

## Restart: Working across systems to prevent domestic abuse Strategic Briefing

### About this briefing

#### Introduction

This strategic briefing has been written to highlight how different sectors, specifically children's social care and housing, can collaborate to address the behaviour of domestic abuse perpetrators and keep adult and child victim-survivors safer. It uses the Restart Pilot, developed by the Drive Partnership, MOPAC, Cranstoun and DAHA as an example to demonstrate the opportunities and challenges of collaborative working identified within a practice context. This briefing primarily draws from a variety of data sources produced by, on behalf of or in collaboration with the Drive Partnership including:

- Restart Pilot Interim and Year 1 Evaluations by RedQuadrant
- Restart Pilot quarterly reporting data
- Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: literature review summary report and strategic briefing by Research in Practice
- Learning report: research on the housing rights of perpetrators, and on other accommodation projects for perpetrators by Standing Together & DAHA

Several other supporting sources are also used throughout. Please find a full list of sources at the end of this document.

This strategic briefing is aimed at commissioners, commissioning bodies and policy makers who are concerned with ending domestic abuse, children's social care and housing. It contains sections on

- Background and policy context
- Developing existing practice in children's social care
- The importance of a focus on perpetrators of domestic abuse in multi-agency working
- Opportunities for developing the evidence base around perpetrator work

#### Strategic ambitions - key asks

1. Central and local government senior leaders must prioritise and incentivise building strategic partnerships between children's social care, accommodation pathway providers and specialist domestic abuse providers to incorporate perpetrator interventions that utilise multi-agency working as part of their strategic planning to improve outcomes for children.
2. Central and local government senior leaders must strategically invest in long term, mandatory, workforce development and training for social workers in order to embed effective responses to perpetrators of domestic abuse alongside a strength-based approach to working with victim-survivors and ensuring that children's voices and safety are held paramount.

3. National policymakers and local authorities must commit to placing quality perpetrator work, which centres adult and child victim-survivors, within a robust coordinated community response, across a range of harm and risk levels as part of meeting their strategic aims.
4. Commissioners, policymakers, academics and practitioners must jointly develop an outcome, impact and evaluation framework that is consistent and replicable so that perpetrator programmes and their outcomes can be formally assessed. Assessing the impact of perpetrator interventions on child victim-survivors should be a key priority when developing this framework, as there is a particular lack of data on this subject. This will enable local authorities to make funding decisions and compare models when commissioning.
5. Local authority senior leaders must have clear long term and sustainability commitments within their strategies to address perpetrator behaviour and the impact of that behaviour on families. This should include continued funding for longitudinal evaluation and the expansion and replication of evidence-based models to bring forward best practice for protecting children, with appropriate workforce development in place to support this.

## **Background and policy context**

### **Policy context**

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 made a number of significant changes to the way in which domestic abuse is defined, setting forth a gender-neutral definition that extends beyond physical violence and recognises the significance of coercive and controlling behaviour and children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right<sup>1</sup>. The Domestic Abuse Plan, published by the government in 2022 included a 'Stronger System' strand which looks at improving the systems and processes that underpin the response to domestic abuse across society<sup>2</sup>. The plan also includes a 'Pursuing Perpetrators' strand emphasising the need to address perpetrator behaviour as the root cause of domestic abuse to improve safety and outcomes for victim-survivors. This included £75 million of investment into perpetrator interventions and improvements in policing response and charging of offences<sup>3</sup>. The Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance that followed this legislation outlined how different agencies outside of the criminal justice system may work together to address perpetrator behaviour. The Drive Partnership and the Action on Perpetrators network have since called for further commitments from Government departments beyond the Home Office on this issue. Commitment and action across government departments, such as the Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Education and Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities will be required to fundamentally improve multi-agency working and ensure that a range of interventions are available across England and Wales to ensure the safety of families and children by responding more effectively to perpetrators of domestic abuse<sup>4</sup>.

Within children's social care, domestic abuse is the most frequently identified factor at 'Child in Need' assessments, with concerns about the child's parent/carer being the victim of domestic abuse being identified at 161,000 assessments, and concerns about

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<sup>1</sup> Domestic Abuse Act, Home Office 2021

<sup>2</sup> Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, Home Office, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The Action on Perpetrators network responds to the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, The Drive Partnership 2022

a child being the victim identified at 57,000 assessments in the year 2021/22<sup>5</sup>. Significant recent reviews, including the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the National Review into the Murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, have highlighted how workforce training and development in relation to domestic abuse is critical to protecting child and adult victim-survivors and preventing further abuse.

