

Cordis Bright and West Midlands
Police and Crime Commissioner

Research into 'what works' with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators: key lessons

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west midlands
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1 About this report

1.1 Introduction

The Home Office commissioned the West Midlands' Police and Crime Commissioner and Cordis Bright to conduct research to improve the understanding of 'what works' with domestic abuse perpetrators to reduce harm, especially once a perpetrator has been identified. The research has a specific focus on Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes (DAPPs). This research builds on, and aims to contribute to, improving the knowledge base in this area.

This research aims to take an approach which is supportive of developing the evidence base of 'what works' in delivering interventions for domestic abuse (DA) perpetrators. We recognise that the field is evolving and that those individuals and organisations involved in this area are striving to achieve the best outcomes for victims and perpetrators.

However, despite these shared goals, this is a highly complex area comprising different perspectives and viewpoints which can be a challenge to disentangle. There are passionate views and the issues are often contentious. We recognise that not everyone will agree with everything in this research and this summary of key lessons. However, we hope it provokes discussion and critical challenge so that better knowledge can be developed about what works with perpetrators to reduce harm for victims and improve safety.

This report provides a summary of the key lessons based on our interpretation of the findings from the four key research outputs summarised in Figure 1. The evidence that sits behind the key lessons outlined in this summary can be found in these four detailed reports. These should be read in conjunction with this summary of key lessons.

Figure 1 Table summarising the four key reports that inform this summary

Report	Description
Report 1: Research into 'what works' with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators: key stakeholder views	This report considers key stakeholders' views on the characteristics of successful DAPPs, the types of evidence needed to support the commissioning of DAPPs, the level of need across the West Midlands for DAPPs, and the level of existing provision and whether this meets the level of need. It is based on in-depth interviews with 47 key stakeholders including commissioners, providers, and policy and academic experts.
Report 2: Evidence review: What works in delivering effective	This review outlines the development of DVPPs, potential characteristics of successful DVPPs, and approaches to assessing behaviour change.

Report	Description
Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPPs)?	It also highlights methodological issues with existing evaluations of DVPPs.
Report 3: Evidence review. What works in the identification and risk assessment of Domestic Abuse Perpetrators?	This rapid evidence review discusses the wider context of domestic abuse, and existing and emerging research on current and prospective approaches to identification and risk assessment of domestic abuse perpetrators.
Report 4: Research into 'what works' with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators: need and supply analysis.	This report presents an analysis of need and supply concerning DAPPs in the West Midlands. This includes the prevalence of domestic abuse and perpetrators, national approaches to working with perpetrators, and an overview of supply in the West Midlands.

In addition, as part of this programme of research we have produced:

- A commissioning toolkit on interventions for DA perpetrators including approaches to needs assessments.
- A brief for evaluating and measuring the impact of perpetrator programmes.

1.2 Definition of domestic abuse

This report is in line with the definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which states that:

- Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—
 - A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
 - the behaviour is abusive.
- Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—
 - physical or sexual abuse;
 - violent or threatening behaviour;
 - controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - economic abuse (see subsection (4));
 - psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

- “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—
 - acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
 - obtain goods or services.
- For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

More information about the definition of Domestic Abuse and the definition of “personally connected” can be viewed [here](#).¹

Domestic violence is also known as spousal abuse, battering, family violence, and intimate partner violence (IPV) (James et al., 2013: 360). Within this review, we use the term domestic abuse and violence to broadly capture these conceptualisations.²

Controlling behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.

1.3 Areas of exploration

This research has focused on exploring the following key areas:

- Understanding the level of need across the West Midlands for interventions that work with perpetrators to prevent further harm.
- Understanding the level of existing provision and whether this meets the level of need across the West Midlands.

¹ See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/section/1/enacted> last accessed 26th May 2021.

² Please note that we used the previous cross-government definition of domestic abuse during fieldwork – see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/intimate-partner-violence-domestic-abuse-programmes>

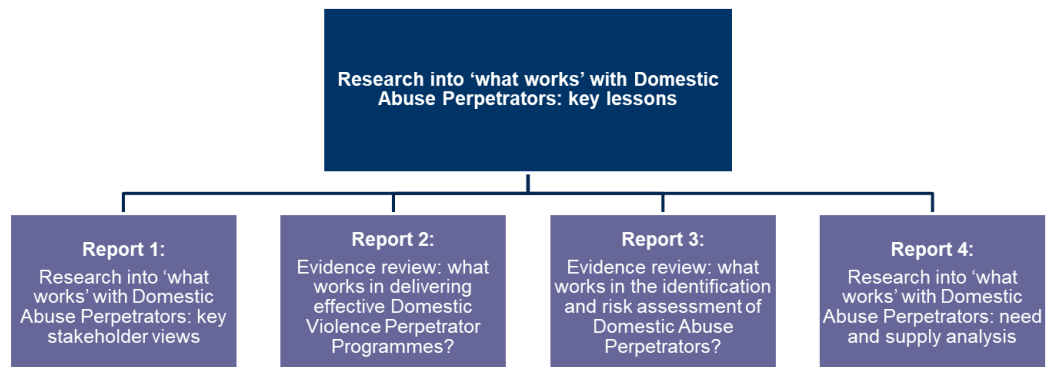
- The characteristics of successful programmes, services, and initiatives which address the abuse and violence of perpetrators.
- Understanding what types of evidence are needed to support the commissioning of interventions and approaches that reduce the domestic abuse of perpetrators.

1.4 Approach and methods

All research approaches, methods and tools have been designed by Cordis Bright and agreed with the West Midlands PCC before use in the field. The research was rapid in nature and conducted between the middle of March and end of April 2021.

This summary report summarises the key findings from the four research outputs outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Relationship between key lessons report and key outputs



Each of these individual reports includes information about the methods used and the limitations and challenges associated with these.

This summary presents our interpretation of the key findings of these reports and highlights the key lessons from them to help support the continued development of DAPPs and effective ways of working with domestic abuse perpetrators.

2 Understanding need and supply

2.1 Overview

This section summarises the key lessons from the research to support understanding of the need for and the current supply of DAPPs. It is based on an analysis of need and supply in the West Midlands, although it is likely that the lessons highlighted will also be applicable for commissioners elsewhere.

Key lessons were identified in the following areas:

- Prevalence of domestic abuse is increasing at regional and national levels.
- Commissioning should be informed by the characteristics of perpetrators.
- Existing DAPP provision is varied, but insufficiently understood.
- Action is required to grow DAPP capacity to better match levels of need.

2.2 Prevalence of domestic abuse is increasing

Analysis of police recorded crime data and Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data highlights the scale of domestic abuse related offences within the West Midlands and nationally.

Nationally, police recorded domestic abuse-related offences have increased consistently in recent years, and domestic abuse-related offences, as a proportion of all recorded offences, have also risen considerably, accounting for 17% of recorded offences in 2020 (842,813 offences). **This represents a 100% increase in the number of offences flagged as domestic abuse-related over a four-year period.**

This trend is mirrored in the West Midlands, with the number of crimes flagged as domestic abuse related more than doubling since 2016/17 in all seven local authority areas.

