

**A Domestic  
Abuse  
Perpetrator  
Strategy  
for England  
And Wales**

**CALL TO ACTION**

We want to turn the tide on domestic abuse. It is not acceptable, and it is not inevitable. The right interventions at the right time can stop abuse from occurring, recurring, or escalating. We want to ensure that quality, coordinated responses from the statutory and voluntary sectors are consistently available across England and Wales to address perpetrators' behaviour effectively.

## Signatories include:





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## This document is also supported by...

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This document has been formally endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners

This call to action has been coordinated by the Drive Partnership on behalf of the signatories above.  
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# Turning the tide on domestic abuse

More than 1.9 million adults experienced domestic abuse last year, each one abused by a perpetrator.<sup>1</sup> Perpetrators are the people committing domestic abuse but are often missing from the narrative and the response.

We know that a quarter of high-harm perpetrators are repeat offenders and some have at least six different victims.<sup>2</sup> Their behaviour costs lives, wellbeing, and money. These costs are disproportionately borne by women. Every week, two women are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales.<sup>3</sup> One in four women have experienced domestic abuse in their lifetime and domestic abuse represents a third of all violent crime recorded by the police.<sup>4,5</sup> In 2019, the Home Office estimated the total cost of domestic abuse for victims who were identified in a single year at £66bn.<sup>6</sup>

There are approximately 400,000 perpetrators causing high (including murder) and medium levels of harm across England and Wales<sup>7</sup>, and yet only a tiny percentage of these – fewer than 1% – gets a specialist intervention that might prevent future abusive behaviour.<sup>8</sup> Perpetrators whose victims are assessed at lower levels of risk are even less likely to get a specialist intervention.

There is a growing body of research to demonstrate the effectiveness of quality-assured interventions. A University of Durham and London Metropolitan University study of twelve domestic violence perpetrator programmes, found a reduction in the number of women whose partners tried to punch, kick, burn or beat them from 54% to 2%.<sup>9</sup> A more recent study from the University of Bristol shows a 30% reduction in the number of criminal domestic violence and abuse (DVA) incidents amongst a cohort of perpetrators receiving an intervention compared to the control group;<sup>10</sup> and in another study by the University of Northumbria, an intervention was found to have a 65% reduction in DVA related offending and a social return on investment of £14 for every £1 spent.<sup>11</sup> There are no accurate figures on prevention spend but Home Office commissioned research – combined with sector knowledge – suggest that as a fraction of the total costs associated with domestic abuse, it is tiny.<sup>12</sup> This is a missed opportunity.

Survivors, who inform our work, agree. 80% of survivors have told us that they think interventions for perpetrators are a good idea – yet such programmes are patchy in their availability, limited in the range of perpetrators they can reach safely, and variable in their quality.<sup>13</sup>

As signatories to this document we believe there is an urgent need for a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy for England and Wales underpinned by core statutory support. We want long-term solutions to domestic abuse that address the behaviour of perpetrators and fully support victims and survivors, including children. This perpetrator strategy must therefore exist in a multi-agency framework, alongside high-quality victim services, including for children, and an effective criminal justice response. It is time for a change in our approach to prevention.

*“The police, the courts, social services – all of ‘em were just focusing on me. I felt I was to blame. They did nothing about him.”*

Victim/survivor, AVA, ‘Capturing



# How this Call to Action has been developed

This case for change has been created with input from statutory and voluntary service providers, academics and commissioners across health, social care, housing, probation, substance misuse, victims' and children's services, as well as philanthropic funders and government. It has been coordinated by the Drive Partnership.<sup>14</sup> This Call to Action outlines principles that support a more coherent and joined up approach to perpetrators wherever they live. Due to devolution, a further paper will be developed to reflect the Welsh policy and legislative landscape to take this work forward within Wales. The voices of victims and survivors have been key in developing this call to action.<sup>15</sup> The process of capturing and learning from those with lived experience continues as we take this work forward.

## Our Shared Vision

**We want to turn the tide on domestic abuse. It is not acceptable, and it is not inevitable. The right interventions at the right time can stop abuse from occurring, recurring, or escalating. We want to ensure that quality, coordinated responses from the statutory and voluntary sectors are consistently available across England and Wales to address perpetrators' behaviour effectively.**

Domestic abuse can only end if we address those that are perpetrating abuse. This means challenging the social norms that facilitate abuse, intervening with those on the cusp of offending, those already causing serious harm, and all stages in between. We want to see systems that enable those who have been abusive or are at risk of being abusive to change their behaviour and systems that force them to do so if they are unwilling to change. We want to see a range of interventions for all types of perpetrators, including individuals with protected characteristics, and that address abuse in all its forms.

