

Refuge and Respect project to support employers' responses to domestic violence

“It’s a difficult subject, isn’t it?”

Evaluation report from pilot of HR policy in ‘Nordby’ County Council

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INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank Nina, Pam and Karen at Nordby County Council and all the other staff who took part in the pilot, particularly those who completed evaluation questionnaires and participated in interviews.

The domestic violence and employers' resource toolkit was developed by the Refuge Head of Policy and Parliamentary Affairs and Respect Development Director, funded by Nationwide and published in 2010.

The aims of the resource toolkit are to raise awareness of the effects of domestic violence on employees and employers and to provide technical assistance to help line managers to respond effectively to domestic violence affecting their employees and the workplace.

As part of the development of the resource pack, Refuge and Respect piloted their approach with a large employer. Refuge and Respect are grateful to staff and councillors at Nordby County Council (a fictionalised name for a genuine, large county council) for their commitment to addressing domestic violence and working with them to pilot many of the ideas and processes in the resource pack. This report is an evaluation of that pilot.

1.1 Why assist employers to respond effectively to domestic violence?

For Refuge and Respect, in line with their organisational aims, the benefits of the pilot were to help more victims of domestic violence to be supported and protected in the workplace and more people using or perpetrating domestic violence to seek help to change their abusive behaviour.

From the employers' standpoint, likely benefits may at first seem less obvious. However, some employers have already begun to recognise the costs to them of ignoring or failing to respond appropriately to domestic violence. Others will have had their awareness raised by the launch of the resource pack itself or from activities by the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence or other organisations.

Some employers have learnt the hard way, such as when an employee commits such serious offences that they bring adverse publicity to the organisation, for example as a result of a court case. Other organisations have been affected because the abuse has taken place on their premises, in some cases including serious assault or even homicide. Others have begun to realise that they are losing staff or staff hours because an employee is missing work or leaves a job to cover up for abuse or because of the effects of domestic violence.

Employers may have noticed that the domestic violence experienced by a member of staff has had a negative impact on work colleagues who may have undertaken actions to protect the victim, putting themselves at risk. Work colleagues may also have had to pick up the work of the employee affected by domestic violence and may feel resentful as a consequence of this and other perceived 'special treatment', especially if the abuse has not been formally disclosed.

The resource toolkit produced jointly by Refuge and Respect (hereafter referred to as "the toolkit"), together with associated training, aims to help employers to improve how they identify and respond to domestic violence as it affects their employees and/or workplace. This includes how they recognise and respond to victims, perpetrators and colleagues. The toolkit was written jointly by Nicola Sharp, the Refuge Head of Policy and Parliamentary Affairs and Neil Blacklock, the Respect Development Director (hereafter referred to as NS/NB).

The toolkit contains information about how domestic violence affects the workplace, resources to help guide employers and a sample policy and procedure for responding.

1.2 The pilot

The resource was piloted in a county council which will be referred to throughout this report as Nordby County Council or NCC. Nordby County Council serves a population of a little over 1 million people. It is part of two tier local government in the region, with a layer of smaller borough councils operating in parallel. The Human Resources (HR) department of Nordby provides HR and payroll services to over 40,000 employees.

The pilot was supported by NS/NB. Together they delivered specific elements, liaised and assisted the key members of staff at Nordby CC who were leading the implementation of the pilot and provided training materials for the briefing sessions delivered by the HR staff to others. They also worked with the Respect Research Manager, Thangam Debbonaire (hereafter referred to as TD) to prepare evaluation tools, which they then ensured were distributed to the managers taking part in the training and briefing sessions at various intervals (see below) and further reviewed the pilot in interviews with some of these managers.