CSEW data provides an insight into the number of West Midlands residents who have experienced domestic abuse and violence, using self-reported data. Data for 2019/20 shows that an estimated 9% of women and 4.3% of men aged 16 to 74 in the West Midlands have experienced domestic abuse in the last year. This is higher than the national average, and represents an estimated 138,572 victims in that 12 month period.

Further emphasising the scale of need, in 2020 38% of children's episodes of need recorded by local authorities within the West Midlands Police force area had domestic abuse as a risk factor, higher than the England average of 32%.

Viewed together, this data presents **a clear picture of higher levels of domestic abuse in the West Midlands than the national average, and a trend**

which is increasing year-on-year. Whilst this data focuses on numbers of offences, incidents and victims, it can serve as a proxy for number of perpetrators (whilst recognising the likelihood of repeat perpetration, meaning the number of perpetrators will be notably lower than the number of offences, incidents or victims).

2.3 Commissioning should be informed by the characteristics of perpetrators

Data regarding the characteristics of domestic abuse perpetrators is limited, and highlights the **need for more effective and coordinated collation and analysis of perpetrator data at local, regional and national levels.**

Where data is available, it suggests that characteristics of domestic abuse perpetrators does vary between Local Authority areas in the West Midlands, and that this variation is not always in-line with variations in the characteristics of the wider population. **Commissioning of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes requires an understanding of local characteristics of perpetrators in order to enable services to be tailored to local need.**

Determining the number of domestic abuse perpetrators within the West Midlands is challenging. Analysis relies more heavily on police-recorded data than estimating numbers of victims, and so again is likely to under-represent the scale of perpetrating, and to be skewed towards higher risk perpetrators who are more likely to be known to police. In addition to this, data on repeat perpetrators was not available due to the complexity of correctly identifying these individuals over prolonged periods of time.

However, available data does provide insights into the characteristics of perpetrators. These insights are important for commissioners to consider, as understanding the characteristics of perpetrators will enable DAPPs to be commissioned which are appropriate for local need, and which may have been shown to be particularly effective with certain groups.

- **Gender:** In the West Midlands, police data shows that across all local authorities, perpetrators are overwhelmingly male (approximately 90% of offenders).
- **Ethnicity:** Police data on ethnicity of offenders does not suggest that any ethnic group is disproportionately involved in perpetration in the West Midlands. However, when examining this data at a local authority level, it is clear that there is a high level of local variation. This highlights the need for commissioning strategies to consider local variation.
- **Age:** Police data shows that across the West Midlands and across its individual local authorities, reported domestic abuse is a crime predominantly perpetrated by those under the age of 45. Specifically, those aged 25 to 34 are overrepresented amongst perpetrators of recorded domestic abuse related crimes. This age group constitutes 40% of all perpetrators of recorded domestic abuse, whilst only comprising 15% of the overall West Midlands population.

- **Overall prevalence of domestic abuse:** The number of crimes flagged as domestic abuse related varies between local authority area, broadly in line with the differences in total population. This highlights the need for the scale of commissioned provision to take into account variations in population size.

2.4 Existing DAPP provision is varied, but insufficiently understood

Information regarding the current provision of DAPPs within the West Midlands was limited. Whilst this research has attempted to identify the full range of provision operating within the region, we recognise that there may be services that are not included. This may be the case particularly with agencies which refer domestic abuse perpetrators to services which work with perpetrators as part of a wider client group, but which are not discrete and dedicated DAPPs. In addition, information available for some DAPPs that were identified may no longer be applicable, although every effort has been made to verify what is presented in this report.

Overall, the research identified 12 DAPPs operating in some or all of the West Midlands' local authority areas. These DAPPs worked with perpetrators with a range of characteristics and operated a range of models including both mandatory and voluntary provision, group and one-to-one programmes, with programme lengths ranging from two sessions to no fixed time period.

Data on the numbers of perpetrators currently being supported by these DAPPs was very limited. In addition, data on the impacts and outcomes of the DAPPs was also very limited. This reflects the wider national and international picture regarding the evidence base for DAPPs, and is explored further in Section 5.

As a result, it is not possible to determine how the various formats and characteristics of the DAPPs being offered in the West Midlands map onto identified need, or whether the effectiveness of DAPPs varies between different programme formats. This emphasises the importance of undertaking a thorough mapping exercise to identify existing provision to inform commissioning decisions.

2.5 Action is required to grow DAPP capacity to better match levels of need

Due to the limited data available on the scale of existing provision, it is challenging to determine with any degree of accuracy where existing gaps in provision may be. However, estimates of the number of perpetrators in the West Midlands compared to the existing capacity of DAPP provision demonstrate that **existing supply of DAPPs in the West Midlands is likely to be lower than the total level of need.**

This highlights the need for increased overall provision of DAPPs in the region if commissioners wish to offer support that matches existing levels of need. It is also important to take into account recent trends showing a year-on-year increase in prevalence of domestic abuse, suggesting that **if action is not taken**

to increase capacity of DAPP provision, the gap between need and supply is likely to grow further.

In addition, the evidence presented in this report highlights the need for both commissioners and providers of DAPPs in the West Midlands to work together to obtain an accurate sense of the scale, scope and effectiveness of what is currently being provided across the region. It is important that this exercise captures both services operating at a regional level, and services operating within individual local authority areas or at smaller scales.

As part of our analysis of need and supply in the West Midlands, we modelled a series of scenarios, comparing the estimated number of perpetrators in the West Midlands to the estimated capacity of existing DAPP provision. Full details of the calculations, assumptions and caveats associated with this modelling is presented in the standalone report *Research into 'what works' with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators: need and supply analysis* which has been produced as part of this research.

The following two modelling assumptions have been used to account for levels of repeat perpetration:

- **Modelling assumption A:** 3% of perpetrators account for 90% of total intimate partner abuse crime (for this estimate, it is assumed that the other 10% of crime is committed by one-off perpetrators).
 - Source: Barnham et al. (2017): research into offending in Thames Valley.³
- **Modelling assumption B:** 2% of perpetrators account for 80% of harm (for this estimate, it is assumed that the other 20% of harm is committed by one-off perpetrators).
 - Source: Bland and Ariel (2015): research into offending in Suffolk.⁴

When considering the scenarios presented in this section, it is important to note the following caveats:

- Capacity will not be uniform across the West Midlands, as some DAPPs are only available in certain local authority areas.
- The capacity estimates do not take into account the varying eligibility criteria and risk levels of DAPPs identified. Similarly, the estimates for the

³ Barnham, L. et al. (2017). Targeting Escalation of Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from 52,000 Offenders. *Cambridge Journal of Evidence-Based Policing* 1, pp.116-142

⁴ Bland, M. and Ariel, B. (2015). Targeting escalation in reported domestic abuse: Evidence from 36,000 callouts. *International Criminal Justice Review* 25(1), pp.30-53

number of perpetrators does not differentiate between high, medium and low risk perpetrators.

- The modelling assumptions used to estimate the number of perpetrators make a number of assumptions about repeat perpetrator levels as data on repeat perpetrators was not available.
- Estimates of the number of perpetrators were based on either police recorded incident and crime data or CSEW data. Both of these sources of data are likely to underestimate the true scale of domestic abuse incidents, victims and perpetrators.

These scenarios have been produced to demonstrate the likely difference between existing levels of need and supply in the West Midlands, and are not intended to be used to inform the detail and scale of commissioning strategies.

