



**Strategic Policing and Crime Board  
6 September 2016**

**WEST MIDLANDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
PERPETRATOR PROGRAMME**

Report of the Chief Executive

**PURPOSE**

1. This report updates members on the current position regarding the work being undertaken in the development of a West Midlands Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme. The Police and Crime Commissioner has the provision of a perpetrator change programme as a key priority. The development of the programme has been very much a collaborative piece - which it should be because domestic violence and abuse is an issue with far reaching effects. There has been great enthusiasm from partner agencies across the region to establish the shared principles and themes of what the West Midlands programme should be, and how it fits in our broader framework for holding violent perpetrators to account. Due to the far reaching effects of domestic violence in our communities, getting this sort of work right will be of benefit to us all. This programme focuses on families where there are children. Domestic violence is now the most frequently reported form of trauma for children.

**BACKGROUND**

2. David Jamieson, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner has approved funding for the commissioning of a regional Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme (DVPP). The programme must incorporate provisions for working with perpetrators of domestic violence, an integrated support service for victims (ISS) and a committed support service for children. This report identifies the key issues related to the development of this co-ordinated community response to domestic violence and offers the delivery option that is deemed to be the best one for the West Midlands.
3. Whilst a number of key academic research are cited, the project is significantly informed by the earlier work of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership; consultations with each of the local authorities within the West Midlands and representatives of Women's Aid and Respect: <http://respect.uk.net/> In addition, the report provides a detailed account of the essential challenges for commissioning the

programme, outlines the journey of engagement with relevant partners, and an analysis of the issues.

### **DVPP Overarching Aims and Objectives**

4. The programme aims to increase the safety of victims of domestic violence, and children in families, through practical, individual interventions with perpetrators of high risk domestic violence and abuse. It will be community-based interventions for perpetrators (service users) of domestic abuse whose victims are assessed as being at a high risk of significant harm. The service will offer a risk and needs led response that proactively works with this potentially involuntary/voluntary client group to achieve behavioural and attitudinal change. The service, delivered in the context of a multi-agency response, will develop a tailored intervention plan that meets needs, addresses offending and motivates active engagement in activities that will produce sustained behavioural change, while at the same time keeping the risk to victims paramount.
5. In addition, the programme will be seeking to deliver a high quality, equitable and accessible service for perpetrators of domestic violence to support them to change their behaviour. It will also:
  - Provide a highly competent, informed and professional response which challenges, supports and encourages domestically violent perpetrators to engage in safe and respectful relationships and which works in a way which recognises the nature, prevalence, incidence, gender dynamics and effects of domestic violence
  - Work with other professionals to ensure that domestically violent perpetrators are treated as responsible and accountable for their own behaviour and for changing it
  - Assess, monitor and manage risk and communicate this effectively with other professionals and contribute to the multi-agency management of the risk of the abuser
  - Deliver safety and support work for the victims of the perpetrators on the programme to increase their safety and support their recovery
  - Deliver therapeutic work for children of perpetrators on the programme to support their recovery, increasing their feelings of safety and embracing the voice of the child
  - Re-focus attention to perpetrators, support social change and promote a community-wide intolerance of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women
  - Promote respectful relationships and
  - Support social change
6. The OPCC will also provide a domestic violence perpetrator service that:
  - Is delivered to perpetrators across the West Midlands through local hubs in each local authority area

- Offers the most effective, evidence-based interventions available
- Provides a programme of support of one-to-one sessions and group sessions
- Tests the efficacy of the service through high quality research methods
- Works closely with the women and children's support service, particularly in monitoring risk throughout the programme
- Achieves high levels of service user satisfaction
- Achieves high levels of stakeholder satisfaction

### **Expected Outcomes**

7. The Mirabal research project lasted from 2009 to 2015 and worked with women and victims to investigate the extent to which perpetrator programmes reduce violence and increase safety for women and children <https://www.dur.ac.uk/criva/projectmirabal/> That work devised six measures of success which the women wanted from the perpetrator work:
  - i) Improved relationships between partners (respectful communication)
  - ii) Expanded space for action (having freedom restored)
  - iii) Safety and freedom from violence for women and children
  - iv) Safe, positive and shared parenting
  - v) Enhanced awareness of self and impact of their behaviour
  - vi) Safer, healthier childhoods for their children.

