

Drive Partnership evidence to The Home Affairs Select Committee

Inquiry on Violence Against Women and Girls

May 2021

1. About Drive Partnership

- 1.1 Drive was developed in 2015 by Respect, SafeLives, Social Finance – the Drive Partnership – to address a gap in work with high-harm, high-risk perpetrators of domestic abuse. The Drive Partnership believes domestic abuse is not acceptable or inevitable.
- 1.2 Drive works with high-harm, high-risk and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent and end their abusive behaviour and protect victims. To date, the project has worked with 2147 perpetrators supporting 2403 victims-survivors and 3882 children to be safer. High-risk, high-harm perpetrators are those who have been assessed as posing a risk of serious harm or murder to people they are in intimate or family relationships with. Drive challenges these perpetrators to change and works with partner agencies – like the police and social services – to disrupt and prevent abuse. Drive advocates for changes to national systems so that perpetrators posing all levels of risk are held to account and challenged to change their abusive behaviour.
- 1.3 This consultation response reflects the views of the Drive Partnership and should not be assumed to represent the views of the wider network of Drive commissioning and service delivery partners.

2. Response Summary

2.1 This response addresses 3 of the questions being considered by the Committee:

- What measures should be in place for perpetrators;
- The role of organisations and institutions including the police and criminal justice system, schools, colleges and education institutions, employers and trade unions, social media companies, local community and specialist services;
- How current Bills, such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and the Domestic Abuse Bill and other recent legislation that has been introduced can address the issue.

2.2 We welcome commitments within the Domestic Abuse Act to publish a strategic approach to DA Perpetrators within a year. This perpetrator strategy will sit within a wider DA approach and should include clarity on what measures should be in place for perpetrators and the role of organisations and institutions including the police and criminal justice system, schools, colleges and education institutions, employers and trade unions, social media companies, local community and specialist services.

2.3 In order to successfully keep victims safer, it is crucial that the perpetrator strategy incorporates the following elements:

- i. **Multiagency risk management**, that empowers a range of public services to better hold perpetrators to account. Clear and dangerous gaps in the current system were identified in the DA Bill debates with a focus on the role of probation. There is also support for a police-led approach to risk-management and this is the approach outlined in the 'Call to Action for a DA Perpetrator Strategy for England and Wales.' Without multi-agency risk management, perpetrators hide in plain sight and often offend time and time again.
- ii. **Availability of a range of specialist DA perpetrator interventions** across England and Wales, such as behaviour change programmes.
- iii. **National quality assurance systems** for perpetrator interventions - this is crucial for ensuring efficacy and victim safety.
- iv. **Sustainable, predictable funding** – funding will also need to flow into the partner support element of any perpetrator intervention, whether it is integrated or provided in partnership with an external provider. There should be no assumption that there is existing capacity in victim/survivor support services to provide this. Perpetrator work is only safe and effective when it comes alongside support for victims.
- v. **Strategic cross-departmental leadership**

2.4 These five elements are supported in the ['Call to Action'](#), signed by over 125 organisations and individuals. Signatories include women's organisations, children's charities, local authorities, police and crime commissioners and the Local Government Association.

2.5 The strategy – which must be consulted upon with women's sector organisations and victim/survivors, should be broad and detailed enough to cover all the detail below, including for example plans for Domestic Abuse Protection Orders.

3. Detailed response

3.1 What measures should be in place for perpetrators?

3.1.1 Responses to perpetrators can take various forms some of which are described below. What form, or combination of forms, any given perpetrator will need, will depend on the risk they pose and their individual characteristics:

- i. Risk management. Agencies share information within the law and support each other to use their existing tools effectively. Please see a case study of this below. In short it means many more eyes and ears are on the perpetrator. All high-harm, high-risk perpetrators should receive a coordinated multi-agency response – these are described in section 3.2.3. Different agencies for example social care, housing or probation, need as much support and guidance as possible regarding the role they can play either in multi-agency settings or in their direct day-to-day work with perpetrators.

Case Study 1: Risk Management

Stopping a perpetrator repeatedly breaching restraining orders and making the victim/survivor feel trapped. Bringing professionals together across counties to manage risk.

- The Drive Project intervention was assigned a case where the perpetrator had been convicted of coercive control and had a restraining order in place. He was obsessed with the victim/survivor and frequently breached his restraining order – for example by showing up at her work. She told her specialist domestic abuse worker (IDVA) that she felt unsafe and trapped. He was in and out of jail.
- Because both victim and perpetrator were dealing with two different sets of agencies in two counties (because of where they lived) information was not being shared and the risks not managed. The Drive case manager brought these parties together.
- The Drive team (IDVA and Drive Case Manager) were able to establish that whilst the perpetrator was in prison he was sending letters to the victim, and once he was out, he was planning to meet up with the victim in breach of his restraining order. This information was shared with the cross county multi-agency team. The prison representative was able to put a stop to the letters. When the perpetrator left prison and attempted to attend the victims address, the police were able to arrest him and return him to prison.

