



Respect briefing paper: Evidence of effects of domestic violence perpetrator programmes on women's safety

The scope of this briefing paper

There are two types of domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK – criminal justice programmes and community based programmes. Criminal justice based programmes are usually run by probation or prison staff, and take only mandated referrals from the criminal courts as part of a sentence for a conviction for a violent or abusive incident. Community based programmes are usually run by a voluntary sector organisation or part of a voluntary/statutory sector partnership, and take self referrals as well as referrals from Children's Services, from the family courts and a range of other services (including the Respect Phonenumber). Both types of **programmes typically have linked safety and/or support services for partners and ex-partners of programme participants.** Accreditation systems in both sectors require this and have a minimum time period required for best possible chance of effective and sustained behaviour change. Without partner contact and safety services, organisations running service for perpetrators have no way of checking on the safety of the victim, nor of informing victims about attendance or absence.

Activities of a fully operational perpetrator programme include a range of services which are necessary in order to make sure that the programme is run as safely as possible and with the maximum possible chance of supporting change. These include: : assessment, risk assessment and management, inter agency working, group work for perpetrators, individual and group support for victims, advocacy for victims.

Anger management programmes, educational programmes for men, awareness raising short course and couples counselling services are NOT domestic violence perpetrator programmes as they do not include the full range of service necessary to provide a safe and meaningful opportunity for domestic violence perpetrators to stop being violent. For anger management programmes this is primarily because they are about managing anger, not stopping violence and promoting safety. They do not have contact with partners/ex-partners and we do not recognise a service without such contact as being a safe service for perpetrators. Couples counselling alone, whilst it can and often does form a useful addition after successful behaviour change in a perpetrator programme, does not constitute a perpetrator programme, primarily because couples counselling will not be safe and effective for victims to participate in freely, a requirement for couples counselling to be meaningful.

Whenever this document refers to perpetrator programmes it should be taken to mean full interventions from well established services including all the activities listed above. It does not mean anger management, individual counselling or couples counselling, as these services were not the subjects of the research quoted.

Key findings from research

Key lesson 1: Most men who take part in a well established programme situated in a co-ordinated community response to domestic violence stop using violence.

Key lesson 2: women whose partners and ex-partners take part in programmes feel much safer and attribute this to the programme.

Gondolf (2002). This was a US multi site evaluation of over 600 men and their partners, ex-partners and new partners over four years where the men had taken part in one of four well established programmes who met the state standards of provision and were situated in a coordinated community response to domestic violence. They were compared to the men who had dropped out at an early stage. This research focussed on work with men who used violence against an intimate partner and included court mandated and non court mandated men.

- Men who were mandated to attend were more likely to complete the programme and to stop using violence.
- **The majority of men were no longer using violence at four years after the programme and had not done so for at least a year.**
- Men who completed the programme were much more likely to stop using violence than men who had dropped out of the programme at an early stage.
- Whilst most men did use some violence again after starting the programme, almost all did so a very few times and the gaps between violent incidents grew longer and longer until they had not used violence in the past year at four years after the programme.
- **The majority of women said that they felt much safer and attributed this to the man's participation in the programme.**
- The quality of life for the majority of women was much improved.
- Mandated men were more likely to participate if the court sanctions were consistently applied and were then more likely to make sustained changes than men who self referred.
- The changes were made and sustained with the integration of the programmes into a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

Key lesson number 3: taking part in a perpetrator programme makes criminal sanctions more effective.

Dobash et al (2000) This research team studied 122 men who had participated in two court mandated programmes in Scotland and their 134 partners and ex-partners, and compared them to men who had also been convicted but were subject only to other criminal justice sanctions such as probation.

- **Two thirds of the men who attended the programme stopped using violence and were no longer violent after one year post programme, compared to one third of the men who were subject to other criminal justice sanctions**

Key lesson 4: men find the use of experiential learning helpful for making sustained changes.

Key lesson 5: perpetrator programmes, through proactive contact with partners and ex-partners of programme participants, often make contact with and provide support to victims who do not otherwise contact or receive support from any other organisation.

Key lesson 6: there are several forms of mandate which help to keep them participating in programmes.

Burton et al (2000) studied 351 men referred to a community based programme in London and 796 women, who included the men's partners and ex-partners, during a two year period.

- **Most of the men stopped using violence and were no longer violent after the programme, according to the evidence supplied by the women.**
- The men found the use of experiential learning very useful for examining the effects of their violence and the alternatives to it.
- The study also found that some women had not had any other form of support and that the women appreciated proactive contact from the research team.
- They also found that the concept of "voluntary" attendance on a programme was flawed: most men were socially mandated in some way, with a perception of undesirable consequences if they did not attend, including separation from partner, social services action to remove the children or lack of contact with the children post separation.

Key lesson 7: social services are now effectively operating a mandate for programme attendance, which brings more women into contact with people who can help them and provides men with ways of making changes.

Rajagopalan, V., Price, P and Donaghy, P. (2008) This team studied the effects of social services mandated participation by 76 men (and 98 women partners/ex-partners) in a community based programme in East London (DVP – Domestic Violence Intervention Project).

- Almost all women engaged with the service and were provided with significant support, advice, advocacy and group support for themselves as well as providing information for case management jointly with the men's workers
- All men were assessed for risk and for suitability for participation in the group work intervention programme for violent men
- Those men who participated in the programme stopped using violence, according to evidence provided by their partners/ex-partners.



- Most women said that they felt safer as a result of the intervention.

Key lesson 8: more research is needed on the ways in which men can be most effectively assisted to stop using violence and other contributions perpetrator programmes can make to victim safety as part of a coordinated community response

Forthcoming UK research commissioned by Respect (2009- 12). The research team led by Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (Kelly), London School of Hygiene and tropical Medicine (Watts and Zimmerman) and the University of Durham (Westmarland and Hackett) has begun the pilot phase of a large scale, four year multi site research programme on the outcomes of men’s participation in UK community based domestic violence intervention programmes, comparing the outcomes for women’s safety with women whose partners do not take part in an intervention programme. Preliminary findings have identified a range of criteria for successful participation in a programme, from the views of staff, funders, men and women taking part in the programme. The research group has engaged five programmes across the UK who have already accredited by the UK accrediting body Respect or by the Scottish government, or who are working towards that standard. They have gathered and reviewed research tools and are awaiting the decisions of key funders for continuing the research. Providing the funding is forthcoming and sufficient, the results of this multi site research will be available in 2012. Regular research updates and emerging findings will be published on the Respect website from April 2010.

Bibliography:

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- Gondolf, E.W.** (2002) *Batterer Intervention Systems: Issues, Outcomes and Recommendations.* California: Sage
- Rajagopalan, V., Price, P and Donaghy, P** (2008) *An evaluation of the East London DVIP.*

About Respect

Respect is the UK membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services. Our key focus is on increasing the safety and well-being of victims by promoting, supporting, delivering and developing effective interventions with perpetrators. Our services include: support, resources and training for members; managing accreditation of perpetrator programmes; developing work with young people; promoting knowledge of research about domestic violence and collaboration between researchers, practitioners and policy makers; influencing public policy; providing a national voice on masculinity and violence against women; running the Respect Phonenumber, an advice and referral line for perpetrators; running the Men’s Advice Line, a helpline for male victims and running Dadspace.com, a virtual child contact centre. Respect is a UK registered charity, number 1083968. Our website is www.respect.uk.net