Figure 3 presents these modelled scenarios, which show that estimates suggest existing supply is **at the highest end sufficient for 45% of the estimated number of perpetrators**, and **at the lowest end sufficient for 7% the estimated number of perpetrators**.

Figure 3: Need and supply scenarios for the West Midlands

Scenario	Estimated number of perpetrators	Estimated DAPP capacity	Capacity as % of number of perpetrators
Modelling assumption A			
Scenario 1 (low perpetrator estimate, high capacity)	7,009	3,138	45%
Scenario 2 (low perpetrator estimate, low capacity)	7,009	2,002	29%
Scenario 3 (medium-high perpetrator estimate, high capacity)	14,286	3,138	22%
Scenario 4 (medium-high perpetrator estimate, low capacity)	14,286	2,002	14%
Modelling assumption B			
Scenario 5 (medium-low perpetrator estimate, high capacity)	13,875	3,138	23%

Scenario	Estimated number of perpetrators	Estimated DAPP capacity	Capacity as % of number of perpetrators
Scenario 6 (medium-low perpetrator estimate, low capacity)	13,875	2,002	14%
Scenario 7 (high perpetrator estimate, high capacity)	28,280	3,138	11%
Scenario 8 (high perpetrator estimate, low capacity)	28,280	2,002	7%

3 Strategic lessons

3.1 Overview

This section summarises key lessons from the research around improving the system to ensure that programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse are effective. Key lessons were identified in the research in the following areas:

- Recognising and responding to the scale of the challenge.
- Taking a whole system approach.
- Greater collaboration and transparency.
- Joint commissioning approaches.
- Addressing the causes of perpetrator behaviour.
- Developing and using the evidence base.
- Taking a theories of change approach using logic models.
- Agreeing the focus of provision.
- Provision of parallel support for victims and families.
- Provision that reflects diversity and is culturally appropriate.

These areas are explored in more detail in the sections that follow.

3.2 Recognising and responding to the scale of the challenge

Based on consultation with stakeholders across the West Midlands there is a recognised need for DAPPs that can work to improve outcomes for victims, families and perpetrators. Stakeholders suggested that provision was needed in order to shift the onus for change from the victim to the perpetrator, to prevent and reduce repeat offending, and to break cycles of violence and abuse.

Although the need is recognised, it is also important that system stakeholders develop and agree on the scale of the challenge. This includes ensuring that decisions are based on a robust assessment of need and evidence. Two aspects of the challenge are:

- **The scale of the issue.** 2.3 million people, an estimated 5.5% of the population aged 16-74, experienced domestic abuse in the last year

according to the Crime Survey of England and Wales.⁵ However, according to SafeLives fewer than 1% of perpetrators received an intervention to change their behaviour. Frontline practitioners across England and Wales recently identified a lack of funding for perpetrator response as their biggest issue.⁶ Currently, despite affecting an estimated 5.5% of the population, and costing around £66 billion year in terms of costs to victims⁷, only £15 million of funding is being ringfenced by central government for perpetrator programmes in the 2020-2021 budget.⁸

To achieve real change in perpetrator behaviour to reduce harm and improve safety appropriate resourcing over a longer period of time is needed. This would enable further development and improvement of DAPPs and would support collaboration between commissioners, providers, and partners. Stakeholders consulted as part of this research recognised that there is not currently enough resource available to meet the need for perpetrator programmes and interventions in the West Midlands.

- **Designing and implementing programmes that achieve behaviour change.** The evidence review undertaken as part of this research shows how challenging it is to design and implement perpetrator programmes that successfully demonstrate the impact on the perpetrator, victim and family outcomes.

Stakeholders consulted as part of this research recognised the importance of multi-agency and whole system responses to approaching the issue.

3.3 A whole system approach

DAPPs have the best chance of working successfully when they are well integrated into a whole system approach, i.e. so that all stakeholders understand the aims, objectives and role of the DAPP in the wider response to domestic violence and abuse. Stakeholders consulted as part of this research recognised that multi-agency approaches are key to delivering DAPPs successfully. The reasons for this include:

⁵ See: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2020#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Crime%20Survey,last%20year%20> last accessed 18/05/2021.

⁶ See: https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/SafeLives%20Briefing%20for%20Second%20Reading%20of%20DA%20Bill%2028.04.20_0.pdf last accessed 18/05/2021.

⁷ Home Office (2019) [The economic and social costs of Domestic Abuse](#) last accessed 18/05/21.

⁸ See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966868/BUD_GET_2021_-_web.pdf last accessed 18/05/2021.

- **More effective approaches to addressing domestic abuse and managing risk.** Strategic oversight from commissioners and funders can help support agencies to work together to address domestic abuse and manage the risk.
- **Ensuring agreement on the aims and objectives of DAPPs in the whole system response.** When designing DAPPs, providers, commissioners and partners should work collaboratively and agree intended outcomes and impacts and develop a shared understanding of the inputs, activities and outputs required to achieve success (see section on logic models below). Collaborative approaches that ensure system 'ownership' and 'buy-in' to the DAPP are likely to have greater chances of success.
- **Improved DAPP design.** Collaboration between commissioners, providers and partners will help to support: (1) agreement of desired outcomes and impacts; (2) design of programmes to help ensure they support behaviour change, (3) enabling DAPPs to have a period of adaptation linked to evaluation evidence before programmes are successfully embedded, i.e. it is important to give DAPPs time to develop, adapt and innovate in light of evidence of what is and is not working to give the best chance of success, and (4) effective agreement around evaluation and the roles and responsibilities of partners in providing data.
- **Supporting tailored approaches to meet the needs of perpetrators, victims and families.** Partnership working with other services is important in facilitating a tailored approach based on risk and need which helps to keep victim/survivors and their families safe, and simultaneously maintain oversight of, and provide support to, perpetrators. DAPPs should therefore integrate with other interventions services, such as education, health, employment, housing, probation, substance abuse services, and victim services.
- **Reaching communities commonly referred to as "hard-to-reach".** By partnering with community groups, DAPPs may be able to reach people and communities commonly referred to as "hard-to-reach" (including, for example, those who DAPPs do not know how to access in the right way) who may be unaware of the provision available or mistrustful of traditional referral routes, for example, those that may involve contact with social services.

3.4 Greater openness, transparency, and effective communication

There is a need for more openness, transparency, and effective communication between system stakeholders concerning DAPPs. This would improve their implementation and the evidence base for what does and does not work in achieving perpetrator behaviour change. The evidence review and stakeholders consulted as part of this research both suggested that there was a need for improvements to multi-agency information sharing, and a culture change towards a more transparent and collaborative relationship between commissioners, providers and partner agencies (including victims services). This could also help programmes adapt and flex where things are not working.

Stakeholders reported that they would like access to more information about DAPPs including:

- Aims and objectives.
- Theories of change/logic models.
- The activity they undertake with perpetrators.
- Referral pathways into and out of DAPPs and follow-up support (including eligibility and safe exit criteria).
- Evidence concerning their impact.