Within housing, some organisations have begun to advocate for DLUHC to take a policy and funding lead on this issue, to promote best practice and ensure multi-agency working to develop specific, risk-managed accommodation pathways for perpetrators<sup>6</sup>. Appropriate and effective accommodation pathways for perpetrators of domestic abuse – the parent causing harm – have the potential to prevent family homelessness and uprooting the whole family if it is left for the victim to flee. Such pathways prevent the impact of this and can contribute to ensuring the safety of victims-survivors and their families. Opportunities to achieve this have been identified as:

- Supporting Local Authorities to include perpetrator management within their Whole Housing Approach to domestic abuse
- Integrating a perpetrator element into existing homelessness interventions and funding streams
- Multi-agency coordination to ensure access to and pathways into accommodation and risk-management of perpetrators
- Social investment to expand available housing stock
- Develop larger scale models to develop the evidence base

### **Restart pilot outline**

This document uses the Restart pilot as an extended case study to illustrate how multiagency working across systems can prevent domestic abuse and enable intervention at an earlier point. The pilot was developed by MOPAC, The Drive Partnership, Cranstoun and DAHA, and brings together specialist domestic abuse services, children's social care and housing teams across 5 London Boroughs to identify and respond to patterns of domestic abuse at an earlier stage. The project aims to increase safety for families by providing one-to-one interventions with the parent causing harm to challenge and change their abusive behaviour, whilst ensuring safety and support for the non-abusive parent. If separation is necessary, where appropriate, Restart works to support non-abusive parents and children who wish to remain safely in their home by shifting the onus onto the parent causing harm to relocate, most often into temporary accommodation in order to create space for change. A housing pathway facilitates access to alternative accommodation for the abusive parent, which enables more children to remain safe in their home, within their local schools and networks of support. Restart builds on the vital foundation of providing Safe & Together training and ongoing support for Children Social Care and Housing professionals to improve their ability and confidence to identify and respond more effectively to parents causing harm.

The pilot has been evaluated independently at the 6-month and 1-year mark by RedQuadrant using a mixed-method approach, data from which will be used throughout this briefing. Further information on Restart, the evaluations and their methodology can be found at [www.driveproject.org.uk/restart](http://www.driveproject.org.uk/restart).

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<sup>5</sup> Department for Education, Children in Need Census, Factors identified at the end of assessment in the year to 31 March 2022

<sup>6</sup> Accommodation for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse, DAHA Perpetrators & Housing Working Group, 2021

## Developing existing practice in children's social care

### Relationships based, strengths-based practice

Research suggests that survivors often feel that the responsibility for keeping their children safe is solely theirs and can feel re-traumatised by traditional approaches to and attitudes within social care<sup>7</sup>. This emphasises the need for a whole family approach. The significant value and need to work with the whole family where there is a parent causing harm has been identified by both practitioners and victim-survivors<sup>8</sup>. These approaches aim to redress the imbalance of risk management in families by placing the onus to change on the perpetrator and hold them to account.

There are many examples of this type of whole-family approach in England, as outlined in the Research in Practice strategic briefing<sup>9</sup>. This briefing focuses specifically on the Safe & Together model which takes a strengths-based, relationships-based approach to ensure that children and non-abusive parents are supported to remain together safely, as this is the model used by the Restart pilot. The Safe & Together model is an internationally recognized systems change intervention that combines a training program with linked tools and resources to improve the response to domestic abuse. The model emphasizes the need to intervene with perpetrators, and partner with the non-abusive parent, while keeping children safe and together with the non-abusive parent whenever possible. By implementing the Safe & Together model, commissioners can ensure that domestic violence interventions focus on addressing the root cause of the problem, which is the behaviour of the perpetrator, while promoting the safety and well-being of the non-abusive parent and their children<sup>10</sup>.