We need individuals, communities and all government departments to work with us towards this vision. We want to empower people – whether private employers, government agencies, or people who are worried about the behaviour of a friend – to recognise abuse and respond safely. Together, we need to stop asking “Why doesn't she leave?” and start asking “Why doesn't he stop?”<sup>16</sup>



**1 in 4 perpetrators are repeat offenders. Some have as many as six different victims.**





# What do we mean by perpetrator interventions?

All perpetrator interventions should go hand in hand with coordinated support for the victim. A typical perpetrator intervention would involve a bespoke combination of the following elements:

- 1.** Initial assessments to understand the perpetrator's history and needs to ensure they are suitable for the available interventions. Where attendance on a programme is mandated, for example by probation or CAFCASS, assessment is done as part of the referral.
- 2.** Structured groupwork, individual work or a combination of both, where perpetrators are challenged to recognise abuse and reflect on their own behaviour and its impact. This is more suitable for those who do not have significant additional support needs or chaotic lifestyles and who accept some responsibility for their actions. Programmes can be tailored to respond to the needs of specific groups. A programme for 16 or 17 year-olds or an LGBT+ tailored programme would be very different from a programme for older heterosexual men.
- 3.** One-to-one intensive case management. This can be particularly useful for those with more complex needs or a higher severity of offending profile. Case workers challenge perpetrators to recognise their behaviour as abuse and can address associated problems like substance misuse and mental health needs.
- 4.** Disrupt approaches. These are needed for perpetrators who are not willing to cooperate or whose abuse is continuing despite behaviour change work. Disrupt work consists of multi-agency efforts to manage risk to victims/survivors. Agencies share information and are responsive to the dangers perpetrators pose and are ready to prevent/react to any changes (like new child contact arrangements or a new partner) that might increase risk.

*“There is a need for safe, effective perpetrator interventions in our community, alongside funded services for victims and survivors, and their children.*”

*Successful early responses rely on strong partnerships, public involvement, community engagement, work with everyone impacted by abuse as well as those using abusive behaviours.*”

*It is time to make change, to make life better for individuals, families and communities.”*

Sarah Norburn, Domestic Abuse Coordinator, Lincolnshire Police

# Why is a perpetrator strategy needed now?

The publication of the draft Domestic Abuse Bill and the evidence on the social and economic cost of abuse laid bare the costs of continuing with 'business as usual' and the need to respond to the behaviour of perpetrators head on. There is growing evidence to support a perpetrator strategy, generated by existing programmes funded by philanthropist and government initiatives, including a significant body of work to support the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Act in Wales.<sup>17</sup> It's time to use that learning and rollout best practice to save lives.

Demand for perpetrator interventions is surging. The pre-legislative committee on the Domestic Abuse Bill noted the need for investment in perpetrator programmes and for cooperation with expert providers.<sup>18</sup> This is also required by the Istanbul Convention.<sup>19</sup> The Domestic Abuse Bill facilitates the ordering of positive (behaviour change) interventions by judges, and the introduction of the new Domestic Abuse Prevention Orders (DAPOs) provides new pathways to interventions. However, suitable and quality-assured interventions are far from universally available – indeed there are some groups, such as LGBT+<sup>20</sup> perpetrators, for whom there are almost no suitable interventions available for when this legislation is enacted.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the government has announced a reorganisation of probation services. These changes represent an opportunity to address some of the major challenges identified by HMI Probation in its 2018 report, on the domestic abuse work undertaken by Community Rehabilitation Companies, and would form an important pillar of the perpetrator strategy.<sup>22</sup>

Equally crucial, the 2019 Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) report, showed worryingly low rates of referrals of DVA (and other VAWG related) incidents for prosecution. The improved multi-agency information sharing envisaged in this strategy will support the police to build the picture they need for successful referrals to the CPS, strengthening criminal justice responses to these offenders.

Government in England and Wales has shown willingness to invest in primary prevention, with compulsory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) due to come into schools for 2020 in England and plans for a revised curriculum in Wales in 2021. This proposed perpetrator strategy will reinforce these efforts, ensuring that pupils do not just learn about abuse, but they, and the wider public, can see that it is not being tolerated. It is important that tailored interventions for young people who are either experiencing or using abuse are available for when these curriculum changes are rolled out.