3.5 Joint commissioning approaches

The evidence from the stakeholder consultation suggests that DAPPs would benefit from more effective commissioning approaches. There is potential for partners to develop joint commissioning frameworks and budget pooling. For instance, currently in the West Midlands both the Police and Crime Commissioner and local authorities are commissioning separate DAPPs. There may be strategic benefit in working together more closely to avoid DAPPs competing for referrals. Moving towards joint commissioning approaches would help support the effective commissioning of DAPPs to meet need, address gaps and avoid duplication.

3.6 DAPPs should address the causes of perpetrator behaviour

To support the development of DAPPs stakeholders recognised it was important to have a good understanding of the causes of perpetrator behaviour. They also recognised that it was important to draw upon evidence and expertise in 'what works' in supporting perpetrators to change their behaviours. The following areas may be worth considering and developing.

- **DAPPs taking a trauma informed approach.** Stakeholders recognised that perpetrators often experienced or witnessed domestic abuse as children. They suggested that a trauma-informed approach linked to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) could help in understanding and addressing the 'root cause' of abusive behaviour. Other stakeholders suggested that challenging patriarchal values and misogynistic behaviour of male offenders was important as they saw this as a cause.
- **Developing research on causes of domestic abuse perpetrator behaviour and exploring the wider evidence about causes of offending.** There is a need to continue to invest in research to understand the causes of perpetrator behaviour. However, there is existing research about the causes of offending behaviour which may help in the design and development of DAPPs.

Risk factors associated with perpetrators of abuse and crime outside the home have considerable overlap with those associated with perpetrators of domestic abuse (Farrington, 2021; Theobald et al., 2016). Given the limited evidence base for what works in addressing the causes of domestic abuse through DAPPs, a theoretically led risk-protective factor approach based on the evidence of what works for general offenders might be usefully applied to DAPPs. For example, evidence shows that programmes which have successfully reduced reoffending tend to address known dynamic risk factors, such as impulsivity or self-control, and use cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approaches to address how offenders process information (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). More information concerning this is summarised in Appendix 1.

During consultation, West Midlands stakeholders also agreed that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can equip perpetrators with the skills to control their emotions and change their behaviour. This finding is in line with the evidence base (see Appendix 1 and the evidence review for more information).

3.7 Developing and using the evidence base on what does and does not work

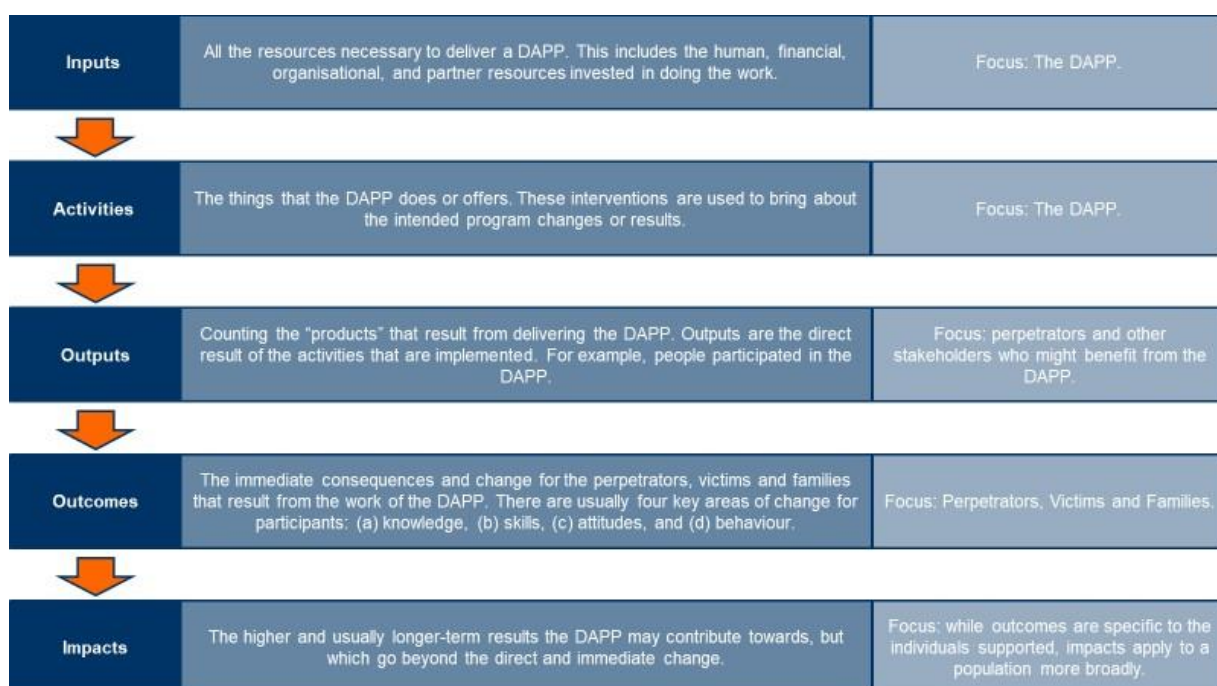
As part of this research, we have delivered evidence reviews on risk assessments for domestic abuse perpetrators and what works in delivering DAPPs. Despite the evidence base being limited for demonstrating the success of DAPPs, these reviews provide indications of what works in addressing the harm of perpetrators. It is important that those involved in commissioning, designing and working with DAPPs understand and build on this evidence base by demonstrating what works and what does not. It is also vital to share this evidence across the sector so other DAPPs and the sector can continue to learn and develop.

3.8 Taking a theories of change approach using logic models

DAPPs would benefit from having clear, evidence-based theories of change and logic models which clearly define inputs, outputs, and activities and how these link to achieving intended outcomes and impacts for victims and perpetrators. Figure 4 summarises the constituent parts of a logic model. This approach, combined with a theories of change approach, can help support the design, development, implementation and evaluation of DAPPs. This is because the approach clearly articulates and aims to identify causal links between:

- Inputs
- Activities
- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Impacts

Figure 4 Summary of a logic model approach applied to DAPPs



As well as considering the logic model, the theory of change around the logic model should include consideration of: (1) the assumptions behind the theory and model, i.e. what is needed for it to work; (2) spheres of influence, i.e. how realistic it is for the model alone to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts and what else needs to happen; and (3) enablers and inhibitors to support the DAPP.

During stakeholder consultation, most stakeholders did not mention the logic model or theory of change of the DAPPs they discussed. Indeed, stakeholders did not describe DAPPs in a narrative that directly linked inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. However, many of the key issues highlighted by stakeholders as requiring improvement could be addressed through the adoption of a theory of change / logic model approach to designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating DAPPs.

The development of a clearly articulated theory of change using a logic model approach case would also support:

- Shared understanding of the DAPPs role in the whole system response to domestic violence.
- Commissioners and partners understand what DAPPs are delivering including answering questions including: what, when, how, who and why.
- Effective referral pathways across the system to support victim safety as well as ensuring perpetrators are referred to DAPPs that meet their risk levels and needs and address the causes of their behaviour in order to support positive change.

3.9 Agreeing the focus of provision

Evidence collected as part of this research suggests that agreeing the focus of resource for domestic abuse perpetrators is complex in terms of whether it should be targeted at low, medium or high-risk offenders. There are mixed views among stakeholders and in the literature.