This pilot started in 2008 with discussions between NS/NB and the county's domestic violence coordinator at NCC, who was instrumental in getting the process started in Nordby. She engaged NCC's human resources team about developing an HR policy on domestic violence and two key individuals within this team kept up the momentum after the domestic violence coordinator left her post in 2009. From this point on the HR individuals liaised directly with NS and NB to arrange training for the HR team (which took place in September 2009) and helped to administer the cascade element of this. These individuals then steered the development of the NCC domestic violence policy, introducing it to the key people in NCC (such as the trade union, the independent occupational health service - which includes a 24 hour employee assistance programme - and the NCC domestic violence partnership) and ensuring that the drafting and re-drafting process produced a policy with an accompanying list of relevant supporting policies.

The final decision to sign up to the policy was delayed as local elections resulted in a change of party in overall control of the council, so commitment had to be secured again with the new council leadership. The policy was signed off by senior management in April 2010 and circulated to staff via the NCC intranet as well as the staff newsletter etc. Due to changes in one of the individual's job role, the second HR contact then took over the day to day work involved in keeping the process going. This member of HR staff kept in regular communication by e-mail and phone with NS/NB.

1.3 The pilot included:

1. Development and agreement of a domestic violence policy for NCC, with reference to the domestic violence and employers' resource pack sample policy and procedure.
2. Circulation of this policy and procedure to relevant stakeholders for comment and sign off.
3. A two day 'training for trainers' session for members of staff in Human Resources (run by NS/NB) in order to prepare them to deliver briefing sessions to other staff. The training included a presentation from the local refuge service. Eight members of staff attended day one and six of those members of staff attended day two. Two members of staff were unable to attend the second day of training due to other work commitments. The trainees were all from HR except for one representative from occupational health who was one of the staff members that attended for day one only.
4. Provision of Powerpoint presentation slides and the film 'Leaving'* for the HR managers to use in the delivery of briefing sessions to other staff.
5. Short briefing sessions about the policy for managers across at least six departments. Six briefing sessions were undertaken and on average 20 managers attended each one, meaning that approximately 120 managers attended one of these briefing sessions in total.
6. A large briefing session for approximately 150 further managers in Adult and Community Services highlighting their possible role in relation to safeguarding adults and children.
7. Specific briefing for occupational health advisors, also using the DVD 'Leaving' plus training from the occupational health lead as a consequence of 'training the trainers'.†
8. Consideration of including the possible effects of domestic violence on an employee's performance in other HR training.
9. Advising a borough council on the development of a specific domestic violence policy for that borough council. Providing training and resources.
10. Provision of posters advertising services for victims and posters providing information about services for perpetrators wanting to change their behaviour; making these accessible via the intranet for staff to place in key places, including notice boards and staff toilets around some departments in NCC.
11. Provision of information and contact details for relevant domestic violence support organisations on the Nordby County Council's intranet for managers to download, including a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet.

*<http://www.socialfilmdrama.com/>

† It is important to ensure that occupational health, employee assistance programmes and other services contracted out to another organisation are included in training on domestic violence to ensure a consistent response to employees. This is learning that arose from the evaluation that Refuge and Respect will take forward and include in future resources.

1.4 Aims of the pilot

1. To test out the relevance of the toolkit as a basis for developing a training package for introducing employers to the nature and impact of domestic violence, particularly the impact of domestic violence in the workplace and the role of employers in responding.
2. To test out the usefulness of the draft domestic violence policy and procedure included in the toolkit.
3. To investigate how far the training, procedure and publicity increased employer awareness of responses to domestic violence.
4. To investigate if the training and NCC policy assisted employers to respond more effectively to employees who are perpetrating or experiencing domestic violence.
5. To identify any amendments necessary to improve the resources in the toolkit.

One of the original aims of the pilot, to test out the Refuge/Respect draft domestic violence policy and procedure in the toolkit, was not possible as Refuge and Respect were developing their model domestic violence policy at the same time as Nordby was creating its own domestic violence policy. However, Refuge and Respect worked closely with Nordby to support the development of the council's policy. It is important to note that the NCC policy on domestic violence was integrated within existing HR policies and procedures, so the final policy did not contain the same level of detail and guidance found in the 'stand alone' Refuge/Respect model policy which covers all the issues an organisation should consider where introducing a domestic violence policy. As a result therefore, the pilot actually tested out the usefulness of Nordby's policy and support package to implement it.

