



MEN & WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER
TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Respect briefing paper on the findings of the Mirabal research into the outcomes of accredited perpetrator programmes

STEPS TOWARDS CHANGE

January 2015

Highlights from findings: Respect accredited domestic violence perpetrator programmes work

Summary:

1. **Most men who complete a Respect accredited domestic violence perpetrator programme (DVPP) stop using violence and reduce most other forms of abuse against their partner.** At the start, almost all the women said that their partners had used some form of physical or sexual violence in the past three months. Twelve months later, after their partner or ex-partner had completed the programme, most said that the physical and sexual violence had stopped.
2. **Most of the partners and ex-partners of men on programmes say that they feel and are safer after their partner or ex-partner completed the programme.** At the start of the programme nearly three out of every four women said that they didn't feel safe. By 12 months on from the start, eight out of ten said that they do feel safe.
3. **Respect accredited DVPPs make unique contributions to the "STEPS TOWARDS CHANGE"** (this is the title of the full research report) which help to end men's use of domestic violence
4. **A variety of men come to Respect accredited DVPPs**, including men with a criminal history, men referred by children's services because of risks to their children, men referred by family courts as part of a contested child contact application and men referred by other agencies or self-referred.
5. **Respect accredited DVPPs make a significant and unique contribution to local coordinated community responses to domestic violence** by changing men's understanding of abuse and relationships, teaching them ways of being non-abusive, taking them through steps to change over time and holding them to account.
6. **Respect accredited DVPPs fit with other interventions needed** at various points to ensure safety for victims and children. DVPPs don't replace the need for refuge DVAs, justice system, police, mental health support, parenting programmes etc. but are a valuable and unique contribution to work alongside them as part of a coordinated community response.
7. **There are good indicators for work with children whose fathers are on a Respect accredited DVPP and more work to be done to develop these.** Three of the twelve Respect accredited programmes in the Mirabal cohort had funding for children's workers during the research. Almost all the children said they felt safer after their father had been on the programme.

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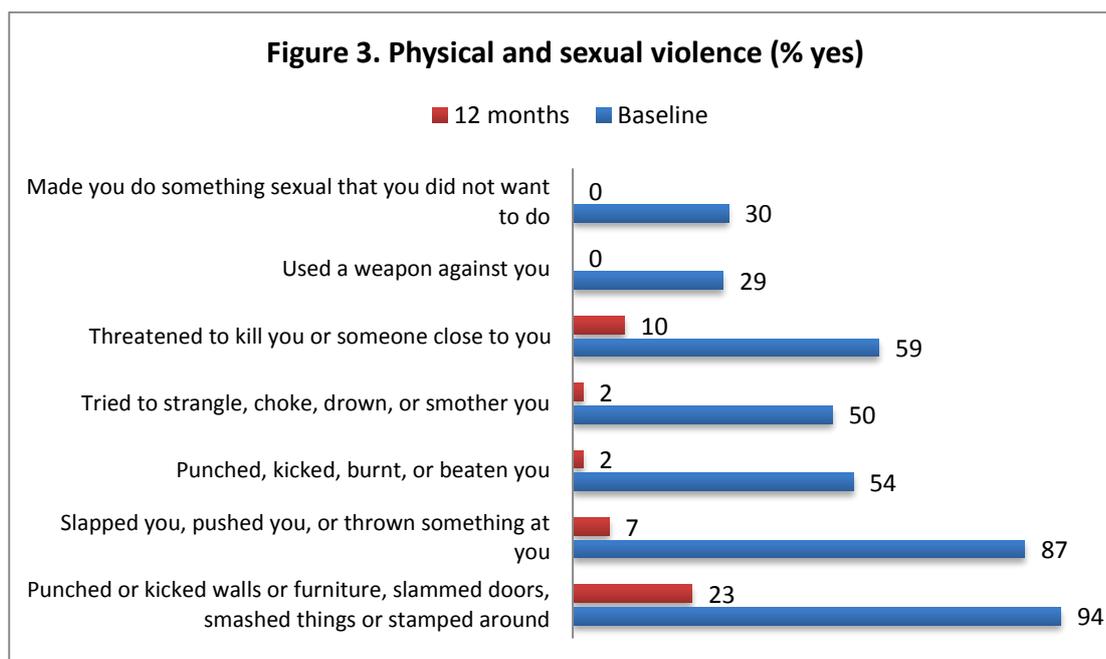
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Highlight 1: most men completing Respect accredited programmes stop using physical and sexual violence and reduce most other forms of abuse

The Mirabal research shows the unique contributions that Respect accredited perpetrator programmes (DVPPs) make to coordinated community responses to domestic violence. It shows that most men who complete Respect accredited DVPPs:

- stop using physical and sexual violence,
- strongly decrease use of coercion, control and other forms of abuse,
- take responsibility for the abuse and its impact,
- learn how to be non-abusive in intimate relationships,
- understand the impact of their abuse on their children.