Stakeholders consulted as part of this research suggested that early intervention with low and medium risk perpetrators is the most effective use of resource as these perpetrators are more likely to achieve sustained behavioural change than higher-risk perpetrators. However, it is worth considering the evidence which shows:

- **Programmes aimed at high-risk offenders tend to have the strongest evidence behind them.** This is certainly the case in the wider literature around what works in changing offender behaviour (see, Appendix 1). This evidence also suggests that programmes aimed at low or medium risk offenders tend not to have as great an impact and, in some cases, did harm.
- **A small number of high-risk perpetrators are responsible for a larger proportion of harm (Sherman et al. 2016).**

As such, there is an argument that targeting programmes at high-risk perpetrators may be a more effective use of resource than focusing on low and medium risk perpetrators.

3.10 Parallel support for victims and families

There was agreement among stakeholders and in the evidence reviewed that where a perpetrator is accessing a DAPP, parallel support must be given to victims and families as appropriate, and that the format of this should be agreed on a case-by-case basis and tailored to risk and need.

This parallel support provided by partner agencies to victims before, during and post-programme was highlighted as a vital element of a successful multi-agency approach. Insight from victim support services was viewed as crucial in ensuring victims' safety while the perpetrator was attending the programme, as well as helping to ensure a balanced and accurate representation of programme outcomes.

There is a recognition that working with perpetrators has the potential to increase harm to victims/survivors, and therefore it is important that appropriate support is put in place to monitor and manage this risk. This aligns with the [Respect Standards](#), which states that the provision of an Integrated Support Service for victims along with perpetrators is essential.

3.11 Provision that reflects diversity and is culturally appropriate

Stakeholders consulted reported that there is not currently enough resource available to meet need concerning perpetrator programmes in the West

Midlands. They noted that this was also true for funding services to support victims. There was agreement among stakeholders that DAPPs should be provided for people with protected characteristics. They reported a specific gap in provision in the West Midlands for the following:

- Low and medium risk perpetrators.
- Female perpetrators and male victims.
- LGBTQ+ communities.
- People from certain ethnic communities.
- People with English as an additional language.
- Accessible local provision.
- Early intervention for young people.

DAPPs which can be delivered to match culturally specific needs may also help increase inclusivity by providing support in different languages and addressing specific types of abuse, such as such as honour-based abuse or female genital mutilation, which are more prevalent amongst specific communities.

Additionally, stakeholders felt that DAPPs should be more accessible, providing flexibility to work around work and childcare schedules, and using facilitators who are representative of the communities they are working with. This could help support programmes to reach groups commonly referred to as “hard-to-reach”.

4 Operational lessons

4.1 Overview

This section summarises key lessons from the research around operational considerations for DAPPs. These are related to the importance of:

- Well-documented and manualised DAPPs.
- Clear eligibility criteria, referral pathways, and exit criteria.
- Improving the approach to perpetrator risk and need assessments.
- Pre-motivational work.
- Planned follow-up.
- A well-trained workforce.
- Expert facilitators.

The research also identified key results relating to the format of DAPP provision, including length and intensity, group work and one-to-one work, accessibility and location and diversity.

These areas are explored in more detail in the sections that follow. They are presented according to the journey: (1) the set up and delivery of a perpetrator programme, (2) documenting the programme and setting eligibility criteria, (3) accepting referrals and working with perpetrators, and (4) perpetrators' exit from the programme and subsequent follow-up.

4.2 Well-documented and manualised DAPPs

DAPPs should be well-documented and manualised to give stakeholders a greater understanding of their aims and objectives as well as information on how the programme and behaviour change will be delivered. Programmes that are well documented will help ensure:

- **Retention of institutional knowledge** and common understanding between partners.
- **Greater openness and transparency** as documentation can be shared across system stakeholders. This will help stakeholders develop a shared understanding of the DAPPs on offer and the evidence base behind them.
- **More robust evaluation.** The evidence review on what works in delivering DAPPs highlighted a range of methodological issues evident in many programme evaluations which make it difficult to determine the extent to which DAPPs are responsible for behaviour change. This makes it difficult to

draw causal links between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. For instance, Gilchrist et al. (2021) advise that evaluations should describe the rationale, processes and methods used in the development of interventions, and explicitly state theory-based targets for change and the mechanisms by which these should be supported. Documenting programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse will help support the development of the evidence-base (Easton et al., 2018).

- **More effective DAPPs.** Evidence presented in Appendix 1 suggests that interventions that are manualised and where every person receiving the intervention receives the same or similar quantity and quality of support are more effective.
- **More effective replication, spread and scale of programmes that work,** i.e. manualised approaches support model fidelity so that that similar impacts can be expected through using the same approach in different areas.

4.3 Clear eligibility criteria, referral pathways, and exit criteria

Clearly communicating well-defined referral routes, eligibility criteria into and exit criteria out of DAPPs to relevant agencies and frontline practitioners is important to ensure programmes reach the target cohort.

Consultation with West Midlands stakeholders revealed a limited awareness about where and how to refer perpetrators into DAPPs. They suggested that improved information around referral routes to programmes would be useful and could also help improve links with other services.

Stakeholders also reported that that they were unclear about which services were available for individuals of different risk and would appreciate further information and guidance about eligibility criteria.

They suggested that it would be helpful if such guidance included:

- Information on programmes available in the West Midlands, including risk level and referral routes.
- How to identify risk of domestic abuse and act accordingly.
- Information on different levels of abuse and risk, and guidance on which interventions it might be most appropriate to refer into based on this information.
- Specialised guidance for various relevant organisations such as children's services.

4.4 Improving the approach to perpetrator risk and need assessments

Perpetrators need to have their risk and needs assessed to ensure the DAPP is right for them and so that work can be tailored to meet their needs. A clear and

agreed approach to identification, targeting and risk assessment can support the commissioning of programmes that are targeted to local need and address the characteristics/risk factors of the target cohort.

Stakeholders agreed that provision for domestic abuse perpetrators should be tailored according to perpetrator risk and need, but were unclear on how levels of risk were currently being defined, categorised and assessed. There does not seem to be a standardised approach to risk assessment in the West Midlands for referring into perpetrator programmes.

The findings from the evidence review of identification and risk assessment and consultation with stakeholders suggest that a standardised process to identification, need, and risk assessment can be conceptualised in four steps:

- **Local needs assessments.** Commissioners should consider local needs so that programmes are tailored to local risk, are accessible (in terms of location and timing) and have appropriate targets and strategies to achieve behaviour change for the target cohort.
- **Identification.** Workforces should be well-trained in awareness of the causes and presenting features of domestic abuse to support identification of perpetrators who should be considered for a DAPP. They should also understand how to apply this in practice. This should include awareness of mental health indicators and substance misuse which may contribute to certain forms of domestic abuse (i.e., and coercive control).
- **Risk assessment.** A central, multi-agency triage approach could help risk assess referrals. This process should involve ongoing dialogue and information/data-sharing with referrers and partner agencies and must focus on perpetrators and the risk they pose, rather than placing the onus on victims and assessing the risks they face. It should also include whether any pre-motivational work should be conducted prior to a referral to the DAPP (see section 4.5).
- **Screening into DAPP.** Perpetrators can be screened into appropriate levels of service (amount and intensity) according to risk. This process can draw upon assessment tools and participant characteristics associated with risk to tailor the intervention towards the perpetrators' criminogenic and learning needs. If through this process a perpetrator is not deemed suitable for the DAPP then alternative pathways should be considered.