1.5 Aims and methods of the pilot evaluation

There was a small budget for evaluation of this pilot. NS/NB consulted TD at an early stage about how best to construct an evaluation which would be useful and cost-effective. As a group, TD, NB and NS discussed and agreed clear aims for the pilot and evaluation and then jointly created evaluation tools to use throughout the pilot.

The tools were administered by the Nordby staff and the interviews with participants were carried out by NS/NB, using agreed criteria and question topics. The results from the various evaluation activities were then coded and analysed by TD, using SPSS social science data analysis as a tool for the questionnaires and qualitative analysis techniques for analysis of the interview transcripts and the text sections of the questionnaires.

This process identified themes and explored evidence of recognition and responses to domestic violence and changes in these. The draft report was then written by TD based on the findings of this analysis, with discussion, feedback and further contributions by NS/NB.

The evaluation aims, sources of information to meet those aims and the methods or tools agreed to gather that information are presented in the following table:

Evaluation aim	Sources of information	Method/tool
To identify challenges in implementing the policy, training and communication needed to integrate an effective response to domestic violence in a large organisation	Initial responses from training participants re: how they think it might work, expected challenges etc. Subsequent information from key managers about how the training worked, challenges, how challenges were overcome, useful resources, additional support needed	Pre-training evaluation form T1, for managers who participated in the training for trainers delivered by NS/NB and those who attended the briefing sessions delivered by the managers trained by NS/NB Telephone and face to face interviews with key managers – identified from those who put themselves forward for interview on their completed evaluation form
To identify how best to improve support for organisations implementing the tool kit	Analysis of findings above	Analysis of above Reflection on processes
To find out if the implementation of the responses to domestic violence (including the training and communications) increases the numbers of victims and perpetrators NCC is able to identify and respond to (does it increase the number of cases?)	Measuring numbers of victims and perpetrators coming forward before (or as close to start of) implementation of resources etc and after 6 months and comparing these	Ask HR for numbers pre and post implementation, providing them with forms explaining clearly what asking about.‡ If not any pre information, as for perceptions of increases.§
To provide evidence to demonstrate how the resources create an environment in which domestic violence is more freely reported and more effectively responded to	Analysis of the above information, with findings about nature of improved response as well as numbers	Ask managers for qualitative information about how they were able to respond. T2 form
To identify to what extent the implementation of the resources increases confidence of staff to respond to domestic violence	Comparison of staff confidence before and after implementation or within 6 month interval	Interviews post implementation. Evaluation form for managers who attended training T2

‡ This was unfortunately not possible to agree with the Nordby CC staff in time for this evaluation

§ This was unfortunately not possible for the Nordby CC staff to carry out

1.6 Evaluation methods and tools in detail

1. Time 1 (pre-training) questionnaires were distributed via email in May 2010 to all those employees who participated in the briefing sessions. The questionnaires were distributed in advance of the training and in most cases were clearly completed before the training as requested. In some cases it was evident that the questionnaires had been completed after the session, but in these cases the respondents indicated that this was the case. The questionnaires asked about the trainees' existing knowledge of domestic violence, previous training, their views on the relevance of the resources and procedure, their experiences of responding to staff experiences (as a victim/as a perpetrator) of domestic violence.
2. Time 2 (post-training) questionnaires distributed 6 months later in November 2010 to the same people, to provide comparison with completed questionnaires from Time 1.
3. Telephone interviews carried out by NS/NB to follow up the Time 2 questionnaires, exploring in more depth how those who attended the training thought the toolkit had been implemented and what the effects were. These interviews were held with all those managers who had a) consented to be interviewed and b) identified on their evaluation questionnaires that they had responded to a member of staff experiencing domestic violence or had some specific relevant experience or comment to explore further.
4. TD carried out a series of reflective interviews with NS and NB about their own views on the process, training, implementation and the interviews.
5. NS and NB gathered factual data from the Nordby CC HR staff, for example about use of the domestic violence intranet resources, numbers of managers trained on domestic violence etc. and forwarded this to TD to analyse.
6. TD collated, coded (in SPSS, the social science industry standard data processing programme) and analysed the questionnaires and telephone interviews, reviewed the NCC policy and accompanying documents and traced the process of developing the training via an email trail between NCC and Refuge/Respect over the two years. She also analysed all other factual and reflective data, such as the discussions and reflective interviews with NS and NB.
7. TD identified implications and wrote up the report in draft. TD then consulted NS and NB about this draft. They provided feedback on the draft report, which TD then used to re-draft the report. This is the final version of the report.

