one of unchallenged male dominance in all spheres of public life, reinforced by and allowing male dominance in the family. Gender socialisation of girls and boys to accept and continue gender roles has further reinforced male dominance. In this social context until recent times men's violence to family members was largely hidden and private and surrounded by shame and secrecy and this is still often the case. Men's violence is often condoned and colluded with and denial about the nature and extent of it and its effects is widespread. People outside the family have been reluctant to intervene, and the response of the police and the legal system has often further disempowered women by failing to offer them the equal protection of the law.⁸

1.3 Men are responsible for their use of violence

The use of violence is a choice for which each man is responsible and for which he should be held accountable. Although men may have been socialised to believe in their right to control women and children, or may even have been trained to use violence, they can still choose to take responsibility for their behaviour and learn non-violent ways of relating.

Some men who seek assistance with stopping their use of violence have also experienced violence themselves and may use this as a justification for their own violence. At all times, workers

⁶ The 2001/02 British Crime Survey

⁷ Homicide Statistics 1998

⁸ Dobash & Dobash, 1979 p24; Dobash & Dobash 1992; Edelson & Tolman 1992 p18; Gondolf 2002 p3; Hague & Malos 1993; Haraway & O'Neil 1999; Paymar 2000 p232; Schechter 1982; Websdale & Chesney-Lind 1998 p79

need to keep separate the issues relating to a man's own experience of being violated and his responsibility for his own use of violence against others. Any excusing, condoning or minimising of this use of violence on the basis of his own pain and difficulties reinforces his use of violence rather than challenges it.

1.4 Men can change

Men can change their attitudes and behaviour and learn positive, equal and non-violent ways of relating⁹. Although men who use violence do so to assert and maintain power and control with damaging effects on others, they also report a range of negative effects for themselves. These include shame, guilt, hating themselves for what they do and frustration at not have the kinds of relationships with their partners and families they would like to have. Often they feel powerless themselves and use violence to try to increase their sense of power. Clearly, although it involves giving up the misuse of power and control and the privileges of dominance, men also have a lot to gain from learning to have positive, equal and non-violent relationships.

Workers can challenge men with the nature and consequences of their violence and the fact that they choose to use it. They can then invite men to take responsibility to stop using violence and learn non-violent ways of relating to others. Projects should embark on this work with an active commitment to wider social change aimed at ending oppression on the basis of gender.

1.5 Community response

Respect supports the ongoing work of many people working for change at all levels. This includes work to challenge and change gender socialisation, to provide services to support and empower women and children, to improve community awareness about domestic violence and to improve the response to domestic violence on the part of health and community support agencies, the police and legal systems. The long term prevention of domestic violence requires a clear and consistent message from all individuals and social agencies that domestic violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Men need to know that their use of violence will not be condoned by anyone and that everyone will respond to protect the rights of others to safety and autonomy. This includes responses from individuals and community agencies as well as the police and legal system. The legal remedies available to protect women and children must be used and enforced consistently.

⁹ Based on research carried out on perpetrator programmes, not on abusers who have never been detected since data would not be available for this group. Generally, research demonstrates that violent behaviour can be changed, particularly effectively through a perpetrator intervention programme. For example:

- Dobash et al (2000) carried out research into comparing the efficacy of perpetrator programmes with other criminal justice sanctions (such as prison) in Scotland. They found that:
 - At 3 months after the intervention, 30% of men who were placed on a perpetrator programme had been violent while 62% of men who had other criminal justice sanctions had been violent
 - At one year after the intervention, 33% of men who were placed on a perpetrator programme had been violent while 70% of men who had other criminal justice sanctions had been violent
- Gondolf (1997) carried out research on men who took part in a perpetrator programme (including those who dropped out), drawing data from women's reports, men's reports and police records. He found that:
 - At 15 months after programme, 40% had used violence
 - At two and a half years, 45% had used violence
 - At four years, 48% had used violence
- Gondolf (2002) conducted a multi-site evaluation and found that:
 - At the 48 month follow-up 90% of the men had not been physically violent towards their partner in the last year, and 75% had not been in the previous two and a half years
 - About 20% of the men continued to use violence repeatedly – this has been likened to the numbers in drug treatment who continue to use regularly

Women and children need to know that they will be taken seriously and that their rights will be enforced. Women need to have other options made accessible to them and to be supported in making safe changes in their lives.

