

## Section 10 Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

The Sheffield Domestic and Sexual abuse strategy 2014-2017 states...

***We will work together to try and prevent abuse in the future. We will do this by...***

- ***Developing effective responses to perpetrators*** – developing a programme for young people using violence against parents and in their relationships (CYT and Youth Justice Service); consider options for developing a voluntary programme for adults. Ensure good partnership working with the new provider of the Building Better Relationships programme.
- ***Considering options for targeting serial perpetrators*** through joint work between Criminal Justice Agencies.

Identification of perpetrators can be complex, as a result of counter allegations and where the history of abuse includes report incidents on both sides. The national organisation Respect<sup>1</sup> provides the following guidance:-

*It is very rare to find someone who is both using and experiencing violence and abuse of equal severity, risk and consequences to and from an intimate partner or ex-partner. The situation is often complex. Victims may well be using legal reasonable force but nevertheless present a higher risk of injuring their abusive partner than vice versa. Perpetrators may be escalating their own use of violence, which could be leading to an increased risk that the victim will retaliate.*

*If the man is presenting or being described as being in a mutually violent relationship, this indicates the need for more detailed assessment, using if possible a range of sources of information from the client, their partner or other agency working with their partner, other agencies and professional judgement if the worker is skilled and experienced at responding to domestic violence.*

***Perpetrator who is actually a victim*** – Sometimes, if the victim has used violence in resistance, self-defence, and retaliation or to defend children or others they may be wrongly identified – or wrongly present – as a perpetrator. This mis-identification can be further exacerbated if the person concerned does not want to identify themselves as a victim.

***Victim who is actually a perpetrator*** – Sometimes, if the person using intimate partner violence has experienced force used by their victim as self-defence, defence of children, resistance or retaliation they may be wrongly identified – or wrongly present – as a victim. In these cases they may have used this incident or incidents to distract attention away from their own abusive behaviour, or other agencies may have identified them as “both as bad as each other”.

The expert group raised two issues on perpetrators:-

### **1. An anecdotal report of an increasing number of males presenting for services who are determined to be the primary perpetrator**

There is a need for Domestic abuse support services (and others e.g. Children’s Services) to be continually aware of the risk associated with perpetrators, who may attempt to access support themselves as a way of getting access to / perpetrating abuse towards the victim or the children.

The commissioned services are required to use the Respect Toolkit screening tool on all male referrals as part of their contracts.

### **2. There is an increasing need for perpetrator support in Sheffield.**

Perpetrator support aims *‘to encourage the perpetrator to take responsibility for his behaviour, to*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.respect.uk.net>

*recognise internal and external triggers for violence, and to understand and take responsibility for the consequences of his actions*<sup>2</sup>.

When experts were consulted three years ago, there was a heightened need for support for victims and little was raised about perpetrator support. However at the expert group in June 2016 perpetrator support was raised as a need by a number of individuals from a number of organisations.

For the purposes of this report, it is important to understand:-

- The profile of perpetrators is based on local police and domestic abuse support service data in Sheffield
- Perpetrator programmes; current evaluations, ascertain the need and demand for perpetrator support services locally.

### Sheffield Perpetrator Profiles

- Police data<sup>3</sup> finds that 47% of domestic abuse perpetrators were an ex-partner / spouse, 31% a current partner, 17% were a blood relation, 5% were either an in-law / ex in-law, or in a fostering relationship with the victim. This is different to the perpetrator profiles of victims who are in contact with support services, where two thirds cite the perpetrator as an ex-partner or spouse<sup>4</sup>).
- Police activity shows that the highest **age** category is perpetrators aged 25 to 29 years (21.7% or 487 of the 2,243)<sup>5</sup> and three out of five perpetrators (58.4%) are aged 20 to 39 years old.
- Research undertaken by Hester (2009)<sup>6</sup> suggests that the majority of perpetrators are **male** (92%). Police data in Sheffield reflects this research, with 90%<sup>7</sup> of domestic abuse incidents having a male perpetrator.
- Unemployment is a risk factor, 64% of perpetrators were unemployed at the time of the incident, 31% were employed, 4% students and 1% retired.
- 91% of perpetrators in police incidents are 'White – North European', 4% are 'Black' and 4% are 'Asian' and 0.2% South East Asian<sup>8</sup>.

