



Title: Tackling Domestic Violence: Effective Interventions and Approaches (Home Office Research Study 290)

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SCS topic headings: Personal Safety; Home Safety; Partnership Working; Home Safety; Safety of Vulnerable Groups; Equalities & Diversity

This document is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.

Summary of the review's aim

This report pulls together the findings from the evaluation of 27 domestic violence projects. The report presents findings and recommendations on which interventions and approaches work to support victims and tackle domestic violence.

In 1998 the Home Office announced the Crime Reduction Programme which aimed to develop and implement an integrated approach to reducing crime and making communities safer. As part of this programme the 'Violence Against Women Initiative' was launched in July 2000. It was specifically aimed to find out which approaches and practices were effective in supporting victims and tackling domestic violence, rape and sexual assault.

Of 34 projects, 27 focused on domestic violence and seven on rape and sexual assault and were divided into seven packages according to their main interventions (criminal and civil justice; protection and prevention; black and other ethnic minorities; health; multi-service; education; and rural work).

(Seven different independent evaluation teams were commissioned to assess the projects in terms of their development, impact and cost. Findings from all of the evaluations have been collated and a series of research reports and concise practitioner guides have been published or were planned.)

An abridged list of previously published 'Crime Reduction Programme: Violence Against Women Initiative' reports is on pp. i-ii.

Outcomes

The main outcome of evaluating the 27 projects is a series of recommendations across a series of themes:

Primary prevention

- Primary prevention programmes should be implemented in both primary and secondary schools
- Primary prevention should at least be included in the Personal, Social Health and Citizenship Education curriculum.
- Programmes should ideally be approached from a school-wide perspective with a cross-curricular approach.
- All teachers providing primary prevention programmes should be trained and be confident in using the project materials, including how to handle disclosures.
- For effective implementation, teachers should feel supported to deal with any issues raised through primary prevention via local education authority and multi-agency links.

Disclosing domestic violence

- Appropriate training should increase awareness about domestic violence, as well as how to ask about it.
- Good multi-agency relationships and referral systems are necessary for routine enquiry to enable safe disclosure and provide further support for the women concerned. Close working relationships with specialised domestic abuse agencies, such as Women's Aid and the police, should be established prior to the introduction of routine enquiry.
- Mechanisms need to be in place for all staff to receive information, advice and support via various methods, such as supervision, ongoing reviews, and specialist advice/support posts.

Supporting incident reporting

- Projects should aim to increase reported (recorded) incidents in the first instance as an intermediate aim and decrease reported (recorded) incidents as a longer-term aim.
- Projects should work closely with the police and provide specific interventions that support engagement with the criminal justice system in order to increase rates of reporting and arrests.
- More research is needed on the use of photographic evidence and its impact, particularly at the police interview and plea entering stages.
- The 'patchiness' of appropriate police responses to domestic violence still needs to be addressed.

Reducing repeat victimisation

- Advocacy, support and target hardening should be individually tailored to the needs of the woman and her children's safety.
- Intensive advocacy and support, involving on-going contact with the same worker, should be encouraged for those most at risk.

- Risk assessments should be carried out for all women and children and such assessments should be clear, consistent and regularly reviewed (and changes made to the interventions offered if necessary).
- Attention should be given to perpetrators 'tactic changes' that may occur when target hardening or other safety measures are used.
- Further research on repeat victimisation should use self-report diaries as well as police recorded incidents in order to measure 'true' repeat victimisation.

Support through one-to-one and group work

- Outreach support should be structured, tailored to the needs of the individual and incorporate support for children.
- Projects and evaluators should be clear about the intended outcomes of providing 'emotional' and 'general' individual work and develop means of measurement.

Children and young people in schools who may or may not be living with domestic violence

- Primary prevention in schools should involve a cross-curricular approach and include student-centred interactive lessons on relationships and abuse, visual input such as drama, plus training for teachers and multi-agency support.
- Specific Individual and group support for children and young people should include work on being safe, self-esteem, feelings and past experiences, school and family, as well as use of video input and discussion. Group work may be preceded by one-to one work and be more appropriate for those already in a safe environment.

Evaluation measures and approaches

- The collection of comparable data across the project packages was problematic for a number of reasons. However, the ability to evidence 'what works' through evaluation is vital in the development of effective service provision.
- Lessons learned were:
 - data collection should be negotiated between funders and projects leading to a realistic and 'doable' data collection system (electronic if possible)
 - where possible, a dedicated data monitoring post should be costed on top of service provision costs
 - more guidance should be made available on the collection of data, with an emphasis on the ability to provide 'trackable' data
 - projects should collect as much cost data as possible, record which interventions the costs relate to and be clear about what the data does and does not include.
- Data gathering and analysis in order to assess attrition is key to the evaluation of projects involving legal advocacy.
- Evaluation approaches to assess attrition should also use and record the impact of evidence on pleas entered and court outcome. This would address the question raised in this overview of how much/what evidence is needed to

'prove' domestic violence in court and might help prevent evidence being used by the defence specifically with the aim of discrediting witnesses.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The ability of projects to evidence 'what works' through evaluation is vital in the development of effective service provision. The problems encountered indicate that the following changes should be carried out.

- Data collection should be negotiated between funders and projects. These negotiations should lead to a realistic and 'doable' data collection system (electronic if possible).
- Where possible, a dedicated data monitoring post should be costed on top of service provision costs.
- More guidance should be made available on the collection of data, with an emphasis on the ability to provide 'trackable' data.
- Projects should collect as much cost data as possible, record which interventions the costs relate to and be clear about what the data does and does not include.

Future areas for evaluation and research

- Research into the use of evidence is needed to ensure that witnesses and projects are recording the required data and the police are collecting and passing on evidence that will be useful to the CPS.
- Further evaluation of group work is needed, particularly in relation to the use of group work for children.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

The key evaluation aim was to identify 'what worked' to support victims and tackle domestic violence via an assessment of project design, implementation, delivery, outputs, impact and cost. The evaluation teams combined quantitative and qualitative methods, which included:

- 518 interviews with project staff and partner agencies
- 174 interviews with domestic violence victims/survivors
- 22 focus groups
- 2,935 questionnaires.

Quantitative data (gathered mostly through the police) were collected on 80,350 domestic violence victims/survivors, 35,349 domestic violence perpetrators, and 5,687 children living in domestic violence situations.

The qualitative and quantitative data is used throughout the report to evidence statements and conclusions. Having comparable data across projects and packages was central to understanding 'what works'.

The 'evaluation approaches' section (pp.7-11) explains ethical reasons for selecting appropriate data collection methods; the importance for clear definitions about domestic violence to support consistency in research; and, data access, and its cost.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Please contact info@scsn.org.uk

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