A key aim within the Restart pilot is to *'Provide training and capacity building for CSC practitioners to enable CSC to effectively hold abusive parents to account'*. To enable this, social care practitioners across the Restart boroughs have been offered CORE training and a one-day overview training to build their capacity, capability and confidence when working with families where there is a perpetrator of domestic abuse. The 1-year evaluation found significantly improved training scores after professionals had attended the CORE training (75.6% average pre-training score compared to 87.4% post-training score), which signifies a marked change in attitudes, knowledge and understanding relating to domestic abuse for those who attended<sup>11</sup>. Both the interim evaluation and 1 year evaluation reports were given positive feedback by attendees, which speaks to how this kind of training can work to develop skills within a workforce<sup>12,13</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: Strategic briefing page 33, Research in Practice, 2021

<sup>8</sup> Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: Summary report page 7, Research in Practice, 2022

<sup>9</sup> Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: Strategic briefing page 36, 2022

<sup>10</sup> Violence Reduction: Good Practice Case Studies Safe & Together Waltham Forest, London Councils, 2021

<sup>11</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 30, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>12</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 31, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>13</sup> Restart Interim Evaluation page 43, RedQuadrant, 2022

*"I was surprised by the impact this training has had on my thoughts around domestic violence and it has completely changed my way of thinking." - Safe & Together training attendee*

*"This was a training I felt I actually gained skills and knowledge from that I can immediately use in practice." – Safe & Together training attendee*

### **Working with perpetrators of domestic abuse within CSC settings**

The social care system has been repeatedly identified as a key sector for identifying perpetrators of domestic abuse and intervening to keep families safer at an earlier point before families end up in situations of high harm and risk<sup>14</sup>. However, both Research in Practice and RedQuadrant identify multiple commonalities in how increased workload and pressures felt by practitioners, combined with cultural norms and high staff turnover, can create barriers for practitioners to successfully engage with perpetrator work in social care settings and embedding these practices throughout the sector<sup>15</sup>. There is a need to develop confidence, capacity and capability within the social care workforce to enable perpetrator work to be carried out safely and effectively.

*"We've had a lot of staff turnover... a lot of SPOCs [Single Points of Contact] within the boroughs that we've built relationships with change so often or getting moved to a different team, or their priorities change, they have work taken off them. And that can be really frustrating." - Representative of a central agency*

This can be achieved by the kind of training described in the paragraphs above, which should be complemented by embedded professional support for practitioners they can use to ask questions about specific cases and develop their knowledge, such as the Safe & Together Implementation Leads included in the Restart pilot model, coupled with pastoral support and supervision mechanisms. Both RedQuadrant and Research in Practice reports identified the importance of cultural change and support from middle management for front-line practitioners as being key to this embedding process and to ensuring a long-term shift towards perpetrator focused work being a core part of a whole family social care response, as recommended by the Independent Review into Children's Social Care<sup>16</sup>.

*"I think a perpetrator-pattern based approach is a really effective framework for thinking, talking and writing about families as it helps to avoid language that blames the non-abusive parent, instead highlighting the perpetrator's actions." - S&T attendee*

### **Intersectionality**

There is a need for the consistent use of intersectional lens in social work with people who perpetrate domestic abuse in families<sup>17</sup>. This was reflected in the focus groups conducted by Research in Practice, where survivors discussed how children's social care responses to domestic abuse are influenced by intersectional identities, including cultural diversity. They particularly highlighted the need to be mindful of dominant

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<sup>14</sup> Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: Summary report page 24, Research in Practice, 2022

<sup>15</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 26, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>16</sup> The independent review of children's social care – Final report page 44, Josh Macalister, 2022

<sup>17</sup> Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: Strategic briefing page 19, Research in Practice, 2021

language used in social protection work, and that for certain communities the role of the police and safety planning needs to be viewed through a cultural lens (ibid).

These findings were reflected in the Restart Pilot 1 Year evaluation, which found a variable knowledge around the dynamics of domestic abuse in social care professionals. The report highlights the importance of embedding anti-racist practices within services. Restart Violence Prevention Practitioners (VPPs) who work directly with service users discussed the lack of trauma-informed and domestic abuse-aware translators both across the sector and in general<sup>18</sup>.