### Research shows insight into perpetrator abuse

The Mirabal study (2015)<sup>9</sup> interviewed victims and perpetrators at the start of Respect accredited programmes and provides insight into domestic abuse relationships and in particular explores perpetrator's use of violence and other characteristics. The interview findings revealed that:-

- The majority of perpetrators (76%) did not understand the impact actions/behaviour had on the victim.
- Two thirds (66%) did not negotiate during disagreements
- For those who were separated, one third (35%) did not respect whether or how the victim wanted to be in contact with them
- 96% of victims felt they had to be very careful around the perpetrator if he was in a bad mood
- The perpetrator restricted the freedom of the victim in a number of different ways -
  - 49% of victims felt the perpetrator made the final decision as to who visited the home
  - 62% said the perpetrator tried to monitor text messages and contacts
  - 50% tried to use money to control the victim,
  - 68% were suspicious the victim had been with another man/ someone else
  - 65% of victims said the perpetrator tried to stop them seeing and contacting their friends

<sup>2</sup> Royal College of Psychiatrists, Domestic Violence Council report 2002 <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/pdfversion/cr102.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Domestic Violence data reported in Sheffield 2013/14, Lisa Small, South Yorkshire Police provided in 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Minimum dataset 2015/16

<sup>5</sup> Domestic Violence data reported in Sheffield 2013/14, Lisa Small, South Yorkshire Police provided in 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Hester, M (2009) *Who does what to whom? Gender and Domestic violence perpetrators* Bristol: University of Bristol in association with the Northern Rock Foundation [http://www.nr-foundatio.org.uk/publications\\_domabuse.html](http://www.nr-foundatio.org.uk/publications_domabuse.html)

<sup>7</sup> Domestic Violence data reported in Sheffield 2013/14, Lisa Small, South Yorkshire Police provided in 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Domestic Violence data reported in Sheffield 2013/14, Lisa Small, South Yorkshire Police provided in 2015.

<sup>9</sup> The Mirabal study (2015)<sup>9</sup> was a review of perpetrator programmes, measuring 6 overall outcomes measures, each with a subset of questions. The baseline data was taken at interviews with victims and perpetrators at the start of the programme. The baseline data shows insight into domestic abuse relationships and in particular perpetrators actions and traits.

and family.

- 34% had followed the victim home or waited outside a workplace
- The perpetrators used a range of physical and sexual violence -
  - 30% had made their partner do something sexual they did not want to do
  - 29% had used a weapon against the victim
  - 59% had threatened to kill the victim
  - 50% had tried to strangle, choke, or smother the victim
  - 54% had punched, kicked, burnt or beaten the victim
  - 87% had slapped, pushed or thrown something at the victim
  - 95% had punched walls, slammed doors, smashed things or stamped around.
- 36% manipulated the children to get them to report on the mother's actions.
- 45% attempted to get the children to side with him in an argument.
- 54% inspired fear in their children

### Sheffield victim's feedback on perpetrator abuse

Similar experiences of violence are also observed locally, here in Sheffield. Feedback taken from the SURG meeting with victims of domestic violence and the 'Our Stories' DVD, 2015 describe the following:-

- For all SURG members the violence had gone on for a significant number of years
- All described physical violence which caused significant injuries (including to the back, head, arm, teeth *'they were all knocked out'*). A&E and health care services were accessed on a number of occasions. All reported either long term scars and/ or physical injuries as a result of the violence.
- *'Violence crept into the relationship; it escalated and after a couple of years turned into sexual abuse too'*.
- All said they were a victim of mental and emotional abuse
- The manipulation and controlling behaviour described included – *'they think they own you'*, the perpetrator would not allow the victim out of the house alone, *'I lost my job'*, friends and family could not be contacted and these relationships then broke down, there was manipulation of the children, one service user explained how following separation, the perpetrator used the child to *'get at the victim'*.
- Practical reliance on the perpetrator which made it difficult to consider how they could leave?
- *'I was made to feel like a failure and that I couldn't do anything right'*.
- The perpetrator threatened to kill the victim
- The perpetrator would threaten to kill himself
- Two were physically abused while pregnant.

### VAWG Strategy and perpetrators

There is a recognised need in the VAWG strategy to gather more evidence on the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes whilst also supporting initiatives and projects that work with perpetrators, see action from the VAWG below.

Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 - 2020			
<b>16</b>	Support development of the evidence base on perpetrator programmes and support innovative approaches to working with perpetrators such as the Drive project to help achieve sustainable reductions in repeat offending.	HO	Review March 2017

### Evidence on the effectiveness of Perpetrator support programmes

#### Project Mirabel<sup>10</sup>

The project measured the effectiveness of 11 Respect Accredited, community based voluntarily

<sup>10</sup> Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2015) *Domestic Violence perpetrator programmes: steps towards change. Project Mirabel Final Report 'Project Mirabel'* London Metropolitan University and Durham University.



attended programmes.

Effectiveness was measured using six outcomes. The improved relationship between victim and perpetrator following the programme, the empowerment of the victim, the freedom from violence, perpetrator self-awareness of the impact their actions have on the victim and the child/ren, the change in parenting and whether a safer environment had been created for the child.

The project found significant reductions in the level of physical and sexual violence and an increase in the proportion who felt very safe.

- 51% of victims felt 'very safe' 12 months after the perpetrator had attended the programme and 30% felt somewhat safe compared to the 8% and 21% respectively prior to the programme.
- 30% had been in a position where the perpetrator had made them do something sexual that they did not want to do and 29% said the perpetrator had used a weapon against them. After 12 months no one reported these happening to them. These are significant changes.
- 59% of victims had said the perpetrator had threatened to kill them or someone close to them, but this reduced to 10% after the 12 months.
- Significant changes were also found in the reduction of those who were strangled, choked, drowned or smothered from 50% to 2%, 54% of those who were punched kicked burnt or beaten reduced to 2%, 87% had been slapped pushed up for it had something thrown at them and this reduced to 7%.

The findings did not show such significant reductions in harassment and those being given more space to act but these did still have reductions.

- 90% said the perpetrator did things that scared or intimidated at the start and this reduced to 41%
- 68% reported being harassed by letters, emails, texts or phone calls and this reduced to 28%.

The project concluded that the outcomes indicated that perpetrator programmes can have an impact and can therefore have a part in ending domestic abuse.

The Strength to Change report (2010)<sup>11</sup> reviews the outcomes of a voluntary perpetrator support project located in Hull that provided support to the perpetrator, their partners, ex-partners and children. Support to perpetrators included telephone advice, assessment and support, one to one signposting to relevant services, one to one courses for up to 10 weeks and group courses for up to 40 weeks. Support to partners, ex-partners and families included unlimited one to one support and telephone advice.

After 16 months duration there was an observed reduction in the number of re-offences committed by perpetrators on the course, a reduction in the number of police call outs and when incidents did occur, a lower severity of violence.

The findings estimated that for every £1 spent there would be a return on investment of £2.24 for reduced criminality, a £2.57 net saving for health services, £10 saving to all public agencies and up to £14 saving for human and emotional costs. There are no longitudinal findings or social findings e.g. social benefits to the family which if known would add further financial benefits in addition to those observed in the report e.g. a child did not have to enter foster care or had ended social services interventions.

Gondolf (1999, 2002 and 2004<sup>12</sup>) is a widely known researcher in this area and he observed programmes did result in a long term reduction in re-assault but risk of abuse continued while the programme was ongoing. Gondolf's research observed that programmes with the best outcomes were high quality, with a good completion rate, interaction with the female victim and legal

<sup>11</sup> Lancaster, J (2010) Strength to change: Return on investment, NHS Hull

<sup>12</sup> D. Alex Heckert and Edward W. Gondolf (2004) *Predicting Abuse and Re-assault Among Batterer Program Participants*  
<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/199730.pdf>



consequences for course compliance.

Bloomfield and Dixon<sup>13</sup> reviewed the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) delivered by Probation, replaced by Building Successful Relationships (BSR) and the Community Domestic Violence Program (CDVP) delivered by Community Rehabilitation Companies. These are criminal justice; court mandated programmes run nationwide by probation for high risk perpetrators of domestic abuse. The programmes were found to be marginally effective in reducing domestic violence. The results found lower reoffending rates for those who completed the programme, 22% compared to 34%, and time before reoffending was marginally longer, 9.6 months compared to 8.7 months. The report acknowledged that the reoffending rates are based on reported police incidents and therefore the level of incidents not reported to the police was unknown.