Agencies should share a common focus which holds men accountable for their violence and expects them to address their behaviour. Without this, women and children may be blamed for the violence, further disempowered and lose access to options other than continuing to live with violence.

1.6 Accessibility of services

Projects should have an active commitment to meeting the needs of the communities they serve. Projects and practitioners must demonstrate a commitment to anti-oppressive practice and respecting difference.

All women and men should have access to group programmes and other services which are helpful for resolving their experiences of domestic violence. This includes people with specific needs, such as those experiencing geographical isolation, those who speak languages other than English, those with disabilities and those with substance use difficulties.

1.7 Promoting positive relationships

In addition to working to prevent the negative and destructive behaviour and beliefs associated with men who perpetrate domestic violence, all work – both with perpetrators and those experiencing domestic violence – must actively promote an alternative, positive and constructive model of human relationships, based on the following principles:

- Respect for the autonomy and self-determination of all individuals
 - Belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings
 - Willingness to negotiate and compromise
 - Acceptance of power as a shared and negotiated commodity
 - Determination to seek and apply non-violent ways of relating
 - Refusal to accept, tolerate or practice beliefs or behaviours which breach the above principles
-

1.8 Applying the philosophy to our lives

At all times practitioners working in the field of domestic violence should attempt to apply these principles to their own lives. Both in and outside of work, practitioners should, through their own behaviour and attitudes, demonstrate a holistic application of the philosophy.

Section 2

Minimum Standards of Practice

Organisational Issues

2.1 Focus

The core focus of interventions with domestic violence perpetrators is always the safety of women and children. Perpetrator programmes should never be run in isolation. They should always be integrated with specialist, pro-active, associated women's services.

Research in the USA¹⁰ has found that 'program outcomes appear to be substantially influenced by how well the police, the courts, probation, women's services and other community services all work together'. Therefore it is essential that Projects are actively involved in local fora which promote co-ordinated community responses to domestic violence, such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), Domestic Violence Fora and any specific local initiatives.

Those seeking to establish work with perpetrators of domestic violence should engage in dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders in their area, in particular women's refuges, the police, probation service and the domestic violence forum co-ordinator.

2.2 Services for children and young people

A growing body of research has demonstrated the lasting effects on children of witnessing domestic violence and also the increased risk that they will suffer direct abuse themselves.

Currently very few perpetrator projects in the UK have associated services for children and young people. It is essential that projects begin to meet the needs of the children of the men and women they work with. Ideally projects should develop associated services for children and young people. In the meantime, they should ensure that they have links with, and are able to make safe and appropriate referrals to, local children's services.

Respect intends developing appropriate principles and minimum standards for associated services for children and young people.

2.3 Perpetrator programmes and the Criminal Justice System

Domestic violence includes criminal behaviour that is a legitimate concern of the Criminal Justice System. Projects must ensure that men do not use their attendance on a perpetrator programme to avoid the legal consequences of their behaviour. Criminal justice agencies should not use perpetrator programmes as a diversion from traditional responses of arrest, charge, prosecution and conviction. Projects should proactively engage with criminal justice agencies to promote effective sanctions against perpetrators.

2.4 Appropriate responses

Couples work, anger management, mediation and restorative justice are **not** appropriate responses to men's abusive behaviour to women¹¹.

Couples work may be considered:

- subsequent to a man completing a perpetrator programme
- **AND** after a suitable period of non-violence
- **AND** only where the woman is and feels able to freely enter couples work without fear for her safety or other negative consequences

¹⁰ Gondolf (2002) p 23

¹¹ See separate Respect position statements for more information

2.5 Information sharing between the perpetrator programme and women's service

In order to ensure women and children's safety, it is essential that perpetrator service workers and women's service workers establish protocols for responsible information sharing. This may require a significant shift from traditional working practices. Protocols should enable workers to share concerns about safety and to develop strategies to manage risk.

Perpetrator programmes should provide their associated women's services with the contact details of all relevant women partners and ex-partners (see section 4.2) so that they can make pro-active contact with each woman (see section 4.6).