### **Domestic Violence Offender Management Programmes**

8. The Police and Crime Commissioner is committed to ensuring that the perpetrators of domestic violence are held to account, alongside ensuring that victims are supported, never blamed. Domestic violence doesn't respect organisational boundaries, and is a priority across partners. As such, the management of domestic violence perpetrators requires commitment and coordinated input across partners, and requires a range of activities. A domestic violence perpetrator programme (DVPP) is one tool to use within the wider offender management framework and coordinated community response to domestic violence. In order to allow the best possible success of a DVPP, each of the 7 local areas have demonstrated their overall local perpetrator (DV offender) management framework in order to access the programme.

### **Governance**

9. The service providers of the programme will be accountable to the Commissioner, and monitored by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. In addition, it will report to the Strategic Police and Crime Board, the Reducing Reoffending Steering Group, the Violence Prevention Alliance and the Preventing Violence Against Vulnerable People Board. This will ensure the programme is strategically

linked to other areas of work taking place. Due to the nature of the work, a DVPP oversight board is needed, comprising of a representative from each local area. This Board will receive and monitor the performance data from the work and ensure the service develops safely and in line with objectives and expectations. An existing board which fulfils this function is the PVVP Public Protection Board.

10. A formal independent academic evaluation will also take place alongside the project in order to assess the efficacy and sustainability of the intervention, including a cost benefit analysis. The evaluation will cover:
  - An assessment of outcomes such as reduced repeat abuse, level of violence and abuse and improved outcomes for victims and children.
  - Outcomes will be measured for a significant period of time post-interventions to establish whether changes are sustainable
  - Evaluation of the model and key features to ensure that we gain an understanding of the contextual factors that promote or inhibit implementation and effectiveness.

### **The Journey: Engaging with Partners**

11. Consultation has been on-going with local partners over the last 12 months. Birmingham Community Safety Partnership agreed to produce initial discussion papers to focus regional engagement and provide a starting point; this became available for circulation from the end of October 2015 following approval from the Birmingham Violence against Women and Children Steering group. Regional leads (from each local authority area, plus DV services reps, CRC, WMP, OPCC) were called together in December 2015 to look at what would be required for a regional programme, and to begin to ascertain the views and position of local partnerships and how a DVPP would fit in with the work that is taking place locally. A smaller task group met in January 2016 to further develop proposals. It was decided to invite Respect, the national charity which accredits DVPPs, to speak to partners and help shape a workable proposal. <http://respect.uk.net/>
12. Regional leads met again in March 2016, along with Respect. The task group met following this, and more detailed, individual discussions with local authority partners developed, including engagement with Children's Services, through visiting colleagues in LA areas. The group has continued to meet regularly to develop the proposal.

### **Local Authority Positions**

13. The table below sets out where each LA is in terms of current provision:

Coventry	Existing perpetrator provision, 10 week program. Also have DV perpetrator mentoring (separate to their LA DV commissioning package). OPCC will need to consider how to be equitable to areas with existing provision
Sandwell	Existing perpetrator provision, 10 week program. OPCC will need to consider how to be equitable to areas with existing provision

Walsall	ITT for local DVPP for up to 12 week provision closed on April 18, funded through Children's Services (with Public Health involvement). It will not include a specific children's service. Would want access to regional programme if it offers a different model of work (duration, approach etc) to the specification out to tender. This increases the options to refer perpetrators into the route deemed most appropriate and will provide a site to compare outcomes between the two programmes
Birmingham	Supportive of a Respect 'accreditable' programme as an indication of us complying with the safest known standards in an area of work where evidence is not comprehensive
Wolverhampton	Supportive of a Respect 'accreditable' programme. CSP funding reduced and allocated, would be interested over time to contribute to fund additional units of provision for their area as DV and perpetrator work is a priority in the LA. Children's Services are currently coordinating a review of DV provision across the themes: DV perpetration, accommodation based support, floating support and advocacy, counselling & therapeutic, target hardening). Regional provision could either be their sole 'programme' under DV perpetration or part of the offer; but they do have money which could be contributed, as well as in kind such as office space
Solihull	Supportive of a Respect 'accreditable' programme, in conversation with Children's regarding wider support and resourcing (eg spot purchasing)
Dudley	Supportive of a Respect 'accreditable' programme. Currently have no perpetrator provision, but have an intervention for children/young people affect by DV. This is part funded by Children Services. However this has a significant waiting list.
Warwickshire	<i>Have indicated their interest in being able to purchase places from a service due to not having provision and the high costs of commissioning their own</i>