## Current position of perpetrator support in Sheffield

### The Criminal justice perpetrator interventions are as follows:-

- Court mandated perpetrator support is via the 'Building Better Relationships' programme provided by the South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) as part of its contract with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). This is available to perpetrators on probation in Sheffield, but only for a few (around 100 per annum). It is delivered to those who are assessed as high risk of committing domestic abuse and have a relevant court order in place.
- South Yorkshire Police in conjunction with the CRC and NPS have embarked on an initiative to refresh and reform Offender Management arrangements, utilising the brand name of COMPASS (County Offender Management Partnership Action & Support Strategy). COMPASS will seek to identify and target work around a select group of Domestic Abuse Perpetrators, implementing a wide range of solutions to address their offending behaviour and thus minimise risk to victims. There is limited data available and the success (using re-offending data) is not yet known<sup>14,15</sup>.
- The HMIC report *Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*<sup>16</sup> recommends police forces need to improve how they identify and target serial and repeat perpetrators. There is perpetrator profiling completed by the police but *'it differs from District to District, the top ten prolific offenders (not necessarily those committing criminal offences but those who have the most reported incidents of DA) are managed via the district IOM programme and intelligence tasking process. We are still looking to formalise a process across the force*<sup>17</sup>.
- Perpetrators are discussed at MARAC and all services represented at MARAC who are in contact or have knowledge on the perpetrator share relevant information.
- South Yorkshire has a force policy on investigating Domestic Abuse which is in line with the Authorised Police Practice Guidance on Investigation, but cannot be shared due to its sensitivity<sup>18</sup>.
- The Respect (national provision) perpetrators helpline (0808 802 4040) and website [www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk) can be accessed in Sheffield.

It is recommended that providers of a voluntary perpetrator service/programme gain accreditation, via Respect<sup>19</sup>.

### Sheffield does not have any voluntary perpetrator support available at the time of writing.

However, in 2015/16 there were over 4,300 domestic abuse victims<sup>20</sup> which mean there will be a

<sup>13</sup> Bloomfield, S. and Dixon, L (2015) *An Outcome evaluation of the integrated domestic abuse programme (IDAP) and Community domestic violence programme (CDVP)*, National Offender Management Service

<sup>14</sup> James Newcomb – Update to the supporting document for domestic abuse, 2015

<sup>15</sup> Peter Horner, email on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 to Louise Potter on the DA and SA needs assessment in response to the question *'What is the current position on COMPASS and how effective has the initiative been? Any data on this?'*

<sup>16</sup> *Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*, (2014) HMCI, [www.hmci.gov.uk](http://www.hmci.gov.uk)

<sup>17</sup> Peter Horner, email on 1st September 2016 to Louise Potter on the DA and SA needs assessment in response to the question *'Is there a prolific offender matrix? If so how does it operate? If not, is there still a plan for this to happen?'*

<sup>18</sup> Peter Horner, email on 1st September 2016 to Louise Potter on the DA and SA needs assessment in response to the question *'Is there a force policy and what does it say?'*

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/accreditation-project.html>

<sup>20</sup> SDVC data 2015/16



similar number of perpetrators of domestic abuse being reported to the police each year. The volume of perpetrators on the court managed programmes will be low (e.g. in 2012 less than 100 perpetrators completed the IDAP programme<sup>21</sup>). This therefore suggests less than 2% of perpetrators in Sheffield are likely to currently receive some form of formal perpetrator support.

In the mean-time local experts working in support services, police and the MARAC data show that perpetrators are nonetheless known to services e.g.: GP practices, mental health services, housing services, children and adult social care services. However, there are no programmes in Sheffield to refer these individuals to. Local experts raised this as one of their three main areas of need for the city.

Interestingly, all service users consulted (victims) stated they did not believe their perpetrator would have voluntarily attended a programme, thereby raising the issue that the number of places to be commissioned may still need to be relatively small.

**The need for a perpetrator programme has been known for some time** and the commissioning of a perpetrator programme in Sheffield is an action in the Sheffield Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy (2014-2017) but is yet to be completed.

The current position at the time of writing is that the intention is to for Sheffield to financially contribute to a South Yorkshire wide commissioning of a perpetrator support service<sup>22</sup>.