2.6 Information sharing with external agencies

Projects have an obligation to act within the current legal framework with regard to information sharing and data protection. If the right information is shared responsibly it can significantly enhance women and children's safety. However there is also the potential for harm if that information is not managed appropriately.

The main principles upon which information is shared should be:

- increasing the safety of women and children
- enhancing good practice

Protocols should be developed for sharing information with outside agencies which maximise women's confidentiality and safety. (see sections 3.3 and 4.3 on confidentiality).

2.7 Child protection and contact

Children living in families where there is domestic violence are at greater risk of suffering direct abuse themselves. Additionally, perpetrators often use children to maintain power and control over their (ex)partners.

Projects have a duty to:

- have an active child protection policy¹² and procedures which ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children are prioritised in all aspects of their work.
 - ensure that they record the details of any children who might be at risk from each perpetrator they work with – including children living with the man and children with whom he has contact
 - screen referrals for Social Services and Family Court / Children's Hearing System involvement
 - regularly assess risk in order to recognise when domestic violence has become a direct threat to children and when action may need to be taken to ensure their safety
 - have active links with local Social Services departments
-

2.8 Diversity

Projects should have an active commitment to meeting the needs of the communities they serve. Projects should take steps to ensure that they have local knowledge of the demographic profile of their community.

¹² For more information refer to Respect's Child Protection Policy.

Every project should ring-fence a proportion of their resources to ensure they can work towards meeting the diverse needs of their local community. Funding applications should explicitly cost-in elements required to meet these diverse needs – for example providing interpreters, outreach with local community groups and information in appropriate formats (eg Braille, community languages).

2.9 Resourcing of services

Projects should take an integrated approach to funding their services to ensure that both the perpetrator programme and the associated women's service receive sufficient, equitable resources to enable them to achieve the minimum standards described in this document. When fundraising, it is useful to include a 'unit cost' which covers both the work with the man and the woman – and where appropriate the child(ren).

Where a perpetrator programme contracts a separate women's group to provide its associated women's service, it is the perpetrator programme's responsibility to ensure that sufficient, equitable funding is available.

There should be parity of grade and pay between perpetrator workers and women's support workers.

At a local level, perpetrator work should not take funding away from existing services to women and children.

Projects should actively promote and support the development of services by other agencies – particularly women's groups such as Women's Aid and Refuge – which enhance women and children's safety by providing safe housing, advocacy, counselling and community support.

2.10 Recruitment

In recruiting staff for both perpetrator programmes and women's services, projects should seek to appoint staff who can demonstrate commitment to the principles listed in section 1, in particular nos. 7&8.

Staff should be able to:

- give clear reasons about their motivation to work in this area
- demonstrate self-awareness, in terms of learning and growing from personal and professional experiences
- demonstrate a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development
- demonstrate an understanding of the major theoretical perspectives on domestic violence and how they inform their practice

Projects should ensure that staff do this work by choice.

Projects should ensure that all staff are Criminal Records Bureau / Disclosure Scotland checked.

Projects should carefully consider the implications of including ex-perpetrators on the staff team. At interview all staff should be asked about their own experience of / perpetration of domestic violence and how that might positively or negatively impact on their work.

If staff have ever used violence or abuse in their intimate relationships they should be prepared to give a full, honest account of this and to demonstrate the steps they have taken to change their behaviour. Before they work with clients they must have been violence-free for a significant period of time (likely to be at least 5 years) and be able to demonstrate how their behaviour is now non-abusive and non-controlling.

2.11 Competencies

Quality programme delivery is a significant factor in successful intervention outcomes.

Staff performance should be measured against set competencies consistent with an equal opportunities approach. Some suggested competencies are:

Knowledge of domestic abuse

- Understanding of the effects of domestic abuse on victims/survivors & children
- Understanding of the definitions of domestic violence & abuse
- Awareness of the cultural, societal and gender related aspects of domestic abuse
- Understanding of the tactics used by abusers to maintain dominance & oppression
- Understanding the dynamics of power & control in abusive relationships

Assessment and interview skills

- Ability to conduct a suitability assessment on perpetrators
- Ability to use relevant risk assessment procedures
- Knowledge of risk & dangerousness indicators
- Ability to place women's safety at the centre of any assessment and management of risk
- Skills in interview techniques
- Ability to screen for additional needs, e.g. substance misuse or mental health concerns