The use of standardised risk assessment tools within this process allows professionals to prioritise cases and allocate resources where they are most needed (Turner et al., 2019). Although risk assessment practices have tended to focus solely on assessing victims' risk, more effective approaches to identifying and risk assessing perpetrators (especially those who are responsible for the largest proportion of harm – see section 3.9), could lead to significant harm reduction.

The strengths and limitations of numerous identification and risk assessment tools are outlined in more detail in the evidence review produced as part of this research. This includes two tools which may be particularly useful for DAPPs:

- **The Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool (PPIT).** The PPIT is a promising example of an effective perpetrator identification and risk assessment tool that has been tested and proved effective in practice (Robinson & Clancy, 2017; 2020). It incorporates the principles of multi-agency collaboration and also takes into account the issue of coercive control, which should be a key requirement for risk assessment tools (Robinson & Clancy 2015; 2017; 2020).
- **The Risk-Need-Responsivity model** has been used to develop correctional programmes for offenders which have proved effective in reducing recidivism rates (Stewart et al., 2013). The model proposes screening perpetrators into appropriate levels of service (amount and intensity) according to risk, aligning the service, content and methods to that risk, along with appropriate targets for change.

4.5 Pre-motivational work

Stakeholders suggested that pre-motivational work completed by frontline workers before a referral into a DAPP, or built into the structure of a DAPP, can help reduce programme dropout rates.

West Midlands stakeholders reported that many DAPPs in the region require perpetrators to have a pre-existing motivation or readiness to change. They reported that this limits the number of perpetrators eligible to participate in DAPPs. They suggested that training for organisations that work with families on how to engage with perpetrators could be helpful in moving participants towards a motivation to change.

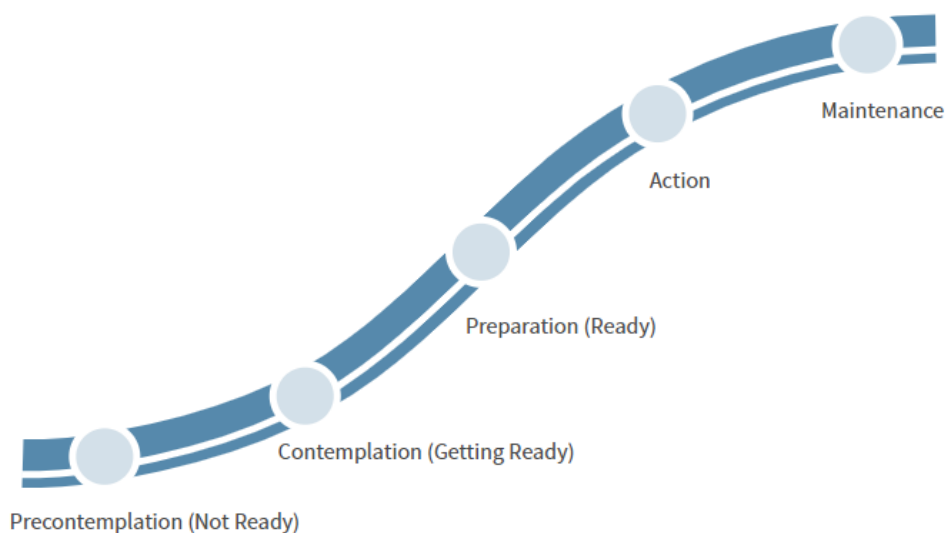
Evidence suggests that this sort of training can help practitioners to recognise perpetrators as active members of the families they are supporting, and to proactively engage them in work to improve outcomes for families (Stanley et al., 2012).

Such training could include information and guidance around perpetrator risk levels, identification, and information about available DAPPs, to help ensure referral routes into the most appropriate programmes. Stakeholders also suggested that DAPPs could offer tailored support to perpetrators to develop their motivation to change.

Research suggests that methods to increase perpetrator motivation and encourage progression through the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) 'stages of change' (Figure 5) may be effective in enhancing positive programme engagement and outcomes (Semiatin et al., 2013). Techniques such as Motivational Interviewing (Stewart et al., 2013) and Individualised Motivational Plans (Lila et al., 2018; Romero-Martinez et al., 2019) are associated with

positive outcomes including increased assumption of responsibility, reduction in physical violence and increase in cognitive empathy.

Figure 5: Transtheoretical model stages of change



Stakeholders reported that if a DAPP cannot work safely with individuals who do not have a readiness to change, then alternative pathways should be considered. These pathways should be clear and agreed with partner agencies. Any referrals should be directed towards partner organisations or DAPPs with the capacity and skill to undertake pre-motivational work, and which are tailored to the perpetrators' level of risk and need.

4.6 Provision format

4.6.1 Evidence is mixed on format and length of DAPPs

The length, intensity, and format of programmes is contested in the literature and among stakeholders. As such, as far as possible, programmes should be bespoke to the perpetrator, lasting as long as is needed for meaningful behaviour change while supporting sustained engagement and offering flexibility around one-to-one or group work.

Kelly and Westmarland (2015) argue that the greater the length and depth of programme, the more likely to create deeper changes beyond simple behaviour disruption, as well as avoiding the perception of programmes as 'tick-box' exercises. However, the length of programmes may increase the likelihood of dropout (Stewart et al., 2013). Stakeholders interviewed as part of this research also recognised this conflict.

4.6.2 Group work, one-to-one work and mixed approaches

Similarly, there are pros and cons to group work and one-to-one work with perpetrators. Evidence shows that group work can result in positive behaviour change and may be particularly useful for perpetrators who are mistrustful of therapists, or consider them an extension of the legal system (Semiatin et al., 2013). These programmes should encourage positive group cohesion in order to achieve successful behaviour change, as negative cohesion can normalise and reinforce behaviours (Sheehan et al., 2012; Semiatin et al., 2013; Karakurt et al., 2019).

However, stakeholders suggested that some perpetrators might be more suited to one-to-one work, but that this requires a highly-skilled facilitator and increased funding to match the intensity of support.

Most stakeholders interviewed suggested that a flexible approach where perpetrators engage in one-to-one or group work depending on their need and/or the progress they are making may be a more effective way of delivering interventions. For example, if a perpetrator is not making progress, or if the risk is increasing during their work in a group setting, the perpetrator could be moved for a period of time to a one-to-one format with the possibility to return to a group setting if the risk decreases/progress is made.

4.6.3 Local and accessible

Stakeholders reported that DAPPs should be more accessible, providing flexibility to work around childcare schedules and using facilitators who are representatives from the communities they are working with. This could help support programmes to reach groups commonly referred to as “hard to reach”.

4.6.4 Diversity

There was agreement among stakeholders that DAPPs should be provided for people with protected characteristics and that they should be designed to reflect the communities that they serve wherever possible. For more information see sections 3.11 and 4.9.

4.6.5 Voluntary, mandatory, or conditional

It is currently contested in the literature and among stakeholders whether perpetrators' attendance at DAPPs should be voluntary, mandated, or conditional. Furthermore, the evidence-base for the impact these different approaches have on completion and attrition rates, re-offending, and long-term behaviour change is limited.