*“I was just looking for help and I didn't want to speak to anyone who wasn't neutral, and I thought my family and friends would not be neutral [...] A stranger who was an expert on these topics, maybe they could be neutral.”*

Caller to the perpetrator hotline<sup>29</sup>



## Case study: making the most of criminal justice opportunities

Perpetrator case managers in Croydon are liaising with the local police. When the police arrest a perpetrator, who is also on the case managers' list, they call the case manager who can visit the perpetrator immediately in custody. Perpetrators who previously declined behaviour change support, or were too risky or difficult to contact, often then agree to engage, providing an opportunity for progress regardless of the criminal justice outcome.



# OUR CALL TO ACTION

It is time for the government to lay out a perpetrator strategy, to tackle endemic levels of domestic abuse. It must include five elements to ensure it is systematic, safe, and effective.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

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*“He was only in prison for 9 weeks. He came out with the same assumptions about women, the same anger, as he went in with. With a dented ego. That’s putting a very dangerous man into the community. If he’d been approached in prison it might have helped. Or during probation. Because he’s never had any intervention he doesn’t think he’s done anything wrong.”*

Survivor, interviewed July 2019 (SafeLives)

# PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY SERVICES EMPOWERED TO HOLD PERPETRATORS TO ACCOUNT

To effectively and safely deliver a response to perpetrators, we need:

- **Police-led multi-agency forums** in each area to coordinate responses to the most harmful perpetrators. These will also be attended by, amongst others, probation, health, social care, children’s services, housing, substance misuse and other services – and crucially, victims’ services. Together they will share information necessary to keep victims and their families and friends safe. Agencies will cooperate in using all the legal tools at their disposal to disrupt and limit offending behaviour. They will also encourage and support more holistic approaches, including whole family support. These forums – sometimes called perpetrator panels or ‘Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination’ – are increasingly common and are being effectively used in several force areas including Northumbria, West Mercia and North Yorkshire.<sup>23</sup>
- **More systematic use of criminal justice opportunities** to address perpetrators’ behaviour – from more effective use of existing police powers to better plan for when a prevention order ends, to an extension of behaviour change interventions available to the in-prison population; to increased DA-focused use of licensing conditions by probation, and specialist quality-assured sentencing options for a wider range of perpetrators.
- **Workforce development training** across the statutory and voluntary sector, including victim’s services, health, social care, children’s services, police, housing, probation, and substance misuse services. This would enable a range of professionals to identify abusive behaviour in their clients and in their workforce. Such training would give professionals the confidence to use the tools at their disposal effectively – whether it’s the ability to use a professional code of conduct or the knowledge of how to re-house a perpetrator out of area. Training in England would draw on learning from Wales where there is a national training strategy and where the development of good practice guidance for working with perpetrators is underway.
- **Clear pathways into perpetrator interventions** from sentencing, multi-agency forums (see above), police, probation, CAF/CASS, social services, health services including drug, alcohol and mental health services, voluntary sector services such as helplines and self-referrals.

# 2.

## BEST-PRACTICE PERPETRATOR INTERVENTIONS AVAILABLE ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES

To reduce the number of victims and increase the safety and life chances of victims and survivors, including children, we need:

- **Availability of quality assured perpetrator interventions** across England and Wales, provided by both voluntary and statutory sector; that address the whole range of perpetrators. These are not alternatives to a criminal justice response. Different approaches will be required, taking into account the different kinds of risk perpetrators pose, offending profiles, needs, and trauma history.
- **Appropriate community level initiatives and communications campaigns**<sup>24</sup> in place, to ensure those who are seeking help know where to access it, communities are not silent or enabling domestic abuse and that perpetrator interventions are responsive to the cultural context in which they are delivered.<sup>25</sup> Programmes for children and young people are also needed, including but not limited to, adequately funded LGBT+ inclusive Relationships and Sex Education, to ensure they are appropriately educated about abuse, harmful gender stereotypes are challenged, and that prevention starts at the earliest stage. Such education should also be available for those excluded from mainstream school.