Programme delivery

- Effective participation in the preparation and de-brief of group-work sessions
- Understanding the need to maintain programme integrity
- Knowledge of and skills in dealing with group dynamics
- Ability to address responsiveness issues
- Ability to develop appropriate co-working relationships
- Ability to be receptive to feedback on delivery style

Child protection knowledge

- Knowledge of how children may be used by abusers as part of their abuse
- Knowledge of child protection policies and procedures
- Skills to deal sensitively with the issues posed by abusers who are also parents
- Knowledge of what constitutes respectful parenting

Support skills

- Maintaining case records and completing paperwork in a timely fashion
- Knowledge and appropriate use of IT
- Ensuring that any interventions delivered to perpetrators are informed by the views of victims/survivors
- Understanding the limited confidentiality and worker responsibilities within the agency's confidentiality policy
- Ability to liaise with appropriate agencies in order to ensure women's safety
- Aptitude to identify and respond to own learning needs

This competency based approach should include effective supervision, ongoing training and regular appraisal of staff, and provide support for staff to help them develop necessary proficiency.

However, it needs to be recognised that not all staff can reach the level of competency required for this work. Therefore policies and procedures should be in place for redeployment of staff that are unable to demonstrate effective practice.

2.12 Training

It is the responsibility of projects and practitioners to ensure that they have sound training relevant for their methods of working. Training should be undertaken by agencies which adhere to Respect's Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice.

Basic Training

For all workers this must include training in the following areas:

- Domestic violence awareness
- Women's perspectives / experiences
- Children's experiences
- The law and domestic violence
- Child protection issues
- Diversity issues
- Substance use
- Integrated working
- Understanding adult learning
- Understanding the process of change
- Risk assessment and risk management

Additional training for perpetrator workers

- A minimum of five days training on programme delivery and related issues
- Group-work skills
- Programme suitability assessment, including Motivational Interviewing techniques

Additional training for women's support workers

- A minimum of five days training in service delivery and related issues
- Group-work skills (if women's groups are run)
- Awareness & understanding of how the perpetrator programme works

All workers running groups should have the opportunity to be mentored by an experienced co-worker for at least 6 months or 26 sessions before working without an experienced co-worker.

2.13 Supervision

There are specific stresses in this work. Projects must build in provision for appropriate supervision / consultancy aside from line management with appropriate external¹³ supervisors, who are accountable to the project and to the principles of the programme. One and a half hour's supervision a month is a minimum.¹⁴ Inexperienced staff will require more than this.

The needs of supervisees can be met in a variety of ways and should cover the following areas:

- Exploring the personal impact of the work
- Looking at how workers' own issues impact on their practice
- Exploring the relationship between co-workers
- Ensuring worker accountability and adherence to minimum standards and principles
- Critically examining interactions with clients and exploring group process and dynamics
- Dealing effectively with diversity and the consequent power issues
- Ensuring workers further develop skills and identify training needs
- Delivery style

¹³ External to that project - not necessarily to the organisation as a whole

¹⁴ British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy guidelines

Supervisors have the responsibility to ensure that workers' practice is appropriate and consistent with the aims of the work.

2.14 Preparation, planning and debriefing for group workers

Projects must ensure that group workers have adequate time for preparation, planning and debriefing with their co-workers. This is an integral part of the work. Such time is separate from form-filling, record-keeping and tidying up. Minimum requirements are:

- ½ hour planning time immediately before a group
- ½ hour de-brief time immediately after a group

Less experienced workers are likely to need more time.

2.15 Worker-client relationships

Workers and projects should maintain clear professional relationships with clients. Workers should not engage in intimate, sexual, social, or economic relationships with clients during the time they are in a professional relationship and for a minimum of two years afterwards.¹⁵

Workers should not be expected to work with clients known to them personally and vice versa.

2.16 Monitoring and evaluation

Internal and / or external evaluation is essential and integral to this work. Projects should have effective procedures for monitoring the quality of their services which prioritise measuring ways in which the safety and quality of life of women and children are increased.

Projects should work in a transparent way and be open to the notion of external audit.

