

# Working with perpetrators of domestic violence

## Reducing risks and saving money

We are DVIP – the Domestic Violence Intervention Project. We have 20 years' experience of effective work with male perpetrators of abuse and with the women and children affected by their violence.

Evidence shows that our programmes reduce domestic abuse, reduce its harmful effects, and reduce the risks it presents to women and children. This in turn lessens the demands on many other services and saves public money.

## About our services

### Who does DVIP work with?

We work with male perpetrators of domestic violence, their women partners and ex-partners, and their children. We work with men who are both known to and outside the criminal justice system, taking referrals from a wide range of agencies.

We take a holistic approach to domestic violence and have developed services for parents, children and young adults. We have also run a unique domestic violence service for Arabic-speaking men and women for 10 years.

While most domestic violence perpetrators are men<sup>1</sup>, we can also offer interventions to reduce women's abuse of male partners, and abuse in gay and lesbian relationships.

### How does DVIP work with perpetrators?

Our service has three core elements: expert risk assessment, a violence prevention programme for perpetrators and a women's support service. The violence prevention programme works to bring about changes in perpetrators' attitudes and behaviours. It is not anger management or counselling; it is a group programme designed specifically to reduce domestic violence. We use a combination of cognitive, therapeutic and teaching techniques to promote and support changes.

Our local partnerships are delivering measurable benefits for the community and for professionals who work across a wide range of agencies. Our programmes are adding value to local strategies that focus on reducing crime and disorder, increasing community safety, safeguarding children, and improving families' health and wellbeing.

This leaflet introduces our services and how we work.

If you would like to know more, please get in touch.

### Why does a programme for male perpetrators need to work with women?

The women's support service is an integral part of our service and critical to its success. We work directly with partners and ex-partners and empower them to make safer choices for themselves and their children. Our support improves women's health, wellbeing and resilience. Their engagement helps us to hold men accountable and to assess changes in their behaviour.

### What's the evidence that DVIP is effective?

We measure a range of outcomes. Our monitoring shows that we reduce repeat victimisation and we reduce the frequency and severity of abuse. Referring agencies report that our service makes women and their children significantly safer, as do the women themselves.

### What does a programme cost?

It depends on the exact configuration of services. As a guide, the average cost of our services is around £125 per week for each man and his partner.

### What benefits does a programme deliver?

Reduced levels of violence reduce the demand for other agencies' services, including health, the police and social services. For example: the annual cost of looking after one child in public care is around £40,000<sup>2</sup>. For less than this, we can work with up to 35 families per year, depending on contract arrangements, including families with children subject to child protection proceedings. Because we help to reduce and manage the risks of domestic violence, children can be more effectively protected outside the public care system.



# How our intervention programme works

A programme for perpetrators of domestic violence is a complex intervention. It works to change men's abusive behaviour, making it possible for them to address deep-rooted attitudes and responses. Our understanding is that perpetrators are fully responsible for their behaviour, and they can be helped to stop damaging themselves and their families.

Our service has three core parts: expert risk assessment; a violence prevention programme (VPP) for men; and an integral women's support service (WSS) for their women partners and ex-partners.

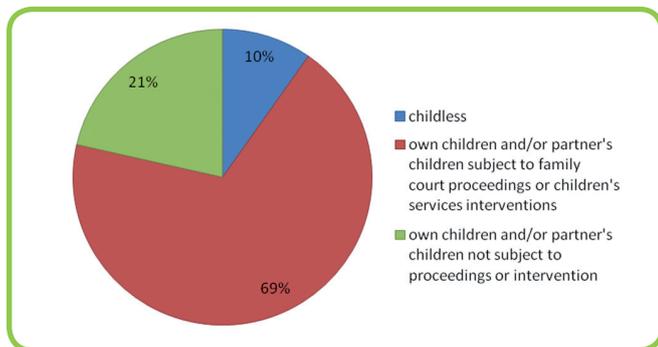
- Our **expert risk assessment** team undertakes specialist analysis of the risks a man presents. We conduct extensive interviews and gather relevant evidence. We analyse each man's history of domestic and other violence, his alcohol and drug use, his attitudes to his abuse and levels of denial. We consider the impact of any exposure to violence on his or his partners' children. This assessment then informs the risk management as the case progresses. We can deliver written reports to referrers, with our analysis and specific risk management recommendations.
- Our **violence prevention programme** includes up to 80 hours of structured intervention for perpetrators, delivered in a group setting. It is designed specifically to challenge and reduce domestic violence. We use a range of cognitive, therapeutic and teaching approaches to bring about changes in men's attitudes and behaviour. We focus on ending physical and sexual violence; ending other forms of abuse; developing relationship skills; and parenting.
- Our integral **women's support service** proactively contacts the woman partner or most recent ex-partner of each man referred to DVIP. We help with safety planning; we offer support for her mental and emotional health; and we promote realistic expectations about her partner's progress and change. Women can choose different types of one-to-one or structured group support.

We always work in close partnership with local agencies and contribute to multi-agency groups such as Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs). We work as part of a community's overall response and can provide domestic violence training to support other agencies' work.

*"Your risk assessment report was an eye-opener. Without it, I would never have thought in such detail about the dynamics of a relationship in a Muslim family. It has shown me another dimension of risk to children, and a completely different risk management strategy was devised as a result."*

Social Worker, London Borough of Westminster

## Partnerships that keep children safer



In the vast majority of cases we see, a man's violence is affecting children.

In one year, 410 men were referred to us. Only 40 men (10%) had no children. 370 men's violence (90% of referrals) affected children and at least 728 children were affected - an average of two children per case<sup>3</sup>.