Some evidence suggests that programme completion is linked to lower levels of recidivism. Although voluntary engagement with programmes may seem likely to result in lower completion rates, a systematic review by Vigurs et al. (2016) found that court mandated programmes continue to have high attrition rates, suggesting that legal pressure to participate may not be sufficient to motivate perpetrators to complete treatment.

Moreover, if completion is mandatory, engagement with the programme may not necessarily be meaningful, and therefore completion may not lead to sustained behaviour change. There was consensus among stakeholders that participation in DAPPs should be meaningful, and not a “box-ticking” exercise.

Further evidence on the impact of voluntary, mandatory or conditional participation in DAPPs is therefore needed to support commissioning and funding decisions.

4.7 Planned follow-up

For change to be sustainable, perpetrators may require follow-up or re-engagement from the DAPP. There is limited evidence available relating to what a safe exit and follow-up following DAPP completion looks like. However, stakeholders agreed that achieving a hard stop to domestic abuse for perpetrators was unlikely, and that for change to be sustainable perpetrators may require follow-up or re-engagement from the programme. They suggested that appropriate follow-up planning should therefore take place before perpetrators exit programmes, and that this should be implemented and documented.

4.8 Well-trained workforce

Stakeholders interviewed identified a need for training and workforce development across partner agencies to help ensure appropriate approaches to identification and first contact with perpetrators and smooth and effective working practices and referrals into DAPPs.

4.9 Expert facilitators

Successful facilitation of DAPPs will vary dependent of the theory of change, the needs and risks of perpetrators, and approaches used for changing behaviour. Evidence suggests that strong participant-therapist alliances (supportive and collaborative, non-confrontational relationships) can produce positive outcomes for perpetrators and victims (Sheehan et al., 2012; Semiatin et al., 2013; Stewart et al., 2013; Vigurs et al., 2016; Lilley-Walker et al., 2018; Lila et al., 2018).

West Midlands stakeholders suggested that it is important that facilitators are well trained (including training in psychology) to enable them to manage potentially manipulative or coercive perpetrators, or that programmes should include contributions by psychologists with specialist experience in working with offenders.

In addition, they suggested that:

- Facilitators should be highly skilled and their remuneration should reflect this skillset.
- Facilitators should reflect the diversity of the communities they are working with wherever possible.

5 Evaluation lessons

5.1 Overview

This section summarises the key considerations for evaluations of DAPPs as identified from the research to improve the evidence base for what works in addressing perpetrator behaviour and the quality of DAPP provision.

5.2 A culture of evaluation should be embedded in DAPPs

Although the evidence base for what works in addressing perpetrator behaviour is evolving, the number of evaluations with a robust, high-quality methodological framework remains limited, particularly in the UK. For the evidence to further develop and improve there is a need for further funding of programmes with sufficient budget allocated for evaluation, which should be designed and embedded in the programme from the start.

5.3 Considerations for evaluation

To support the development of robust evaluations the following should be considered:

- **DAPPs should have a clear theory of change and logic model.**
- **Commissioners, providers, and partners should agree the outcomes and impacts that the DAPP is aiming to achieve.** They should also have a shared and common understanding of how the programme will achieve its desired outcomes and impacts.
- **A co-developed evaluation framework.** Before the programme is implemented, an evaluation framework should be co-developed between the evaluator, commissioner, provider and partners. This should be clearly linked to the theory of change and logic model. This framework should clearly outline:
 - Evaluation questions
 - Data capture methods including sources
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Timescales
 - Ethics protocols
 - Risk management approach
 - Approach to information sharing and data security

This framework should be agreed at the start of the evaluation by all partners. The framework should be re-visited regularly to ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose over the lifetime of the evaluation.

- **Evaluations should use measures and data that clearly link to the DAPPs theory of change and logic model.** The evidence review about what works in delivering DAPPs, conducted as part of this research, outlines a range of approaches to measuring outcomes, impacts and also the factors that may cause or contribute to these.
- **Mixed-methods approaches.** Stakeholders suggest that the use of quantitative measures helps ensure a data-driven approach is taken to measuring and demonstrating outcomes and impacts, while qualitative measures can help address why or why not outcomes may have been achieved as well as provide nuance. Measures should be repeated and occur over a long period of time so that sustained behaviour change can be measured and risk continually monitored. This would also help to shed light on the sustainability of the behavioural change achieved by DAPPs.
- **Triangulation of data.** Stakeholders reported that taking a multi-agency approach to the delivery of DAPPs necessitates a multi-agency approach to evidence. Agreeing, measuring, and triangulating outcome measures across different partner organisations can help monitor progress and risk in a holistic way. This is especially important considering that other services, such as substance misuse services, may also be addressing some of the causes of individual perpetrators' behaviour.
- **Information sharing and collection agreements.** Stakeholders suggested that standardised data sharing and collection agreements, alongside guidance for all organisations on how to measure success could help provide a consistent approach.
- **A need for more high-quality evaluation.** The evidence review on what works in delivering DAPPs conducted as part of this research suggests that there are limited high-quality evaluations of DAPPs in the UK. For DAPPs to develop and improve it is important that more resource is allocated to delivering high quality evaluation. This is because at present not enough is known about what does and does not work concerning DAPPs. Evaluations would benefit from taking theory-driven experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Appendix 2 outlines the potential benefits of Randomised Control Trials and Within-Individual designs which both would provide high quality evaluations if embedded in DAPPs.

Appendix 1: A note on causes of DA perpetration

Overview

There is an emerging body of evidence which suggests that perpetrators of domestic abuse (DA) may also be perpetrators of crime and violence outside the home. This evidence is based on high-quality studies which have examined offence overlap between DA and non-DA offenders and studies which have examined the early risk factors for later DA and later non-DA offending.

Offence Overlap

There is considerable overlap between the perpetrators of DA and the perpetrators of crime and violence outside the home. Men who perpetrate DA are more likely than those who do not to commit criminal offences and violence outside the home (Theobald et al., 2016). For example, based on the results of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, which is a prospective longitudinal study of 411 boys followed-up from age 8 to 48, Theobald and Farrington (2016a) found that men involved in DA were significantly more likely to have a criminal conviction of any kind; 55.6% of DA men were convicted versus 37.7% of non-DA men; to have a conviction for violence, 30.6% of DA men versus 14.5% of non-DA men, and to be a persistent offender (i.e. have a conviction before and after age 21), 62.5% of DA men versus 34.8% of non-DA men.

Childhood Risk Factors

The same longitudinal study was used to explore what risk factors measured early in a child's life were associated with DA when the male was age 48 (Theobald & Farrington, 2012). The results showed that a host of family (e.g., having a convicted parent, coming from a low SES family, poor parental supervision), and individual factors (e.g., being impulsive, being unpopular in school, having low school attainment) measured between the ages of 8-10 were predictive. Importantly, the same factors have been identified as being predictive of later general offending and violence (Farrington, 2021).

The offence overall and the overlap of childhood risk factors led Theobald et al (2016) to conclude:

'The totality of these findings would suggest that rather than having specific interventions based on specific males who commit specific types of offenses, the focus should be on violent males, whether they are violent outside the home or in both domains'.