## **The importance of a focus on perpetrators of domestic abuse in housing and multi-agency working**

### **Strengthening accommodation pathways for perpetrators**

Whilst children's social care has been the focus of much of this briefing, the innovative accommodation pathway included in the Restart pilot model demonstrates how multiple agencies can work collaboratively to improve the safety of victim-survivors and keep families safe at home together, where appropriate. There are inevitable ethical considerations that arise when considering the options of opening housing pathways to perpetrators of domestic abuse, especially given the high need and demand for limited housing options in general, which has an inevitable impact on victim-survivors who wish to leave the homes they share or have shared with a perpetrator. While accommodation pathways for perpetrators may not be suitable or even feasible in many circumstances, findings from the Restart evaluation report that in appropriate circumstances, removing the perpetrator from the family home can have a significant impact, giving the victim-survivor space for action to make decisions about their living situation and reduce risk and harm for the family<sup>19</sup>. For context, approximately 22% of Restart cases had an identified housing need for the perpetrator in the initial needs assessment<sup>20</sup>. As with all forms of high-quality perpetrator work, it is imperative that the needs, safety and freedom of the victim-survivor and their children are prioritised in the development and delivery of any perpetrator pathways, and that pathways are tailored to be suitable to the needs of families<sup>21</sup>.

*"[it's] allowed professionals to consider an intervention that focuses on the perpetrator as opposed to putting the onus on the survivor and forcing them to move. This is a really positive thing because often we see survivors being forced to move and nothing happens to the perpetrator. This allows some perpetrator accountability and to address the root cause of the domestic abuse." - Practitioner, central agency*

As part of the Restart pilot, Standing Together and DAHA produced a paper examining existing accommodation projects for perpetrators of domestic abuse<sup>22</sup>. They made several recommendations reflecting on the good practice and opportunities for improvement that they identified, including the following for perpetrators programmes / domestic abuse services / commissioners:

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<sup>18</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 25, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>19</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 11, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>20</sup> Restart outcomes dashboard, The Drive Partnership, 2023

<sup>21</sup> Respect Standard: 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Respect, 2022

<sup>22</sup> Research and learning report: Accommodation support for perpetrators of domestic abuse, Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse & Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, 2022

- Perpetrators programmes need to build partnerships, including co-location, with housing options teams and housing providers to ensure officers understand the rationale and benefit of exploring housing options with perpetrators of domestic abuse in order to support, increase safety, and potential prevent homelessness of the victim/survivor and children.
- Early cost-benefit analysis of rehousing perpetrators compared with making the victim/survivor homeless looks promising.
- Programmes must ensure that victims/survivors have access to specialist domestic abuse support after the perpetrator has moved out as abuse can increase in the post-separation period. Support with affording housing costs will also be likely.
- Access to Housing Advocates should be available to work alongside behaviour change programmes to assess the housing needs of the family, including that of the victim/survivors and perpetrators and provide support or referrals where needed. Advocates should have the capacity and knowledge to support perpetrators' homelessness applications.

The Year 1 Restart evaluation report recommends that in order to prepare perpetrators for the long-term housing placement process, if required, investment in a greater range of housing placements should be made to increase the likelihood of service users being able to access long-term housing once they leave temporary accommodation<sup>23</sup>.

### **Needs-based approaches to perpetrator work**

Taking a needs-based, trauma-informed approach to perpetrator work has been highlighted by both professionals and victim-survivors as beneficial in that these approaches direct responsibility away from the victim-survivor and onto the perpetrator. A needs-led approach enables professionals to see the perpetrator as a whole person with co-occurring needs and any relevant history while recognising the role of shame in the lives of perpetrators of abuse, and how this may act as a barrier to engagement and / or behaviour change<sup>24</sup>.

*"We have one guy whose partner wanted him to leave and it had been ongoing and there had never been any [physical] violence, but there had been verbal violence and verbal abuse and put downs and she described it as just a constant barrage of put downs. During lockdown, he wasn't working and he fell into depression. I offered him some encouragement to get some mental health support. He started understanding the effects on his children and their mum and she wanted him to leave the house at the time, but she didn't want him to go just before [the holidays] for the children's sake. After we did some work, she reported that he really started making an effort around the house, apologising when he put her down, and catching himself before he criticised her. He didn't stop immediately, he hasn't actually stopped completely but he's taking some responsibility within the house." – Central agency practitioner*