### Perpetrator work model

14. There are various different models for DVPP work, but there has been limited evaluation and research in UK settings. A larger UK study, Mirabal, was published in 2015 ([Kelly and Westmarland, 2015](#)). These findings have been drawn upon significantly to develop the options. Respect, the UK accrediting body for perpetrator work, do not promote specific programmes, but outline the principles, standards and operating arrangements required to meet the Respect Accreditation Standards.
15. Working with perpetrators of domestic abuse can be complex and can increase the risks that the victim faces; careful planning and delivery by skilled professionals is needed to mitigate this risk. They offer hope that their violent / abusive partner can change and 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. 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. It is vital issues of safety and risk are explored with victims whose partners or ex-partners are attending perpetrator programmes and programmes must never be run without adequate associated partner support.

### **Managing Risk**

16. 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 tool/ 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
- 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 (i.e., Social Workers, Courts)

Ways that perpetrator programmes can increase safety:

### **Changing the perpetrators behaviour**

17. Perpetrator programmes cannot 'cure' violence or guarantee dramatic transformation, as behavioural change is a long and complex process. However, research demonstrates that, of perpetrators who complete a domestic abuse 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 abuse perpetrator programmes can reduce dangerousness.

### **Monitoring perpetrators and holding them to account**

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

To assess risk, perpetrator workers can use:

- disclosure and / or changes in how they behave in the group

- use of blame, minimisation and denial
- information from the perpetrator's (ex)partner (which should be treated with care to ensure that 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 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.

### **Supporting women partners and ex-partners**

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

### **Monitoring men and holding them to account**

20. A key element of successful perpetrator programmes is encouraging perpetrators to disclose the abuse they have perpetrated and challenging their attitudes and beliefs about the acceptability of such actions. They should be held to account by the people running the programme, others on the group, and by their partners (via the associated partner work). Programmes that cover different methods of abuse, but do not challenge attitudes and beliefs or promote disclosures do not meet the standards.

Monitoring also needs to take place over time and programmes should not be shorter than the timescales outlined in the Respect standards.

21. The West Midlands Domestic Violence Standards includes a standard on DVPPs: <http://violencepreventionalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/WM-DV-standards.pdf>:

*'Agencies will ensure that domestic abuse perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. With the extension of legislation, greater aspects of domestic violence and abuse will now be a crime and agencies will ensure that criminal justice solutions are the first consideration within a robust offender management framework.*

*Beyond criminal justice, offender management includes activity to distract, divert, disrupt, apply wider protection through civil action and identify serial perpetrators, each undertaken to protect adult and child victims. Programmes aimed at working with perpetrators to change their behaviour may form part of an offender management framework. Where perpetrator programmes are delivered in their area, Birmingham, Solihull and Walsall require that programmes should be accredited by RESPECT, the national membership organisation for work with domestic violence perpetrators. Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton require that programmes in their area incorporate the RESPECT principles below. These requirements provide evidence-based assurance that the service is safe and as*

*effective as possible, without which both adult and child victims may be put at more risk'.*

22. The Design Considerations has looked at the core requirements of a DVPP, and this includes an independent women's support service. West Midlands partners are committed to including a strand of work for children of the perpetrators, in line with emerging research (Miribal project, 2015), and as a commitment to intervening as a means to preventing further harm (see rationale section).

### **Perpetrator Cohort**

23. We have also considered the options for referral criteria for perpetrators. Feedback from colleagues indicated a preference for perpetrators who are fathers, recognising the impact of domestic violence on children as well as partners. Therefore the cohort of perpetrators eligible will be fathers who are in contact, or seeking contact, with their children where children are on child protection plans, or families have been assessed as being 'under early help' or 'child in need'. It was considered that child protection cases needed to be prioritised due to the exceptionally high prevalence of domestic violence in child protection cases. Projects evaluated within the Mirabal research had referrals dominated by Children's Services and CAFCASS. The NSPCC [evaluation](#) of the Caring Dads perpetrator programme specifically for fathers found that:

*'The programme focus on parenting and the impact of domestic abuse on children was the main motivator for fathers to participate in the group work and was also a unifying factor within the group process, enabling the group to become more cohesive before focusing upon the more challenging areas of the programme'.*

*It also considered there to be additional safety where there are other agencies working with the perpetrator, particularly the referring agency:*