Figure 3 shows that at the start of men's participation in a groupwork programme, almost all the women said that their partners had used some form of physical or sexual violence in the past three months. Twelve months later, after their partner or ex-partner had completed the programme, most said that the physical and sexual violence had stopped. Most men decreased their use of all other forms of abuse but most were still using some non-physical abuse. This emphasises the value of the Respect accreditation model, in which linked partner support is a required part of the DVPP as a whole, and working with and alongside other interventions such as women's support services, is also essential.





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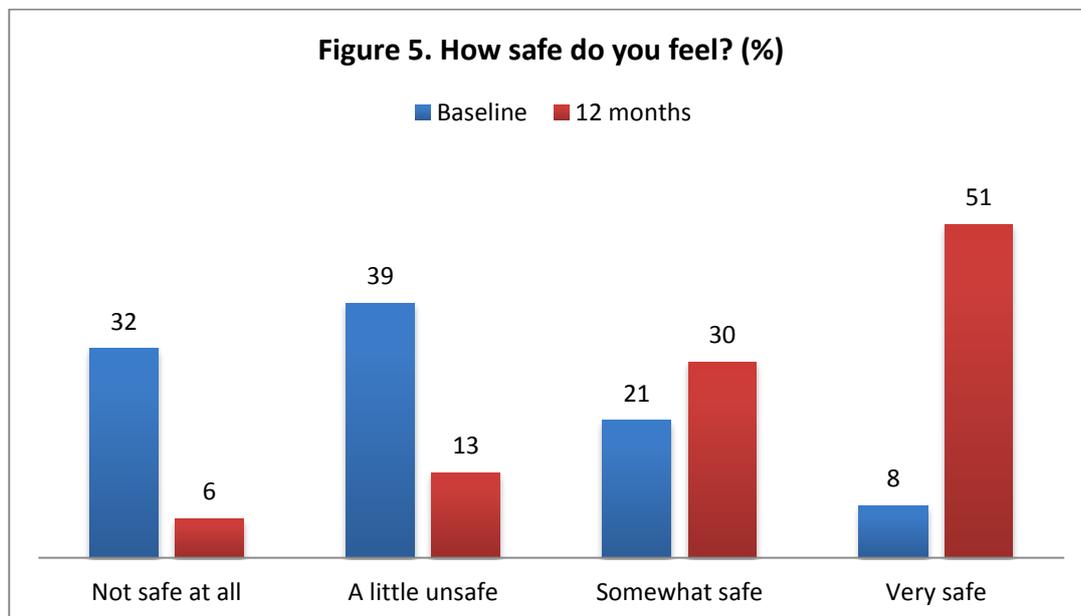
All the men in the study completely stopped using any form of sexual coercion and also completely stopped any use of weapons. Almost all physical violence was eliminated by the end of the programme. Just over a quarter of men still hit walls, slammed doors or similar physical acts.

Highlight 2: women are safer and feel safer as a result

The Mirabal research shows that most of the partners and ex-partners feel and are safer by the end of their partner/ex-partner participating in a Respect accredited programme.

Most women reported feeling safe by 12 months on: just over half reported feeling very safe by the 12-month point compared to less than one in ten at baseline (51% compared to 8%).

At the start of men's participation in the programme nearly three quarters of the women (71%) said they didn't feel safe. Twelve months later, after their partner or ex-partner had completed the programme, four out of five (81%) said that they do feel safe.





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Highlight 3: Respect accredited DVPPs make unique contributions to the STEPS TOWARDS CHANGE which help to end men's use of domestic violence and protect and support women who suffer it

The process

Some women saw huge changes in all aspects of the violent and abusive behaviours their partners had previously used. Others saw significant improvements in violence and abuse but less change in the other forms of abuse. A few said there was no improvement. They talked about this being a process which took time and went through different stages.