To help build a picture of abuse, need and risk and to inform the approach taken on a case-by-case basis, Restart practitioners complete the Severity of Abuse Grid (SOAG) with input from the Partner Support Worker, children's social care professionals and the

<sup>23</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 43, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>24</sup> Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: Strategic briefing page 36, Research in Practice, 2021

service user. The SOAG is designed to provide practitioners with a framework for identifying specific features of the abusive behaviour being perpetrated and help guide the practitioner in addressing the safety of victim/survivors in an informed way. The SOAG covers the nature or type of the abuse, how often the abuse takes place, how severe it is and whether it is escalating. This tool helps build a picture of the abuse and informs the approach that should be taken to address risk for that individual on a case-by-case basis. Practitioners can use this tool, alongside their professional judgement and wider context relating to the case to build a fuller picture and best address the specific needs of the individuals involved. This can then allow the Case Manager to effectively prepare the service user for future in-depth behaviour change work.

One of the primary aims of Restart is *“to build motivation and facilitate access to behaviour change interventions for the abusive parent.”* Of the 84 service users who have completed Restart, 45 service users have been referred onto a 20+ week group domestic violence perpetrator program and 23 services users have been referred onto a 12-week 1-1 behavioural change programme<sup>25</sup>, which shows a fulfilment of this aim. Streamlining the handover of information and data between teams was recommended by the 1-year evaluation report in order to better facilitate long-term service user engagement in behaviour change work<sup>26</sup>.

### **Restart Individual Case Study**

*Zara\*, a victim-survivor, had expressed fear to her social worker and sought to end her abusive relationship with Kai\*. While working with the Restart Case Manager (CM), Kai expressed remorse for an incident which involved knocking one of his two children over during an argument with Zara but had limited sympathy for Zara herself. Both parents stated that they wanted what was best for the children. Through collaborative efforts, including social workers, housing departments, and Restart, Kai was relocated to temporary accommodation after having no fixed abode for several years, and using Zara’s flat as a base. Support for Zara was provided by the Restart Partner Support Worker (PSW) as well as the social worker and an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate).*

*In the referral to Restart, the Social Worker detailed their concerns about the impact of Kai’s abusive behaviour towards Zara on their two children, which was manifesting in their beginning to imitate his behaviours. Their youngest daughter had started becoming overly apologetic and their son was noted by the school as being hyper-vigilant of his father’s mood at drop off and pick-ups. Since Restart has been working with the family, the social worker has noted that their oldest child is doing well at school and the younger child is more confident interacting with adults.*

*Both parents are now living in separate secure accommodation and contact with the children is being agreed with the social worker. Kai is engaging in a long-term Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme and has acknowledged how his behaviour has negatively affected both Zara and his children. Zara has reported positive increases in her wellbeing and safety and echoed the social worker’s observations about the children. She has thanked the Restart PSW for her advice and support.*

<sup>25</sup> Restart outcomes dashboard, The Drive Partnership, 2023

<sup>26</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 58, RedQuadrant, 2023

*\*anonymised*

### **Perpetrator work as part of a coordinated community response**

A coordinated community response (CCR) to domestic abuse and violence ‘enables a whole system approach to a whole person’ and shifts responsibility for safety away from individual victim-survivors and onto communities and services<sup>27</sup>. In the context of perpetrator work, such as the Restart pilot, an effective CCR should ensure that the right services are available to the right people across a spectrum of risk and harm levels at the appropriate time<sup>28</sup>.

There is recognition from the Restart team that the intervention, as with any perpetrator intervention, must exist as part of a coordinated community response towards perpetrators in the local area and any areas of future expansion and replication. To embed a true CCR areas must ensure that there are a range of services to address perpetrators of all need and risk levels, this requires areas to identify gaps, invest in workforce development and be willing to learn from existing programmes such as Restart.

### **Support for victims work as part of quality perpetrator intervention**

As set out in the 4th Respect Standard, any quality perpetrator intervention must be accompanied by a corresponding victim-survivor support service of equal value and importance, the ISS (Integrated Support Service), which is focused on the safety and freedom of victims/survivors<sup>29</sup>. This is aligned with the Home Office’s Standards for Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Intervention, which state that: “The priority outcome for perpetrator interventions should be enhanced safety and freedom (space for action) for all victims-survivors, including children”<sup>30</sup>.