We have well-established, effective partnerships with local authorities in and around London. As part of an overall community response, our programmes are reducing the costs of domestic violence for our commissioning partners. Our work keeps women and children safer, and reduces the demand for safeguarding children in public care.

### Measurable benefits

- We reduce the incidence of repeat victimisation.
- We reduce the frequency and severity of physical violence and emotional abuse experienced by women, and therefore reduce the demands on other agencies.
- We enable some men to cease physical violence entirely. There are different impacts as men engage with and complete different stages of the programme - there are measurable gains from an engagement as short as 12 weeks.
- We provide opportunities for men to end a cycle of family abuse and develop healthy, non-abusive relationships with future partners.
- We achieve lasting improvements in women and children's safety by working directly with each woman, whether or not her partner completes the full treatment programme. We may support her to leave; we may enable others to make more informed decisions about keeping her safe.
- We support and inform professionals' practice in working with vulnerable women and safeguarding children at risk, by providing specialist analysis of risk and how to manage it effectively.
- We have enabled children to stay safely with their families rather than enter public care.

# One family, from one of our partnerships

*For one London borough, we provide a range of services designed to reduce and manage risk. The services include: expert risk assessments for cases subject to public law proceedings; assessments of partners' vulnerability to abuse; assessment reports for cases where a child protection plan is in place; and a violence prevention programme and women's support service.*

*The cost of these services, covering 15 to 20 referrals, is around £35,000 per year. The case of one family illustrates their value.*

Children's Services were considering taking three children into care because of their exposure to domestic abuse. Their father, P, had a long history of violence towards to their mother, his ex-partner N. This included attempted strangulation and threats to kill. There had been numerous police call-outs because of P's violence, and N had suffered a miscarriage following one prolonged attack.

The two older children were placed on interim care orders, and Children's Services referred the family to DVIP for assessment and recommendations.

Our risk assessment of P concluded that, without intervention, there was a significant risk of further abuse. His history of severe violence was combined with high levels of hostility and little understanding of the impact of his abuse. P agreed to attend a programme, but the prognosis was not optimistic.

Our assessment of N's vulnerability concluded that repeated violence had significantly affected her self-esteem, resilience and ability to focus on her own and her children's safety. We recommended a programme to help address these concerns.

Both P and N undertook programmes with DVIP. After P started the programme, there were no disclosures of further violence. N is now considered less vulnerable, and is in a new, healthier relationship. P now has no contact with the children, after deciding to withdraw from the Family Court process. The three children are living with N, doing well, and no longer subject to a formal Child Protection Plan.

**If the two older children had gone into care, the cost would have been around £80,000 per year, or £1,600 per week. With our interventions, that did not happen.**

## Evidence that working with perpetrators is effective

*In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the costs of domestic violence to society, and increasing interest in the evidence for interventions' effectiveness<sup>4</sup>.*

*We provide evidence of our success through a range of outcome measures. The following figures, from an evaluation of DVIP's service in three London boroughs<sup>5</sup>, are not unusual.*

We measure levels of repeat victimisation. With continued intervention with the victim and/or the perpetrator of domestic violence, **we reduced the incidence of repeat victimisation by 87% to 89%.**

We measure the frequency and severity of reported violence when men are on the programme. 70% of women reported that they experienced no further violence since their involvement with our service.

We collect and analyse referring agencies' evaluations of their clients' safety. For example, 78% of referring social workers

assessed that the children were much safer or safer since their engagement with DVIP.

We collect and analyse referrers' assessments of the value of our expert risk assessment. These are overwhelmingly positive: 89% of referring social workers found our risk assessment 'very useful' in assisting the care planning process.

We collect and analyse women's assessments of their own safety and their children's safety. 65% of women reported that they felt safer or much safer since their involvement with us and 69% said their children were safer or much safer.

*"I found DVIP's risk assessment report extremely beneficial in terms of putting together a plan for this family. It is detailed, comprehensive, informative and objective. It brought to my attention issues of risk I would have never thought about."*

Social Worker, London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

# The highest professional standards

*We are proud that our programme is one of the first in the UK to be fully accredited by Respect, the membership association and accreditation body for domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK. To gain accreditation, services are assessed against high standards in over 100 competencies that cover staff skills, service delivery and management.*

*The Respect Standard is supported across government, and by the Association of Directors of Children's Services, CAFCASS and major national domestic violence charities.*

## References

1. HM Government (2010) *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls*
  2. London Borough of Haringey (2010), cited in Respect (2010) *Domestic Violence Perpetrators: working with the cause of the problem* London
  3. DVIP referrals monitoring, July 2009 to June 2010
  4. Howarth, V., Stimpson, L., Barran, D. and Robinson, A. (2009) *Safety in Numbers: Summary of Findings and Recommendations from a Multi-Site Evaluation of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors* London: Hestia Fund
  5. Rajagopalan, V., Price, P. and Donaghy, P. (2008) *Improving Women and Children's Safety: Report and evaluation of the East London domestic violence service* London: DVIP
- CAADA (2010) *Saving lives, saving money: MARACs and high risk domestic abuse* London: CAADA
- Respect (2010) *Respect briefing paper: Evidence of effects of domestic violence perpetrator programmes on women's safety* London: Respect
- Westmarland, N., Kelly, L. and Chalder- Mills, J. (2010)

*"DVIP are substantial and important partners, with whom we would want to maintain a long-term relationship."*

Michael Coote, National Commissioning and Partnerships Manager, CAFCASS

DVIP is known as an authority in the UK on effective practice in addressing the problem of domestic violence. We now work with over 1,500 men, women and children each year in the Greater London area. We take referrals from around 30 London boroughs and eight neighbouring counties.



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