- ii. Behaviour change and early intervention responses. Not all perpetrators will be suitable for behaviour change – but quality assured behaviour change interventions can make a huge difference to those who are and more importantly to the victim/survivors associated with them. There are a range of interventions including group work and one-to-one options. One-to-one can be effective for perpetrators with a high level of additional needs (for example substance misuse, mental health etc) who may struggle to participate in group sessions.

The Drive Project intervention – which uses a one-to-one case management model – has been shown to reduce the number of perpetrators using physical abuse by 82% and jealous and controlling behaviour by 73%. It is similarly effective at reducing other types of abuse. The Drive Project intervention is for perpetrators who have been assessed as posing a very high risk.

There are other evaluated programmes responding effectively to perpetrators at both high and lower risk levels. Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPP) use group work to change attitudes and challenge behaviour.

Early intervention programmes build communities' ability to recognise abusive behaviour and get help.

The availability of perpetrator interventions is currently being mapped by the DA Commissioners office but we know having worked in the field for several years that provision is patchy with some geographical areas having almost nothing. We believe there are particular gaps in provision of tailored culturally appropriate perpetrator responses to meet the needs of different racially minoritised groups, and Drive Partnership is partnering with specialist organisations to understand these gaps and needs better and how they might be met. There are also gaps in provision of responses for LGBT perpetrators – it would not be effective for example to refer a gay man onto a group work programme for heterosexual men.

Investments are needed to fill these gaps and develop models that can be used widely, so that all victims can benefit from this work, whatever the characteristics of the perpetrator. Investments are also needed to ensure the existing, quality-assured evidenced-based programmes are widely available. Plans for this should form part of the forthcoming Perpetrator Strategy, which will sit within the government's domestic abuse plans.

Poorly managed perpetrator work is at best a waste of money and at worst can put the victim at further risk, so quality assurance is key. See section 3.2.6 below.

Increased availability of quality programmes is needed urgently if the Domestic Abuse Act is to have its intended impact. The new DAPOs (domestic abuse protection orders) allow for positive requirements on perpetrators, such as attending programmes, but such provisions are meaningless if there are no programmes to attend.

- iii. Support for the perpetrator in order to reduce risk to victim. Some perpetrators have additional needs which exacerbate their abuse and make it harder or impossible for them to engage in behaviour change work. The types of support areas that commonly make a difference are housing (for example to prevent the perpetrator sofa surfing at the victim's or other vulnerable persons' address); substance misuse services and mental health support. This range of needs and their implications for the victim is one of the many reasons why any perpetrator strategy must be cross departmental to be effective.

3.2 The role of organisations and institutions

3.2.1 [The Drive Partnership's evidence to the Home Office VAWG consultation](#) makes detailed recommendations of the areas within key services where innovative, safe practice could be extended to improve the response to perpetrators of domestic abuse and therefore make adult and child victims safer. We concentrated our comments on the sectors with which Drive has the most contact and therefore experience:

- Policing
- Probation
- Children's social care
- Housing
- Mental health

The full paper can be accessed [here](#)¹ and the Drive Partnership would be happy to expand on this in oral evidence to the HASC. However, some key elements are drawn from this paper below.

3.2.2 Multiagency working and training: Every police force area should establish a forum to coordinate a multi-agency response to high-risk and serial perpetrators, adhering to nationally agreed and consistent standards and crucially, victims' services. Together they will share information necessary to keep victims and their families and friends safe.

3.2.3 The precise form this forum takes should be decided at the local level, what matters is that it fulfils the following functions:

¹ http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/190221Drive-Consulation-response-VAWG-strategy_final-submission-.pdf