# 3.

## NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

Infrastructure is needed to ensure adult and child victims and survivors are kept safe, address the risks of poor practice and provide confidence in the quality of specific perpetrator interventions. Further data and research is needed to develop best practice. Such infrastructure must include:

- **National approaches to quality assurance** for England and for Wales across statutory and voluntary services, including the development of widely accepted standards, which are sufficiently flexible to accommodate the necessary diversity of provision.<sup>26</sup> These standards would go alongside training for commissioners about the importance of quality-assured commissioning.
- **Perpetrator work should be covered by the relevant inspectorates** under new appropriate thematic programmes (e.g. HMICFRS, HMI Probation, NICE).
- **England and Wales-wide data collection, supported by analysts and communicators, to enable the collation and use of best practice and insights** on work with perpetrators; capture the voice of people with lived experience; ensure that our understanding of the diverse cohort that are perpetrating abuse will continue to grow; fill urgent gaps in knowledge, and continue to find ways to reduce risk to victims and prevent abuse.

# 4.

*“ We have started to put much more focus on the perpetrator and hold them to account for their behaviour whilst at the same time ensuring that safeguarding and preventing and reducing future risk is everyone’s focus.”*

Lisa Gore, Chief Inspector,  
South Wales Police

## A SUSTAINABLE, PREDICTABLE SOURCE OF FUNDING

Delivering a perpetrator strategy for England and Wales will require funding. Police and Crime Commissioners and practitioners tell us that funding is the primary obstacle to commissioning perpetrator provision in their areas.<sup>27,28</sup> This is a problem across the domestic abuse system as a whole. Perpetrator interventions are often funded from inconsistent, ad-hoc commissioning budgets with much uncertainty about sustainability. Philanthropic funding will continue to play a significant role going forward, supplementing funding from government, however, there now needs to be:

- **A cross-departmental funding commitment** from the Treasury to support the roll-out of the perpetrator strategy. All commissioning would be based on the appropriate training, quality and safety standards. This commitment should be backloaded, to enable immediate investments in systems we know work along with new pilot projects that seek to fill the gaps in our knowledge with the prospect of roll-out later.

It is essential that funding for work with perpetrators is not viewed as a substitute for investment in victim support services, and that each be funded sustainably, independently of each other. **It is not either/or.**



# 5.

## NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEADERS TO SPEARHEAD THE PERPETRATOR STRATEGY

Strategic leadership at central and local levels is needed to deliver societal and systems change and these innovative ways of working. Such leadership must connect with those working on the ground to facilitate the embedding of best practice. To achieve that, we believe it is necessary to:

- **Explicitly include the remit to oversee responses to perpetrators in the responsibilities of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.**
- **Develop a leadership programme**, building on what already exists, that trains and links together individuals and organisations in both England and Wales who can lead change in their area's response to perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- **Hold Ministers in every department accountable for calling out abusive behaviour and tackling harmful gender stereotypes in their day-to-day communications and business.** We propose that this should sit under the general functions of the new DA Commissioner.