The researchers said: *"It was clear that this [change] was not a process that involves a 'lightbulb' moment but rather a series of sparks – different for each man – that eventually combine".*

This is well illustrated by the following quote from one of the men in the study speaking after the DVPP:

"I don't think there was a moment... during the programme they all say like the penny drops, as it were, all of a sudden this light-bulb moment and there never is... it's like a little fairground machine where you put a coin in and it bounces off various little pegs and it's only working its way to the bottom and the programme is like that... I know that I will be remembering it when I'm in my 70s and my 80s ... But it's never like this light-bulb moment. I always say it's like this little coin that you drop in and it bounces around for ages and it sort of argues with yourself and all of a sudden dink it's in the bottom before you know it." [KIERAN, TIME 2]

Steps to becoming non-violent in intimate relationships

Techniques such as 'time out' and 'positive self-talk' were important interruption techniques for violence avoidance particularly in the early stages. As time went on, violence avoidance changed from being dependent on specific techniques to a more sustained process of change as men learnt and began to consider different points of view, changed their expectations of their partners, developed respect and understanding.

Expectations of personal relationships

Men changing their beliefs about men's and women's roles in relationships was fundamental to their steps to change in ending use of violence and abuse. This is specific and unique to programmes.

Arrest for men, shelter for women, multi agency risk management processes all have an important part in responding to domestic violence and all are needed. However, this research shows that only a specific intervention can help men go through a process of change which leads to ending their use of violence and abuse. This doesn't happen every time, and it isn't the sole purpose of a Respect accredited DVPP.

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However, it is a unique contribution to the coordinated community response to domestic violence, with Respect accredited DVPPs working alongside other vital interventions.

Highlight 4: a wide range of men come to Respect accredited DVPPs including men with a substantial criminal history and men referred from several different routes

The patterns of the men attending both National Offender Management Scheme (NOMs) and Respect DVPPs were similar for age and ethnicity. Details of criminal history made available through the Respect members' client database (REDAMOS) analysed during the research show that there is a proportion of men on Respect DVPPs who have extensive criminal histories and of men who have had no contact with their ex-partner or children for some time and had been referred during a contested child contact application.

Sixteen referral pathways into a Respect accredited DVPP were identified in this research, but three predominated: Children's Services (n=559), CAFCASS/family courts (n=300) and 341 categorised as a 'self-referral'.

Highlight 5: Respect accredited DVPPs do much more than run groups

The Mirabal research found that Respect accredited DVPPs are far more than the group work.

All Respect accredited DVPPs will carry out assessment, group work interventions for men and associated linked support for women whose partners or ex-partners are on the DVPP, risk and case management. Larger organisations undertake further work including assessments and reports for courts, CAFCASS or children's services, or provide training and other activities with a wider social impact than individual behaviour change.

DVPPs are continually developing and testing out different models of intervention and engagement such as locating embedded workers in children's services or providing parenting DVPP specifically for fathers who have used partner violence.

Highlight 6: Respect accredited DVPPs make a unique contribution to community responses to domestic violence to work alongside other help

The size and nature of Respect accredited DVPPs has shifted and changed over the years.

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Four very different sites were studied for the review of contribution to a coordinated community response with a geographic spread, varied size of DVPP.

The Mirabal research found that all had good reputations locally and that their expertise was recognised. All faced new funding challenges. There were frustrations amongst stakeholders at the limited capacity of DVPPs.

A further aspect of DVPP work seldom documented are the reports on and assessments of risks presented by perpetrators – both those accepted onto DVPPs and those not. Across the ten sites where data was available a total of 649 reports were undertaken:

- 315 for family court proceedings;
- 191 for Children's Services;
- 58 for CAFCASS;
- 44 for criminal court cases;
- 41 for child protection conferences.

Highlight 7: most children said they felt safer

Three of the twelve Respect accredited DVPPs in the Mirabal cohort had funding for children's workers during the research. Almost all the children said they felt safer after their father had been on the DVPP.

Children said that they hoped that their fathers would change from being on the DVPP. Most were doing more activities, and talked about their everyday lives being better. Almost all the children said they felt safer after their father had been on the DVPP.

The researchers recommend that part of holding men to account is that they are accountable to their children and that children should have access to support through DVPPs. There are two reports on this aspect of the research available at the time of writing (see appendix for links).

Implications and recommendations

Commissioners, funders and policy makers

1. Commissioners, funders and policy makers can now have confidence in:
 - The effectiveness of a well-run perpetrator DVPP working as part of a coordinated community response;
 - The value of and evidence base for the Respect accreditation system, training and models of work;
 - The potential for developing improved outcomes for children.