Given the very limited evidence-base for the effectiveness of DAPP programmes, at least in the forms that have been evaluated (Day et al., 2009; Warner, 2018; Wilson et al., 2021), this suggests that it might be useful to consider how the evidence based for the reoffending of general offenders might be translated for DA offenders.

What Works with Non-DA Offenders?

The 'What Works', evidence-based approach to reducing the reoffending of those who have committed offences took hold in the mid-to late-1990s and has since proliferated (Cullen, 2005). There is now a collection of knowledge about successful programmes (e.g., Maguire, 2013) and for particular types of offenders (Losel, 2008).

In 2007, Jolliffe and Farrington were funded by the Home Office to conduct a systematic review of studies which evaluated the impact of interventions for violent offenders. The authors identified twelve studies of sufficiently high methodological quality to include in which violent offenders were provided with some form therapy, intervention or support and where reoffending information was available.

Overall, interventions with violent offenders were found to successfully reduce reoffending and violent reoffending by between 7-9%. Those interventions which had a longer duration and longer sessions lengths were more effective, similarly, interventions that addressed anger control, cognitive skills, used role playing, or relapse prevention were more effective.

Repositories of evidence-based interventions for offenders are now available to practitioners and policy makers. These include the Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) and the Campbell Collaboration, both of which include the highest-quality evaluations, cost-benefit analyses and an assessment of whether the programme is evidence-based (has wide evidence of effectiveness), research-based (has been shown to be effective in research studies only), or not. It is noteworthy that Duluth-based models to address domestic abuse were classified as not effective by the WSIPP (Warner, 2018).

Principles of Effective Programmes

Scholars have synthesised the evidence of the many successful programmes that have been evaluated to develop a set of principles or key factors that characterise successful programmes. For example, Andrews & Bonta (2006) detail five qualities that characterise interventions that have been shown to successfully reduce reoffending. These are:

- **Providing support to high-risk individuals**

There is evidence that interventions that target moderate and low risk individuals are less effective and may do more harm than good.

- **Address known dynamic risk factors, such as impulsivity or self-control**

Dynamic risk factors are those that can change. Interventions that target and change these factors have been shown to be effective.

- **Uses cognitive behavioural approaches to address how offenders process information.**

Cognitive behavioural approaches that use role-play, develop thinking and problem solving skills and address abstract reasoning are much more effective than interventions that do not use these approaches.

- **Incorporate responsivity**

Interventions which consider and cater to the learning styles of the individual, and those which include opportunities to consider progress towards the programme goals are more effective.

- **Maintain intervention fidelity**

Interventions that are manualised and where every person receiving the intervention receives the same quantity and quality of support are more effective.

Limitations

It may not be possible to directly translate the knowledge about successful interventions from non-DA offenders to DA offenders. For example, much of the research on non-DA offenders has used those who are in prison and on probation and therefore may feel more compelled to address their offending. However, there is a considerable weight of evidence that these interventions can be effective and components of these could be integrated into DA interventions and tested.

It is important to note that the most successful and cost-effective interventions with general offending involve prevention (Farrington & Welsh, 2004). Providing support to children and families (e.g., child social skills training, parental management training) well before the onset of offending has been demonstrated to have considerable and beneficial long-term impacts. While the effectiveness of early interventions to prevent DA is not known, given the offence overlap and similarity in risk factors between DA and non-DA offenders (Theobald & Farrington, 2016a), it is highly likely that this would be a highly efficacious approach to prevent the onset of DA.

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Appendix 2: Experimental evaluation approaches

Overview

This appendix briefly considers an approach in which a high-quality evaluation could be embedded within the delivery of a DAPP. This is important because one of the key limitations identified in the evidence review was that much of the evidence about DAPPs was based on low-quality evaluations. Low quality evaluation makes it challenging to determine whether a specific DAPP is producing desirable outcomes or not.

It is important to note that achieving a high-quality evaluation would be a challenge and would require close collaboration between the commissioners, the providers, the partners, and the evaluators.

Randomised Controlled Trial

One approach that could be used to evaluate a DAPP would be a randomised controlled trial. This involves identifying a sufficiently large group of those eligible for the DAPP (i.e., at least several hundred) and randomly allocating some to receive the DAPP (treatment group) and others to either an alternative provision or the usual intervention approach (comparison group). The treatment group would then receive the DAPP, the comparison group would not, and both groups would be monitored and followed-up to examine the differential impact of the DAPP.

This approach is of very high methodological quality but is practically challenging and potentially problematic in not providing support to a group of DA perpetrators who may need it. A number of researchers have addressed the challenges associated with RCTs and have suggested that the benefits of this approach in terms of understanding the actual impact of the intervention (in this case DAPPs) outweigh the risks (e.g., Farrington, 2001).

Within-Individual Approach

Another approach, which would be of lower methodological quality, but could also help to understand the impact of a DAPP, would be to adopt a within-individual approach. This would involve repeated administration of a set of measures which would allow a comparison between changes in behaviour/attitudes with changes in theoretically relevant areas targeted by the DAPP (e.g., empathy).

Below is a worked example:

For illustrative purposes, let us assume that the DAPP aims to increase safety (measured by a reduction in aggression (1) and attitudes supportive of aggression (2)) by increasing the empathy (3) and decreasing the impulsivity (4) of DA perpetrators.

Commencement

Everyone who is considered eligible for the DAPP who is contacted should be encouraged to complete all four measures (aggression, attitudes supportive of aggression, empathy, impulsivity), and basic demographic and criminal history data compiled. This provides a picture of the levels of the four key characteristics of all those eligible for the DAPP. This would also provide an opportunity to see whether the DAPP is targeting the correct factors. For example, if those eligible do not have low empathy, perhaps this feature should not be targeted by the DAPP.

The measures should be administered once again to all those at the commencement of the delivery of the DAPP.

Continuation

Once delivery of the DAPP begins, the measures should be repeated after the completion of a certain number of sessions or a set period of time (e.g. three months).

Completion

The measures should be administered at the completion of the DAPP.

Follow-up

All those who commenced or completed the DAPP should be contacted again with the measures re-administered.

Analyses

The data collected would allow the following questions to be answered:

- Do higher levels of aggression/attitudes to aggression/impulsivity or lower empathy prevent the commencement of the DAPP? If so, then targeting these may increase engagement.
- Do higher levels of aggression/attitudes to aggression/impulsivity or lower empathy increase the likelihood of dropping out? If so, then targeting these may prevent dropouts.
- How do levels of aggression/attitudes to aggression/impulsivity/empathy change as delivery of the DAPP progress? This may not be linear, in that levels may go up or down over time (i.e., because of external factors). However, we would expect general trends in the expected direction over longer periods of time.
- What levels of change of empathy and/or impulsivity are needed to get corresponding changes in aggression attitudes to violence?

- Are changes in levels of aggression/attitudes to aggression/impulsivity empathy sustained after the delivery of the DAPP ends?

The measures in this worked example could be supplemented with others, including reports from victims around safety and reduction of harm at each of these stages. They could also be supplemented by the impressions of the delivery team (e.g., level of engagement) or the partner (e.g. experience of aggression) or external agencies (criminal offences). The key in this example is the repeated administration of measures to assess what the DAPP is proposed to change (empathy/impulsivity in this example) and the outcomes of this (aggression/attitudes to aggression).



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