*'Maintaining the involvement of referrers during assessment and throughout the time the father attends the programme promoted safe practice and supported fathers' engagement... Although teams accepted self-referrals, they preferred to have the additional security of working with fathers who were referred as part of a multi-agency approach to working with the whole family, as there were concerns that only a partial picture of what might be happening would be available when fathers self-referred'.*

### **Work with children of domestic violence perpetrators: Rationale**

24. Domestic violence can impact upon all areas of children and young people's lives, including, health, education, the development of relationships, recreation and social activities. The effects of domestic violence on children are wide ranging and will differ for each child or young person. Effects can include:
- Feelings of fear, shame, anger
  - Underachieving (or overachieving) in school
  - Difficulties sleeping and nightmares
  - Distracted behaviour
  - Outbursts of temper and aggression
  - Regressive behaviour such as thumb sucking, bed wetting etc,



- Reluctance to eat
  - Complaints of tummy pain or pain in other parts of their body
  - Low self-esteem and confidence
  - Reluctance to engage in social activities
  - Self-harm.
- (Women's Aid NI, 2014)

25. It has been found that children from domestic violence families may have significantly decreased reading and maths test scores than their peers and increased misbehaviour in the classroom. Also that children who witness domestic violence are at increased risk for nightmares, teen dating violence and school problems. If not addressed, the trauma of living through domestic violence can have lifelong consequences, and is a significant 'Adverse Childhood Experience', significantly increasing the risk of adversity in adulthood.

26. However, not all children exposed to domestic violence will experience such negative effects. Children's risk levels and reactions to domestic violence exist on a continuum; some children demonstrate enormous resiliency, while others show signs of significant maladaptive adjustment.

27. The most recent and comprehensive [research](#) (The Mirabal Project, 2015) into DVPPs highlight the benefits of children's work for children of perpetrators on DVPPs. Research into the experiences of children working with a children's support service while their parent/guardian/carer was on the programme showed increases in perceptions of safety and wellbeing:

*'Children were articulate in their accounts of having an improved sense of well-being, feeling safer, spending more quality time with their dad/male carer, having more trust in their dad/male carer, and an overall enhanced father/child relationship'.*

*"Children described spending time with father doing simple day to day activities – playing games, going to the park - without the threat of angry displays or violence. Many talked positively about new found relationships, even if their parents had separated. A ladder was used for children to locate how safe they felt; before the fathers were on the DVPP all used rungs one and two (very unsafe), at the time of interview one child circled rung five, whilst all the others choose rungs 9 and 10 (very safe and extremely safe)."*

28. The researchers comment that all children had been working with a children's support worker, and that working with the perpetrator without working with the child isn't thought to have the best effects. [Research](#) (Westmarland 2012) into desired outcomes for children of men on DVPPs includes:

*'Changes that research participants placed considerable significance on in terms of increasing positive outcomes for children were: the reduction or cessation of violence; healthier and more engaged father-child relationships; improved school performance; and the reduction of drug and alcohol abuse. We further contend that if perpetrator programmes are successful in changing men's ways of engaging with their children, and men can safely be involved in their children's lives, then they are integral to an overall social work response to the safeguarding and protecting of*

*children who live with domestic violence. They offer a response that does not rely on women to protect children from violent fathers'.*

### **Local Context – children’s provision**

Coventry	DV contract includes a commissioned children’s service, delivered by Barnardo’s for under 18s
Sandwell	No specialist children’s Dv provision, children of men on perpetrator programme are referred through MASH and may be entitled to early help or family support services
Walsall	No specialist children’s DV provision
Birmingham	Limited provision of family support by DV provider, small number of Community Interest Companies have set up delivering counselling
Wolverhampton	No specialist children’s DV provision
Solihull	No specialist children’s Dv provision, Social Care keen to deliver interventions themselves where possible, rather than commission or spot purchase
Dudley	No specialist children’s DV provision

29. The West Midlands Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme will include specialist children’s provision as part of helping children deal with the trauma experienced and supporting them to move on from their experiences. Attending the DVPP cannot in itself be seen as a protective factor which reduces risk as not all men change their attitudes and behaviour following attending the programme. For the safety of the victims, Children’s Services must not consider programme participation to be reason to decrease their levels of intervention or reduce the assessed risk level too early.