In the Restart pilot, the Restart Partner Support Worker (PSW) provides this ISS. RedQuadrant’s research found that the PSW’s role seems to be particularly key in Restart because there is unlikely to be an IDVA providing support for the victim-survivors given that the level of risk is not generally sufficiently high. Examples were evident of the PSW helping with civil and criminal justice procedures and supporting the victim-survivor to take difficult decisions about her and her children’s future. In interviews, victim-survivors noted the importance of the highly skilled, supportive, non-judgemental, non-statutory role the PSW played<sup>31</sup>.

*‘The client said that she was happy with the service received and was grateful for the support given. She felt reassured that her ex was receiving help and hopes that this will make him a better father to their child.’ - Victim-survivor*

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<sup>27</sup> In Search of Excellence© A refreshed guide to effective domestic abuse partnership work – The Coordinated Community Response (CCR) page 6, Standing Together, 2020

<sup>28</sup> Working with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in families: Strategic briefing page 5, Research in Practice, 2021

<sup>29</sup> The Respect Standard 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Respect, 2022

<sup>30</sup> Standards for domestic abuse perpetrator interventions, Home Office, 2023

<sup>31</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation, RedQuadrant, 2023

*'I feel with Restart, it's like you're talking to another human being, not just a number, whereas dealing with a social worker, you feel like you're just another case that they need to finish'. - Victim-survivor*

## **Opportunities for developing the evidence base around perpetrator work**

### **A framework for evaluation**

Whilst there is strong and growing evidence on the effectiveness of quality assured domestic abuse perpetrator interventions in reducing risk for adult victim-survivors, a lack of evidence on the wider impacts of programmes, particularly outcomes for child victim-survivors, has been continually cited as a major barrier to national and local provision<sup>32</sup>. It is rare for evaluations conducted to refer to established outcomes for children and young people such as reduced levels of risk in child protection programmes and children in need assessments. The recent Children's Social Care Independent Review is one of the most recent reports to echo this<sup>33</sup>. There is a lack of a consistent outcome measurement protocol for evaluators to use when evaluating perpetrator programmes, and there is a need for opportunities to measure outcomes longitudinally and observe impact over time, including whether change has been sustained. It would be beneficial to have a framework measuring outcomes that are consistent and replicable across different programmes in order to best understand what actually works, and for whom and enable the comparison of outcomes across interventions. Commissioners, policymakers, academics and practitioners should work together to jointly develop this framework, which should use outcomes that are rigorous, robust and have been evaluated.

### **Data sharing**

There can be multiple difficulties associated with obtaining accurate outcome data for adult and child victim/survivors. According to Respect Standards<sup>34</sup>, all high-quality perpetrator interventions must have a stand-alone victim/survivor support element to them and in many instances, this is provided by a separate agency or organisation. The interim and 1-year evaluations of Restart highlighted examples of where a lack or nervousness around data sharing and data sharing protocols had limited the information available to agencies and affected the delivery of the pilot<sup>35</sup>. This challenge has been particularly evident in attempting to obtain data from children's social services on the outcomes for associated child survivors. An improvement in data sharing between agencies through clear guidelines and support from non-frontline staff is one way to facilitate the development of the data available for evaluation.

### **Qualitative data gathering**

The evidence base would be further improved by having a greater wealth of qualitative data, particularly from victim-survivors, service users and children and young people. This should sit alongside quantitative outcome measures such as the SOAG to provide frontline professionals with the opportunity to improve and develop best practice in their work, and commissioners with the information needed to confidently commission programmes.

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<sup>32</sup> Learning together about how best to support children and families affected by, or at risk of, domestic abuse, David Rodriguez, 2023

<sup>33</sup> Independent Review of Children's Social Care page 251, Josh MacAlister, 2022

<sup>34</sup> Respect Standard: 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Respect, 2022

<sup>35</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 9, RedQuadrant, 2023

The Restart Pilot 1-Year evaluation recommends that future programming and evaluation build upon existing work to gather and integrate the voices of and outcomes for children and young people<sup>36</sup>. This could include existing wishes and feelings work between social workers and children and young people or working closely with other trusted adults who may play a supportive role in children's lives to hear how interventions have impacted on their safety, happiness and general wellbeing. Evaluations should also build timelines to establish relationships with CSC teams to develop tailored engagement pathways that are appropriate and effective for different areas and families. One mechanism of doing this could be through intervention teams developing links to direct children's work through partnering with organisations that already have established and well-evidenced methods of working with children and young people to improve the quality of outcomes for children known to programmes and the quality of data being gathered for evaluation.