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2. We recommend that commissioners, funders and policy ensure that DVPPs have sufficient funding available to ensure staff time and resources to fulfil the requirements of the Respect accreditation standard.
3. We recommend that commissioners, funders and policy makers recognise the full range of contributions a Respect accredited DVPP makes to local coordinated community responses to domestic violence and their wider social impact beyond the impact on individual men, women and children.
4. We invite commissioners and funders to work in partnership with Respect and Respect accredited DVPPs to develop specific interventions or elements of interventions for families where there is an application for child contact following separation, including specific elements for each parent separately and for the children.

Managers of and practitioners in DVPPs

1. Practitioners and managers can have confidence in their DVPP's effects on the safety of women and children and the impact on men's violence and abuse.
2. We recommend that managers ensure that practitioners continue to have sufficient time available to fulfil the activities in the Respect accreditation standard.
3. We invite Respect accredited DVPPs to work in partnership with commissioners and funders to develop specific interventions or elements of interventions for families where there is an application for child contact following separation, including specific elements for each parent separately and for the children.



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APPENDIX

About the researchers

This research was led by Professor Liz Kelly (London Metropolitan University) and Professor Nicole Westmarland (University of Durham) with support from Professor Charlotte Watts from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, plus a team of research assistants from all three universities. It was independent of Respect, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and took 5 years.

About the research methodology

A pilot study developed six measures of success for individual outcomes from change in DVPP participants’ behaviour and understanding:

- a. Improved relationship based on respect and effective communication
- b. Expanded “space for action” for women
- c. Safety and freedom from violence and abuse for women
- d. Safe, positive and shared parenting of the children
- e. Enhanced awareness of self and others for men
- f. Safer, healthier childhoods for the children

The main research operationalised these measures and included a scoring system which explored the possibility that DVPPs made men worse as well as improved them.

Table 1: Project Mirabal data

Element of research	Data collected
Locating DVPPs, CCR case studies	Programme data from 11 research sites Secondary analysis of Redamos* and NOMs data 64 interviews with DVPP staff and stakeholders across four locations
Longitudinal surveys	100 women DVPP intervention group, 62 women comparison group Five interviews phased over six time points (15 months)
Longitudinal in depth interviews	64 men on programmes and 48 women (ex) partners Time 1 (near start) and Time 2 (near end) interviews
DVPP Impact on children(PhD)	Online survey of 44 Respect members Interviews with 13 DVPP staff Interviews with 13 children aged 7-16
DVPP programme integrity (PhD)	16 interviews with early programme developers and stakeholders Six month ethnographic study of the establishment of a co-location project 22 interviews with current programme staff

*A bespoke database used by a number of Respect members

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About Respect and Respect accredited programmes

[Respect is the UK organisation for work with domestic violence perpetrators, male victims and young people](#). We run two national helplines; provide specialist training, events and networking; advise on national policy; run the inspection and accreditation scheme for domestic violence perpetrator programmes to ensure quality, effectiveness and safety.

The [Respect accreditation scheme](#) is built on the most rigorous available evidence about safety and effectiveness and is updated regularly as new evidence emerges.

Mirabal publications to date

An electronic copy of the full report and other Project Mirabal publications are available at:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/criva/projectmirabal>

Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2015) *Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: Steps Towards Change. Project Mirabal Final Report*. London and Durham: London Metropolitan University and Durham University.

Downes, J., Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2014) [Ethics in Violence and Abuse Research - a Positive Empowerment Approach](#). *Sociological Research Online*, 19(1)2.

Alderson, S., Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2013) [Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Children and Young People](#), London and Durham: London Metropolitan University and Durham University.

Phillips, R., Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2013) [Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: An Historical Overview](#), London and Durham: London Metropolitan University and Durham University.

Alderson, S., Westmarland, N. and Kelly, L. (2012) [The Need for Accountability to, and Support for, Children of Men on Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes](#). *Child Abuse Review*, 3, 182-193.

Westmarland, N. and Kelly, L. (2012) (with Kelly) [Why extending measurements of 'success' in domestic violence perpetrator programmes matters for Social Work](#). *British Journal of Social Work*, 43(6), 1092-1110.

Westmarland, N., Kelly, L. and Chalder-Mills, J. (2010) [Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: What Counts as Success?](#) London: Respect.

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