¹⁵ British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy guidelines

Section 3

Minimum Standards of Practice

Perpetrator Programmes

3.1 Aims of work with men

The primary aim in working with perpetrators of domestic violence is to increase the safety of women and children. Every intervention and decision should be made with this in mind.

Secondary aims are to:

- Hold men accountable for their violence towards women
 - Promote respectful and egalitarian relationships
 - Work with others to improve the community's response to domestic violence
-

3.2 Focus of perpetrator work

All perpetrator work should contain the following as core elements:

- An understanding of what constitutes violent behaviour
- That the perpetrator is 100% responsible for his behaviour
- That violent behaviour is a choice
- That violent behaviour is functional and intentional

Workers should challenge men's:

- use of physical violence
- use of sexual violence, sexual abuse and coercion
- expectations of power and control over (ex)partners
- denial, minimisation, justification and/or blame
- attitudes and beliefs which support domestic violence

and:

- work in ways which are meaningful to men from different cultures and backgrounds
 - acknowledge and question the social and gendered context of domestic violence
 - develop men's capacity to understand the impact of their violence on their (ex)partners and children both in the long and short term
 - develop men's ability to have safe and appropriate contact with their children¹⁶
 - encourage men to adopt positive, respectful and egalitarian ways of being
 - focus on men as perpetrators and not as victims
 - avoid collusion with perpetrators' justifications for their behaviour
-

3.3 Confidentiality

Projects have an obligation to act within the current legal framework with regard to information sharing and data protection.

Domestic violence perpetrators pose a risk to their (ex)partners, children and sometimes others. If workers have reason to be concerned for the safety of any persons due to the client's abusive behaviour, they have a duty not to keep confidential those concerns. This duty may include informing, reporting, or warning other agencies or persons including their (ex)partners.

Therefore, in the interest of minimising the risks to others, men should be offered limited confidentiality. These limits should be explicit and include that:

- Information will be available to the man's (ex)partner on his attendance and whether he drops out of the programme or is suspended from it

¹⁶ Workers should be aware that some men will not achieve this and that no contact is preferable to unsafe contact

- If workers believe that a man poses a particular risk, they will inform all relevant people, including his (ex)partner. If the risk is immediate and severe the police will be called
- Information will be provided to any probation officer, CAF/CASS reporter, police officer or other relevant official involved with him or his family, as requested
- If workers are concerned that the man is a threat to the welfare or safety of children they may take steps to increase the safety of those children by involving another agency

Projects must ensure that their conditions of confidentiality are communicated to and understood by the men they work with. Every man should be required to agree to and sign a statement which details the limits to their confidentiality. If a man refuses to do this, he should not be offered a place on a perpetrator programme.

3.4 Specific safety concerns

Projects should ensure that information regarding specific concerns for the safety of a man's (ex)partner, children or others is passed to the women's service immediately (see section 4.4).

3.5 Individual work

Ideally the major constituent of intervention work with perpetrators should be group work.

Where group work is genuinely not possible – for example in remote rural areas or for clients with additional needs – a planned, structured programme of individual work may be considered. This should adhere to the same principles and standards as for group work and should cover the same areas of work (see section 3.2).

3.6 Assessment for the perpetrator programme

Assessments should be carried out upon referral to determine whether a man is suitable to attend the perpetrator programme.

It is essential that men are not accepted on to perpetrator programmes if there is no real hope of successful behaviour change as this is likely to give his (ex)partner false hope that he will change (see ways that perpetrator programmes can raise the risk p7)

Acceptance criteria should include that:

- he can acknowledge that he has been violent and abusive (i.e. he is not in complete denial)
- he sees his violence and abuse as a problem
- he is able to accept some responsibility for his use of violence and abuse
- he agrees to the conditions of attendance including giving contact details for his (ex)partner

Additionally projects should determine whether there are any additional issues which might prevent men from engaging with or benefiting from the programme, such as; substance misuse,¹⁷ language difficulties, literacy difficulties, learning difficulties or severe mental health problems.