### **Victims’ work options - Women and Children’s**

30. Following consultation, the women’s and children’s work will be two strands within one service (rather than potentially two separate providers), recognising both to be victims, and there being expertise within specialist domestic violence services to work with women and children. This allows for therapeutic work for the mother-child relationship which may have been placed under strain by the perpetrator, not just isolated work with a child and with a mother. Support must also be offered to women where children’s work isn’t required.

### **Commissioning Considerations**

31. Meetings highlighted the need to understand the particularities of commissioning a new service. Whereas DV victim services are well established in each area, with a range of trusted providers, the West Midlands only has one provider operating a small programme in two boroughs. There are no programmes running in the region which are in line with Respect standards; Coventry and Sandwell are short courses, as is the new service due to start in Walsall. Probation and CRC have a longer history of delivering DVPPs and managing offenders, the MoJ considers their Building Better Relationships (BBR) programme to be an alternative to Respect accreditation. The BBR programme is run for men who are assessed as posing a significant risk of harm to their female partners/ex-partners and aims to help men achieve a better understanding of why they use violence and aggression towards their female partners. They are encouraged to learn and practice new non-abusive behaviours.

The only route into this programme is to be either ordered to attend it as part of a sentence after conviction through the Criminal Justice Service or through Family Court Orders. A vital part of this programme is the use of Partner Link Workers (PLW) to help the victims and any children keep safe whilst the perpetrator is taking part in BBR.

32. For a new service to enter the market and set up a service which hasn't previously been provided in the area, there are greater costs and project establishment time associated with the initiation phase, with the provider needing to get itself known and build relationships with partners and referrers.
33. Accordingly, there is a risk some providers will not consider a 12 month contract viable given the set up costs of establishing a low volume new service across a large area. To mitigate the risks of not attracting good providers to apply, there should be a plan for making the work sustainable, if the early indication from delivery is that the work delivers good outcomes, so that the potential for project growth is seen, and therefore the OPCC has agreed to fund this project for a 2 year period. This will allow us to evaluate the outcomes and the programme over a longer period of time.
34. It is expected that the victims' work (women and children) will be lower volume; safety work is frequently via phone. Respect report programmes typically make contact with 80% of partners/ ex-partners perpetrators on the programme. Fewer again want to receive ongoing work, estimated 60% (of total initial). It is recognised there are established specialist providers delivering in each area for victims work. The OPCC currently work with the West Midlands Domestic Violence Consortium to deliver support services across the area and will be looking to extend the support that they already offer to include this service.
35. The amount of children anticipated to access the scheme is harder to estimate as most DVPPs don't include children's work.
36. The DVVP will include all seven local authority areas, although priority will be given to the four Local Authority areas where there is no provision (Birmingham, Dudley, Solihull, and Wolverhampton). Due to existing provision within the other 3 areas (Coventry, Sandwell and Walsall), there will be a service for those perpetrators who are considered to be priority cases and to whom the existing provision is considered to be inappropriate.
37. There will be 2 strands of work as part of the programme: one for the perpetrator work and one for the support services for victims and children. Both will be funded to deliver alongside each with direct links between services.
38. The Service Specification for the perpetrator programme is now being developed and we are consulting with the Domestic Violence Consortium on the appropriate service for the victim and children service. The preferred intervention is a family support intervention model. We are also exploring the feasibility of making the programme a mandatory programme.

### **Timescales**

40. It is anticipated that the Service Specification will go out to tender in the week beginning September 19 2016 for a 4-week period. The assessment process will allow planning and development to take place during November/December with a project start date in January 2017.

## **Recommendation**

41. Members of the Board are asked to note the development of the West Midlands Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme.

## **Financial Implications**

42. The Domestic Violence Perpetrator has been approved for funding by the Commissioner to which Decision WMPCC 009 2016 refers:  
<http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/416015/WMPCC-009-2016-Decision-External-grants-and-provision-of-service.pdf>

## **Legal Implications**

43. The Victims Fund is issued as a grant under s58 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.
44. Schedule 9 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 provides Commissioners with the powers to award crime and disorder grants to any organisations and projects they consider will help them achieve their crime prevention aims and wider priorities.
45. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 states that the PCC must make arrangements for obtaining the views of victims of crime in that area.

Thanks to the West Midlands Violence Prevention Alliance who have worked on this project (Rachel De Kam and Chief Inspector Dave Twyford) and our local authority and voluntary sector partners who are continuing to work with us to develop the programme.

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