- i. Enables police identification of priority perpetrators using a referral criterion (such as the Recency, Frequency, Gravity assessment (RFG) or the Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool (PPIT)) and onwards referral to a multi-agency forum coordinating the response to these perpetrators;
- ii. Is not restricted to only hearing cases identified by the police and criminal justice system, but includes cases that may be deemed to be high-risk by safeguarding agencies and processes such as MARAC or MASH;
- iii. Works in close coordination with MARAC and local specialist victim services, so judgements about risk and response are informed by the safety of the victim and any other relevant family members;
- iv. Provides a systematic method for multi-agency sharing of known information about high-risk, high-harm perpetrators with information flowing both from and to the police. The Drive Project intervention experience is that Drive intelligence gathered through a one-to-one intensive case management process adds to information held by police building a fuller picture, increasing awareness of offending profiles and often increasing risk priority and space for action from a police perspective;
- v. Includes capacity and a focus on “disruption” work, which is work designed to prevent future abuse. For example, this could be the arrest or recall of a perpetrator for breach of restraining order or bail conditions, completing a house call and welfare checks, or placing flags on the perpetrator’s vehicle. In order to disrupt perpetration of abuse, the knowledge of the perpetrator’s whereabouts, activity and risk factors are absolutely crucial and the information that can be shared by the police with other agencies is key to facilitating this activity;
- vi. Has access to, and provides a referral pathway into, the provision of intensive one-to-one case management which targets the most complex and hard to engage serial and repeat cases that require additional time, focus and persistence to achieve change through coordinated disruption and/or motivational and behaviour change interventions.

3.2.4 Perpetrator panels should seek to draw in expertise from a range of relevant agencies. Agencies with expertise in serving groups with protected characteristics may experience more funding and capacity constraints and therefore additional efforts may be needed to support them to take part and feed in their crucial expertise.

3.2.5 We also need to support a range of professionals – whether GPs or housing officers – to recognise signs of abusive and controlling behaviour and know what next steps to take. The Welsh government is ahead of England in this respect with published guidance for public servants. The case study below shows how social services, the court and specialist perpetrator case managers can work together to protect victims, including children.

Case Study 2.

Drive perpetrator case manager supplements investigative capacity of social services which were leaving child at risk

- The Drive Project intervention was assigned a case of a dangerous perpetrator who was continuing to spend time at the victim's house putting her and her child at risk.
- Social services were taking the victim's (who could have been coercively controlled) reassurances that 'the relationship was over' at face value and were experiencing challenges in assessing or managing the risk.
- The Drive Case Manger managed to uncover proof in some court documents that the perpetrator was – despite assurances to the contrary - spending time at the victim's house and got the child on the child protection register and ensured the child protection plan included a requirement for the perpetrator not to attend the victim's property.
- The perpetrator subsequently engaged with the Drive Project intervention, enabling the case manager to conduct behaviour-change work, building his awareness of the effects of his abusive behaviour on the victim and the child and building his engagement with the child protection plan and system.

3.2.6 National quality assurance systems for perpetrator interventions: Failure to ensure quality and safety of perpetrator interventions will put victims at risk. All interventions should incorporate a response for the victim and be rigorously quality assured. We urge the government to be clear about the standards it expects commissioners to meet because of the significant risks involved in this work. Investment is needed in national infrastructure so that a wide range of service providers, including for community based 'by and for' services can seek quality assurance. This will also facilitate England and Wales-wide data collection to ensure our understanding of the diverse cohort that are perpetrating abuse will continue to grow and fill urgent gaps in knowledge.

3.2.7 Role of government in providing sustainable, predictable funding. We welcome the government's recent short-term investments in perpetrator work. This includes a £15m fund for perpetrator work and an additional £10m fund for tackling violent crime for 2021-22. It is crucial that this money is spent strategically to ensure that victim safety remains the highest priority and perpetrators are prevented from repeating their crimes time and time again.

3.2.8 There is important learning from the previous financial year's government funding for perpetrator interventions – which was the first ever such fund. These included over £7m funding for perpetrator interventions. These funds had a 6-month delivery period – with all money to be spent by March 21. There were some challenges in set up and delivery

in such a short time frame and limited clarity on quality assurance. Moving forward, long term opportunities are needed to enable local areas to plan provision that is reliable.

3.2.9 Strategic cross-departmental leadership. All government departments need to be involved in building a society that puts pressure on perpetrators, rather than victims, to change. The perpetrator strategy must be a tool to stimulate departmental thinking and identify commitments in this regard. This will mean ensuring departments beyond Home Office and Ministry of Justice are fully involved. For example, we are keen to see the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government extend its important work on domestic abuse to include accommodation solutions for perpetrators that enable their removal from the home, helping victims to stay safe at home, if they wish to do so. This would help effect the Home Secretary's stated policy that "perpetrators should be the ones who have to leave the family home, not the supposed loved ones whom they torment and abuse." (Downing St briefing, April 11th).

3.3 The impact of current/recent legislation

3.3.1 Our response in this section covers two elements of the new DA Act:

- Section 75 – the perpetrator strategy
- Section 36 – positive requirements within DAPOs.