These issues in themselves should not necessarily preclude men from receiving services, but might indicate that they need additional support such as:

- parallel attendance on a substance misuse programme
- individual sessions with an interpreter if necessary (see section 3.5)

¹⁷ Substance misuse is an indicator of high risk both in terms of likelihood of future violence and severity of violence. Where it is an issue risk management strategies should be implemented. (see Gondolf 2002)

- extra help with written work

Projects should not undertake assessments for programme suitability for court mandated referrals without access to the witness statements¹⁸ and other relevant reports. For other referrals, projects should make every attempt to access all available reports.

3.7 Risk assessment

Risk assessment is different to assessment of suitability for the programme. Projects need to be clear about what types of assessment they are able to carry out. Assessment of risk and of re-offending must not be undertaken without including a clear acknowledgement of the limits of such assessment processes as well as an explicit acknowledgement of whose perspective and what information the assessment is based on.

Specialist risk assessment

These are detailed reports designed to assess the risk a man poses to his children and (ex)partner. They are generally carried out for public or private law investigations. They should include separate interviews with the perpetrator, the woman and where appropriate children.¹⁹

Risk assessment based on a man's progress on the perpetrator programme

Projects may be asked to feed into another agency's risk assessment by reporting on a man's progress on the perpetrator programme. This might include his motivation, understanding of materials and attendance.

Workers need to understand that men can present themselves as having positive attitudes and behaviour towards women / their (ex)partner whilst in the group, trying to demonstrate that they have changed, but continue with their abuse outside of the group. When providing reports to outside agencies it is essential that workers stress that any signs of change in the group are no guarantee that real change is taking place.

3.8 Programme duration

Behavioural change is a long-term process. The experience of projects in the UK and abroad, as well as research evidence, suggests that longer programmes are more effective in changing the underlying attitudes of perpetrators.

The duration of programmes, in terms of groupwork-linked contact, on the specific issue of men addressing their violent behaviour, should be **at least 75 hrs over a minimum of 30 weeks**

3.9 Perpetrator Groups

- All groups should have a consistent core team with a minimum of two co-workers.
- Programmes should **always** be delivered by a mixed gender team.
- Ideal group numbers are 8-10 with a maximum of 12 men. Group workers should not be pressurised to work with more men than they feel comfortable or safe to work with effectively.
- Workers should run no more than 2 groups per day or three groups per week.

¹⁸ Except in Scotland, where criminal justice social workers don't have access to witness statements

¹⁹ Respect intends developing guidelines for specialist risk assessments

Section 4

Minimum Standards of Practice

Associated Women's Services

4.1 Aims of work with women

- to increase the physical safety and emotional and psychological well-being of women whose (ex)partners have been referred to a perpetrator programme
 - to increase the safety of any children involved
 - to promote realistic expectations with women regarding their (ex)partner’s attendance on a perpetrator programme and ensure that the service offered to men does not put women and children at further risk
 - to increase women’s empowerment
 - to give women opportunities to develop insight and understanding about domestic violence and not just focus on men’s progress on the perpetrator programme
-

4.2 Provision of services

Services should be provided to:

- the woman who was the subject of a man’s recent abuse
- any subsequent partner
- any ex-partners who the man has contact with and / or who are suspected of being at risk

These services must either be provided directly by an associated women’s service or by an appropriate partner agency and should be staffed by women only. It is not appropriate for perpetrator service workers to provide this service.

Services should be woman-centred, designed to fit around the specific needs of each individual woman and her children.

Women’s service workers should not be asked to undertake work that undermines trust, leads to a conflict of roles, or compromises women’s safety.

When projects provide services to more than one partner or ex-partner of the same man they should ensure that:

- a different worker provides support to each woman
 - strategies are in place to make sure that the women do not meet and in particular that they do not attend the same women’s group
-

4.3 Confidentiality

Projects have an obligation to act within the current legal framework with regard to information sharing and data protection.

Projects should explain to women:

- about their (ex)partner’s limited confidentiality and what information they may or may not have access to (see 3.6 for more details)
- about their own confidentiality
- about the project’s child protection policies
- how information is shared between perpetrator workers and women’s support workers

Projects should give women, and others at risk from his violence and abuse, **complete confidentiality in relation to the man**. This means that projects should take steps to ensure that men are **never** told whether their (ex)partner has had contact with the women’s service and in particular that no information on the nature or content of any contact is divulged.