### **Evidence for accommodation pathways**

The accommodation pathway associated with Restart is one of the key elements that makes it an innovative pilot. The pathway offers the victim-survivor space for action and allowing children to stay safe at home with their non-abusive parent and within their existing support systems. As part of DAHA's work with the pilot, a learning report was produced which mapped all known accommodation projects in the UK which provided housing support to domestic abuse perpetrators to reflect on good practice, set the national context and collate learnings<sup>37</sup>. Their mapping established that there were limited numbers of such projects, and many were only funded short term. Therefore, overall, there is a lack of long-term outcome data associated with these types of interventions with accommodation offers. The learning report identified several positive learnings from these projects including early evidence that behaviour change work is safer and effective when the perpetrator doesn't live with the victim-survivor, and that cost-benefit analysis of rehousing perpetrators compared with making the victim/survivor homeless is promising<sup>38</sup>.

Within Restart, 32 service users have been referred to the Restart accommodation pathway to date<sup>39</sup>. The accommodation pathway is not envisioned to be suitable for every case, however, the evaluation has shown that even having the option available has resulted in a positive shift in narrative which has been noted as a significant benefit for victim-survivors and their children. Early housing learnings within Restart mirror other projects nationally, showing that removing the perpetrator from the family home could provide space for action for their partner and enable them to gain confidence to oppose the perpetrator's wish to return. The evaluation has also noted challenges to operating in London, an area which, like others, is currently experiencing an unprecedented housing crisis and extremely low levels of available social housing stock, alongside limited temporary accommodation options<sup>40</sup>. Replication of this type of intervention with an associated housing pathway in other areas is desired in order to continue to build upon evidence and learnings and enable a more robust evidence-based case for the provision of innovative housing pathways across different areas.

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<sup>36</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 41, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>37</sup> Research and learning report: Accommodation support for perpetrators of domestic abuse, Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse & Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, 2022

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Restart outcomes dashboard, The Drive Partnership, 2023

<sup>40</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 11, RedQuadrant, 2023

### **Funding and sustainability**

As outlined by the Independent Review into Children's Social Care, What Works, RedQuadrant and a variety of others, a commitment to fund longitudinal, methodologically sound evaluation of projects such as Restart is needed to ensure that outcomes are accurately measured, and learnings can be applied to enable funding decisions at a local and national level. It is hoped that local authorities are able to take up the responsibilities outlined throughout this strategic briefing to allow provision for earlier intervention for domestic abuse perpetrators through multi-agency working across systems to expand into different areas. Expansion into further geographic areas will also allow for continued learning and development in relation to the accommodation pathway in different housing contexts. Interim cost-benefit analysis work suggests that there are potential savings for areas implementing Restart through housing costs and reduced children's social care costs through the reduction of escalation in cases<sup>41</sup>.

When looking at replication, it would be worthwhile for areas to consider how elements of the Restart pilot might fit in with their existing provision. The Restart partnership are keen to act in an advisory and developmental role in all three key elements of Restart: the housing element, the children's social care training element and the direct work with victim/survivors and perpetrators element. For example, if there is already a domestic abuse perpetrator programme in the area, the Restart team may be able to advise on developing an accommodation pathway for perpetrators and providing Safe & Together training for social care practitioners. This will support reducing costs and could facilitate a smoother embedding process.

Introducing a pilot such as or similar to Restart is a way for areas to fulfil a multitude of strategic commitments including their Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, seeing children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right<sup>42</sup>, working with perpetrators as part of the area's Whole Housing Approach<sup>43</sup> and working under both the Stronger System and the Pursuing Perpetrators strands of the Tackling Domestic Abuse plan<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Restart Pilot 1 Year Evaluation page 69 & 70, RedQuadrant, 2023

<sup>42</sup> Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Home Office, 2021

<sup>43</sup> Whole Housing Approach, Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, 2020

<sup>44</sup> Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, Home Office, 2022

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