3.3.2 Section 75 of the new Domestic Abuse Act requires the publication of a Strategy for prosecution and management of offenders within 12 month of Royal Assent. This should cover:

(a) detecting, investigating and prosecuting offences involving domestic abuse,

(b) assessing and managing the risks posed by individuals who commit offences involving domestic abuse, including (among others) risks associated with stalking, and

(c) reducing the risk that such individuals commit further offences involving domestic abuse.

3.3.3 We welcome the commitment to what is essentially a perpetrator strategy. Over 120 organisations – spanning women's sector, police and crime commissioners, local authorities and health organisations such as the royal colleges - have come together to share ideas with government about what such a strategy should look like, in the form of a coordinated ['call to action'](#) for a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy ².

3.3.4 The 5 key elements of such a strategy are:

- i. **Multiagency risk management**, that empowers a range of public services to better hold perpetrators to account. Clear and dangerous gaps in the current system were identified in the DA Bill debates with a focus on the role of probation. There is also support for a police-led approach to risk-management and this is the approach outlined in the 'Call to Action for a DA Perpetrator Strategy for England and Wales.' Without multi-agency risk management, perpetrators hide in plain sight and often offend time and time again.

² <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Call-to-action.pdf>

- ii. **Availability of a range of specialist DA perpetrator interventions** across England and Wales, such as behaviour change programmes.
- iii. **National quality assurance systems** for perpetrator interventions - this is crucial for ensuring efficacy and victim safety.
- iv. **Sustainable, predictable funding** – funding will also need to flow into the partner support element of any perpetrator intervention, whether it is integrated or provided in partnership with an external provider. There should be no assumption that there is existing capacity in victim/survivor support services to provide this. Perpetrator work is only safe and effective when it comes alongside support for victims.
- v. **Strategic cross-departmental leadership**

3.3.5 The new DAPO – Domestic Abuse Protection Order – in the DA Act, will enable judges to impose positive requirements ‘to do something’ on perpetrators of domestic abuse. The legislation is silent on what that something might be, but government communications indicate that what is envisaged is the attendance on substance misuse (including alcohol) or domestic abuse behaviour change programmes, or the requirement to take a mental health assessment.

3.3.6 Now the Bill has been passed, it will be time to design pilots for DAPO delivery. A recent meeting of the APPG on Domestic Abuse Perpetrators, which is supported by Respect, published [a paper](#) on this issue, which has been shared with the Home Office.

3.3.7 The paper described how, if designed well, this element of DAPOs could significantly increase the number of perpetrators who receive a timely, quality assured, relevant intervention, resulting in increased victim safety. Designed poorly, perpetrators could be put on programmes that have no impact or worse, actually increasing risk to victims.

3.3.8 The APPG paper points out that there should be no assumption that provision of substance abuse or mental health interventions alone without a DA specific response will reduce risk.

3.3.9 Among men who use substances, research has found a complex interplay between substance use and intimate partner abuse in the context of intoxication, withdrawal and addiction. Reducing substance use and associated problems may result in less abusive relationships, but it will not address violence primed and entangled with sexual jealousy, perceptions of female impropriety and attitudes regarding women’s opposition to male authority reported in these relationships.

3.4 Mental health, alcohol and substance misuse and DA behaviour change practice, are embedded in very different cultures. The former two tend to be principally focussed on the wellbeing of the client, the latter is focussed on outcomes for the victim, and therefore has challenge and risk management built in.

3.4.1 In line with the APPG recommendations, the Drive Partnership supports the following arrangement for the safe and effective design of DAPOs.

- i. **Support for survivors must be built in to any DAPO positive intervention.** It should already be there in any quality assured DA perpetrator behaviour change interventions but it may not be there in substance misuse or mental health.

- ii. **Every DAPO needs to sit alongside a local multi-agency risk management process** – such as a referral to a perpetrator panel. Formal links should be built in and tested at pilot stage.
- iii. **Any positive intervention ordered under a DAPO needs to be delivered by someone with competence on domestic abuse. This will mean a huge programme of training and supervision required across relevant mental health and substance misuse delivery.**
- iv. **Suitability assessments are key to the effective use of DA behaviour change, substance misuse and mental health interventions.** A good assessment process is essential for value for money – without it people can go on programmes that won't work for them – but it is not free and this will need to be built into the planning.
- v. **Investment is needed in a range of domestic abuse behaviour change interventions such that judges actually have the real option of mandating them.**
- vi. **Clear guidance will need to be consulted on and published on standards that anyone providing an intervention mandated by a DAPO will need to meet and there will need to be a system of inspection.** Respect has quality standards which are endorsed by the Home Office for domestic abuse behaviour change interventions. Any statutory guidance relating to the DAPO will need to be updated in light of pilot findings.