Where information sharing arrangements exist between the project and outside agencies (such as the police and social services) projects must explain clearly to each woman how information may be shared including:

- which agencies information might be shared with
- what type of information might be shared

Women should have to opt-in to such information sharing arrangements by giving their written consent.

In some cases sharing information may increase safety, in other cases sharing information may increase risk. In all cases workers have a duty to use their own discretion – in consultation with their supervisor and / or line manager – so as not to increase the risk to the woman or others.

4.4 Specific safety concerns

Projects must pro-actively contact women as a matter of urgency if they have specific concerns for their or their children’s safety.

4.5 Safe and accessible services

Projects are responsible for ensuring that services are safe and accessible to all women by providing services:

- in a safe environment in accordance with the woman’s needs
 - in a venue where women will not come into contact with their (ex)partners
 - accessible to disabled women
 - accessible to women with language needs
 - which meet the woman’s cultural needs
 - with childcare facilities, or resources to pay for childminding
-

4.6 Pro-active contact

Unlike many women’s services which are reactive – i.e. they provide services to women who have contacted them – associated women’s services are given the contact details of women whose (ex)partners have been referred to the perpetrator programme. These women are known to be experiencing / have experienced domestic violence. Instead of waiting for the woman to call, the associated women’s service will pro-actively contact her.

Perpetrators often aim to isolate women. Using a pro-active approach to contact and support women means that services can reach women and children isolated in their experience of domestic violence, some of whom will not have accessed any other form of support. Research has shown that most women positively welcome such contact.²⁰

Perpetrator programmes should provide their associated women’s services with the contact details of all relevant women partners and ex-partners (see section 4.2) so that they can make pro-active contact with each woman.

Initial contact

Unless women directly and specifically request otherwise, they should be informed of the following, by post or telephone within one week of their (ex)partner’s first contact with the project:

²⁰ Burton et al 1998

Information about the perpetrator programme:

- details of their (ex)partner’s referral to the perpetrator programme
- information about the programme, specifically detailing how men may use and abuse the programme materials - for example by him telling her that her behaviour is abusive, telling her to take ‘time-outs’ or insisting that she needs therapy or counselling either during or after his attendance on the programme
- information about how they can access information about the programme and her (ex)partner’s attendance
- information which promotes realistic expectations regarding men’s likelihood of changing as a result of their attendance on the programme

Information about services available to women:

- details of the project’s women’s service / partner agency and how to access these services
- information about that service’s confidentiality policy
- clear messages about men’s violence and her and her children’s rights
- details of other specialist services, including crisis services, such as the Police; Refuge Projects; advice services for legal, immigration and housing problems and other appropriate local and national services

Pro-active phone contact:

Women should be pro-actively contacted by phone in order to

- check that she received and understands the postal information
- reach out to her to offer support
- check out what her practical and emotional needs are
- check if she has any special needs (language, disability)

Projects should continue to attempt contact until contact is made. It is not enough to expect the woman to contact the women’s service herself.

Pro-active phone work must take place within a clear safety procedure which minimises risk to the woman and children.

Further contact

Women should also be informed within one week of the following by post or telephone call:

- significant absences in her (ex)partner’s attendance
- when her (ex)partner is assessed as unsuitable for the programme
- when her (ex)partner completes the programme
- when her (ex)partner drops out of the programme
- when her (ex)partner is breached or suspended from the programme

4.7 Range of services

In addition to pro-active contact listed above (4.6), women’s services must offer face-to-face support to all women clients in at least one of the following ways:

- A minimum of 6 individual sessions to plan strategies maximising safety and for emotional support
- Weekly women’s support group providing mutual emotional support and the chance to explore the effects of the violence and abuse and what it means to them, with other women who have experienced domestic violence too

Some women may need more support, some may need less. The women’s service should structure their services so that they are flexible and able to offer additional support to women who need it most – in particular where there is high risk. Each session should be contained and achieve goals in its own right, since clients who have experienced trauma have one of the highest non-attendance and drop-out rates.

4.8 Availability of services to women

Services to women should be available for at least 4 months after their (ex)partner has left the perpetrator programme. If at the end of this time the woman still has unmet needs, further work or appropriate referral to other services should be done.

Section 5

Bibliography and Further Reading

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