

***DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
PERPETRATOR  
PROGRAMMES AND  
ASSOCIATED WOMEN'S  
SERVICES:  
PRINCIPLES AND  
MINIMUM STANDARDS OF  
PRACTICE***

**Safeguarding Children and Young People  
North East England  
Regional Inter-agency Procedures Project**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Respect's work**

#### **RESPECT**

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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 its members reflects the fact that men against women perpetrate the vast majority of domestic violence.

### **1.2 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 children
- 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.

### **1.3 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, well-being 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, and parents' violence to children. The unequal power relations between men and women account for the fact that men against women rather than vice versa perpetrate the vast majority of domestic violence.

#### **1.4 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 where women are violent to male partners. Such cases are neither the same as – nor symmetrically opposite to – men's violence to women.

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.

#### **1.5 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.

##### **1.5.1 Ways that perpetrator programmes can raise the risk**

#### ***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. 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.

#### ***Perpetrators can abuse their attendance on a perpetrator programme to further manipulate or control their partners and other***

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
- 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).

### **1.5.2 Ways that perpetrator programmes can increase safety**

#### ***Changing his behaviour***

Perpetrator programmes cannot 'cure' violent men or guarantee dramatic transformation, as behavioural change is a long and complex process. However, research<sup>3</sup> 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**.

#### ***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 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**.

#### ***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 offset 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.

***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.***

## **1.6 Glossary**

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

### ***Associated women's services***

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 Section 1.3.

### ***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 group work 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.

### ***Projects***

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

### ***Women***

Refers to women experiencing domestic violence.

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## **2. PRINCIPLES AND PHILOSOPHY FOR WORKING WITH MEN'S VIOLENCE TO PARTNERS AND EX-PARTNERS**

### **2.1 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 year. A woman is killed every three days in England or Wales by a current or former partner as a result of domestic violence.

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. Organisations 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.

### **2.2 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.

### **2.3 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 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.

## **2.4 Men can change**

Men can change their attitudes and behaviour and learn positive, equal and non-violent ways of relating. 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.

## **2.5 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.

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.

## **2.6 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.

## **2.7 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.

## **2.8 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.

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### **3. MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PRACTICE: ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES**

#### **3.1 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.

It is essential that Projects be 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.

#### **3.2 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 women's services for children and young people.

#### **3.3 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.

#### **3.4 Appropriate Responses**

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

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

### **3.5 Information sharing between the perpetrator programme and women's services**

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 so that they can make pro-active contact with each woman.

### **3.6 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.

### **3.7 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 policy 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.

### **3.8 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.

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 (e.g. Braille, community languages).

### **3.9 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.

### **3.10 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 2, in particular 2.7 and 2.8.

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

Organisations should ensure that staff do this work by choice.

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.

### **3.11 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. 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.

### **3.12 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.

For all workers the basic training 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 and 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.

### **3.13 Supervision**

There are specific stresses in this work. Projects must build in provision for appropriate supervision / consultancy aside from line management with appropriate external 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. 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

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

### **3.14 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:

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

Less experienced workers are likely to need more time.

### **3.15 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.

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

### **3.16 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.

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## **4. MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PRACTICE: PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES**

### **4.1 Aims of work with men**

This 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.

### **4.2 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 children
- Encourage men to adopt positive respectful and egalitarian ways
- Focus on men as perpetrators and not as victims
- Avoid collusion with perpetrators' justifications for their behaviour.

### **4.3 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.
- 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, CAFCASS 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.

#### **4.4 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.

#### **4.5 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.

#### **4.6 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.

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 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
- Extra help with written work.

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

#### **4.7 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.

##### **4.7.1 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.

##### **4.7.2 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.

#### **4.8 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 group work-linked contact, on the specific issues of men addressing their violent behaviour, should be **at least 75 hours over a minimum of 30 weeks.**

#### **4.9 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 than they feel comfortable or safe to work with effectively
- Workers should run no more than two groups per day or three groups per week.

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## 5. MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PRACTICE: ASSOCIATED WOMEN'S SERVICES

### 5.1 Aims of work with women

The aims of work with women are:

- To increase the physical safety and emotional & mental well-being of women and children who have experienced domestic violence
- To promote realistic expectations with women regarding their (ex)partner's attendance on a perpetrator programme and ensure that the service offered to her (ex)partner doesn't put her at further risk.

### 5.2 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 that they may or may not have access to.
- 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.

### 5.3 Provision of services

All projects working with perpetrators of domestic violence must ensure that a range of appropriate services are provided for partners and ex-partners, which give her choice and are fitted around her needs. These services must either be provided directly by a linked women's service or by an appropriate partner agency. It is not appropriate for perpetrator service workers to provide this service.

It is the Project's responsibility to ensure that women's services receive sufficient resources to enable them to achieve the minimum standards, in keeping with the level of resources available to the perpetrator programme. It is the Project's responsibility to ensure that their women's service / partner agency works to acceptable standards.

#### 5.3.1 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
- Accessible to women with disabilities

- Accessible to women with language needs
- Accessible to women with cultural needs
- 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 support needs, further work or appropriate referral to other services should be done.

### **5.3.2 Range of Services**

Women's Services / Partner Projects 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 her 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

## **5.4 Pro-active contact**

### **5.4.1 Initial contact**

Unless the woman has directly and specifically requested otherwise, she should be given, or informed about, the following, by post or telephone call within one week of her (ex)partner's first contact with the Project:

- Information about the perpetrator programme:
- Her (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 telling her that her behaviours are abusive, by telling her to take 'time-outs' or by insisting that she needs therapy or counselling either during or after his attendance on the programme
- Information about how she can access information about the programme and her (ex)partner's attendance
- Information to discourage her from having unrealistic expectations of men changing as a result of their attendance on the programme
- Information about services available to her:
- 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
- Details of other specialist services, including crisis services, such as Women's Aid, Police; advice services for legal, immigration and housing problems and other appropriate local and national services

### **5.4.2 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.

#### **5.4.3 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

#### **5.5 Specific safety concerns**

Projects must pro-actively contact a woman as a matter of urgency if they have a specific concern for her or her child's safety

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