Doncaster commission an 8 week voluntary Foundation 4 Change (F4C) perpetrator programme. It has been available since April 2014<sup>23</sup>. The program offers an opportunity for perpetrators to recognise, acknowledge and change behaviour in order to increase safety victims and children. The programme is not currently Respect accredited. Support for the victim while the perpetrator was on the programme was offered by commissioned victim services.

Each programme session focuses on a different subject including raising awareness, healthy relationships, management of emotions, communication & negotiation, parenting, substance misuse and relapse prevention. This means perpetrators learn what a healthy relationship is, how to problem solve and resolve conflict in a relationship, how to communicate in a healthy way and how to take responsibility and accountability for one's own actions.

The initial findings report a high number of referrals (average of 210 per annum); with 57% starting the programme and of those who started 39% successfully complete the programme<sup>24</sup>. Based on Doncaster having around 3,058 victims in 2015/16<sup>25</sup>, this may suggest around 7% of perpetrators in Doncaster were referred<sup>26</sup>. The report states there has been positive feedback from service users and families, from services involved with the victims and the children and most notably a 21% reduction in police call outs to those who accessed the programme.

Further statistical based evidence is required and this is currently being completed by the University of Sheffield (SchARR) and due to be published in March 2017.

A presentation summary of the early findings from the SchARR research<sup>27</sup> explained that the aims of the research are to test what works, review the implementation and operational processes, and

<sup>21</sup> South Yorkshire Probation Programme, 2012

<sup>22</sup> Draft Bid received from Alison Higgins, August 2016

<sup>23</sup> Safer, Stronger Doncaster presentation to the County wide CSP Chair meeting. DA perpetrator programme 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016

<sup>24</sup> Safer, Stronger Doncaster presentation to the County wide CSP Chair meeting. DA perpetrator programme 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016

<sup>25</sup> SDVC 2015/16 data, OPCC

<sup>26</sup> This is based on the assumption that all those referred were unique individuals and that there was an average of 210 perpetrators referred each of the two years on the programme. If this increased in the second year of funding then the percentage will increase slightly, to around 10% of perpetrators.

<sup>27</sup> 25 January 2017



identify areas for improvement, understanding the perpetrator demographics, context, extent of behavioural change and outcomes alongside a cost benefit analysis.

A total of 275 perpetrators were on the programme (254 male and 21 female), 55% had children, 86% were White British, and 43% were in paid employment, resided in six of the 12 postcode areas for Doncaster LA. Complex needs included mental health issues, alcohol misuse, released recently from prison and those on bail conditions.

A total of 229 have ended support, and of these 121 (47%) dropped out.

The new commission would be open to all genders, it would provide programme and/or one to one interventions to perpetrators causing all forms and levels of domestic violence and it is intended that the provider will seek REPECT accreditation.

The South Yorkshire commissioning of a perpetrator programme will go some way to meeting the perpetrator support need in Sheffield.

It needs to be acknowledged that -

- Evidence does appear to show positive outcomes for the majority – an increased feeling of victim safety and a reduction in most forms of violence. But some perpetrators on the programme will continue to cause violence and therefore the victim and their children will not see positive outcomes in all cases.
- A significant number of perpetrators are unlikely to accept a referral for support (as the service users (victims) stated, they believed their perpetrator would not have gone on a programme). Therefore, even when available, it is unlikely that a significant cohort will engage.
- The term voluntary referral is slightly misleading, or a 'grey area'. Perpetrators are encouraged to attend by workers (e.g. social care and police) and often have a personal incentive to attend as a way of gaining access to their children for example.
- There will be a continued gap in perpetrator service provision in Sheffield until a commissioning process is funded and completed and it will also take time before it is fully mobilised.
- Even when mobilised a Sheffield perpetrator programme will only meet the needs of a small proportion of perpetrators; those who voluntarily agree to a referral, start and complete the programme.

**Action – The need remains for voluntary perpetrator support in Sheffield; this is a gap which needs to be filled. Sheffield needs to ensure current and future bids are supported and future funding opportunities for perpetrator programmes/ initiatives are applied for. Sheffield needs to have a partnership approach to supporting perpetrator initiative bids and also to any future mobilisation.**

**Action – Monitor the outcomes of the VAWG action on perpetrators; with a view of using the latest evidence and to observe what perpetrator initiatives are funded and supported and how this could be applied to Sheffield.**