- 1 Oliver, Alexander, Roe and Wlasny, Home Office, 'The economic and social costs of domestic abuse' (2019): Accessible at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf)
- 2 SafeLives' MARAC National Dataset: [safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings/latest-marac-data](https://safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings/latest-marac-data) Also: Robinson, Clancy, and Hanks, 'Prevalence and Characteristics of Serial Domestic Abuse Perpetrators: Multi-Agency Evidence from Wales' (2014) [https://orca.cf.ac.uk/67542/1/Robinson%20Clancy%20%26%20Hanks%20%282014%29%20Serial%20perpetrators\\_Phase%20%20report\\_Final%20version.pdf](https://orca.cf.ac.uk/67542/1/Robinson%20Clancy%20%26%20Hanks%20%282014%29%20Serial%20perpetrators_Phase%20%20report_Final%20version.pdf)
- 3 Office for National Statistics (2016) Compendium – Homicide (average taken over 10 years) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/homicide>
- 4 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending 31 March 2018 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>
- 5 Section 5, 'Domestic abuse recorded by the police', Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending 31 March 2018': <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018#domestic-abuse-recorded-by-the-police>
- 6 This cost represents the total cost, including Quality Adjusted Life Years (health and mental costs), for the duration of abuse and recovery for those victims. See Home Office, Oliver, Alexander, Roe and Wlasny, 'The economic and social costs of domestic abuse' (2019): [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf)
- 7 Respect (2013), DVPP Commissioning Guidance for Police and Crime Commissioners. Accessible at: <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s30732/GBV%2090b%20-%20Respect.pdf>
- 8 Respect (2013), DVPP Commissioning Guidance for Police and Crime Commissioners. Accessible at: <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s30732/GBV%2090b%20-%20Respect.pdf>
- 9 Project Mirabal, Durham University. This project assessed the impact of Respect accredited interventions: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/criva/projectmirabal/>
- 10 Professor Marianne Hester et al, University of Bristol, 'Evaluation of Year 2 of the Drive Project – A Pilot to Address High Risk Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse' (2019): <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Drive-Year-2-UoB-Evaluation-Report.pdf>
- 11 Northumbria University evaluation of the MATAc approach. Data accessed at <http://n8prp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/MATAc-N8-presentation-final-11-June-2017.pdf>
- 12 The Home Office study showed the amounts invested 'in anticipation' of abuse are just 0.01% of the £66bn figure at around £6m. This figure covers prevention in the form of awareness campaigns, domestic abuse training and the costs of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. When the cost of Domestic Violence Prevention Orders and Domestic Violence Protection notices is added, the prevention spend rises to 0.02% of the £66bn figure.
- 13 SafeLives, Every Story Matters, 2018.
- 14 Drive is a partnership between three organisations, Respect, SafeLives and Social Finance, to address a gap in work with high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 15 The authors have drawn on resources such as SafeLives' Every Story Matters report, and interviews conducted as part of the University of Bristol evaluation of the Drive project.
- 16 The authors recognise that whilst perpetrators of DA are disproportionately male, they are not exclusively so. This phrase should be taken to apply equally to any gender combination of victim and perpetrator.
- 17 For example, the Welsh Government's "Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales." (2019) <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/framework-to-support-positive-change-for-those-at-risk-of-offending.pdf> This Call to Action outlines principles that support a more coherent and joined up approach to perpetrators. Due to devolution a further paper will be developed to reflect the Welsh policy and legislative landscape to take this work forward within Wales.
- 18 The Government must also ensure that there is sufficient provision of quality assured specialist programmes for the full spectrum of perpetrators, across all risk levels. This will require an adequate level of funding and cooperation with expert providers.' - Quote from 'Report of the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill' (June 2019): <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201719/jtselect/jtddab/2075/2075.pdf>
- 19 The Istanbul Convention says that state parties must "Set up or support programmes aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt nonviolent behaviours" <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>
- 20 The authors recognise that transgender people may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual and therefore 'LGBT' should be taken to be understood as 'LGB and or T'.
- 21 Professor Catherine Donovan, Dr Rebecca Barnes and Dr Catherine Nixon, University of Sunderland and University of

- Leicester; 'The Coral Project: Exploring Abusive Behaviours in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender Relationships' (2014): <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/criminology/documents/coral-project-interim-report>
- 22 HM Inspectorate of Probation, 'Domestic Abuse: the work undertaken by CRCs' (2018) <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/09/Report-Domestic-Abuse-the-work-undertaken-by-CRCs.pdf>
- 23 Northumbria, Durham, Cleveland, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Humberside are using police-led perpetrator panels as part of the MATAAC process. West Mercia and several other areas – such as Croydon and Birmingham & Sandwell – are using panels as part of the Drive programme.
- 24 Research by Dr Edward Gondolf, cited in a presentation on the aforementioned Mirabal project, found that a broader, coordinated community response to DA made a difference to outcomes of perpetrator focussed initiatives: Dr Nicole Westmarland, 'Beyond Safety' – Findings from UK's Project Mirabal across six new measures of success' (2015): <https://vimeo.com/139367711>
- 25 The finding that interventions need to be responsive to the cultural context in which they are delivered lends support to the call for a whole system approach to tackling domestic abuse, in which domestic violence perpetrator services do not operate in isolation and reflect the broader community in which individuals and their families live." Quote from 'Rapid Evidence Assessment: What works with domestic abuse perpetrators?', Welsh Government (2018) <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/181204-rapid-evidence-assessment-what-works-domestic-abuse-perpetrators-en.pdf>
- 26 For example, Respect and the Welsh Government have clear quality standards.
- 27 Internal survey of PCCs across England and Wales, which received 29 responses.
- 28 SafeLives, 'SafeLives' 2019 Survey of domestic abuse practitioners in England and Wales' (2019): <http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/SafeLives%E2%80%99202019%20survey%20of%20domestic%20abuse%20practitioners%20in%20England%20%26%20Wales.pdf>
- 29 Respect (2019), Perpetrators in the early stages of help-seeking: Views of service users. Accessible at: <http://respect.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Perpetrators-in-the-early-stages-of-help-seeking-Views-of-service-users.Westmarland-N.-and-Burrell-S.R.-2019.pdf>