Unfortunately, there is no system of monitoring disclosures about domestic violence made to managers in place at Nordby CC. This meant that it was not possible to establish clear data before, during or after the pilot about how many people confided in their managers and thus could not accurately assess any changes in disclosures which may have happened as a result of the pilot. This is a regrettable gap and it is strongly recommended that any other organisation wishing to implement such an approach should first collect baseline data against which they can then measure any change.

RECOMMENDATION: that Nordby and any other organisation actively trying to improve their response to domestic violence should establish and continue with a monitoring system. This will help the organisation to measure the success of the policy in reaching the workforce and this data will inform any changes in policy and practice that are needed.

FINDINGS

1.7 Data collected

Of approximately 120 staff, 28 completed Time 1 questionnaires and returned them to the HR manager coordinating the pilot in LCC. This did mean that the questionnaires were not fully anonymous since they were returned by email, thus identifying all participants by name. However, no promise of anonymity was given and the identification enabled the evaluator to directly compare the Time 1 questionnaires with the Time 2 questionnaires where they were completed by the same person. Eight Time 2 questionnaires were returned.

The staff members who completed the questionnaires were all female. They were from 6 directorates, including children and young people’s services and adults and community services.

Eight interviews were carried out by phone, recorded and then transcribed. Some of these interviews were with people who had returned both questionnaires, but not all.

2.1 The need for the domestic violence policy

It was almost unanimously agreed by the 28 people who filled in the evaluation, that it was important that NCC has a domestic violence policy.

Think NCC should have domestic violence policy

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	24	85.7
	Not sure	1	3.6
	Total	25	89.3
Missing	System	3	10.7
Total		28	100.0

2.2 Reasons for having a domestic violence policy

If the participants answered yes to the need for a domestic violence policy, the Time 1 questionnaire asked them to indicate why (from a list of reasons provided).

Possible response (N = 26)	Frequency of “yes” responses	Percentage of respondents answering “yes” to this
Because domestic violence costs us in lost productivity	13	46%
Because we have a duty of care to employees	24	86%
Because we need to demonstrate our ethical stance	15	54%
Because it is relevant to our purpose	10	36%
Numbers and percentages do not add up to 26 or 100% as respondents could answer yes to all those they agreed with		

FINDING: there was near unanimous support for a domestic violence policy and managers had a range of reasons for agreeing that a policy was necessary, particularly their duty of care for employees.

2.3 Knowledge about the domestic violence policy

The participants who completed Time 1 questionnaires were introduced to the domestic violence policy and procedure shortly after or just before completing the questionnaire as part of the briefing session they attended. Subsequently, most of those who completed the Time 2 questionnaire had a good knowledge of the policy:

Do you know of the NCC domestic violence policy – T2 questionnaire

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes I have seen it	7	87.5
	Yes aware but haven't seen it	1	12.5
	Total	8	100.0

FINDING: almost all of the managers who had been on the briefing sessions knew about and had seen the domestic violence policy.

2.4 Benefits of the domestic violence policy

The eight people interviewed gave details of what they saw as the benefits of having a domestic violence policy for Nordby CC. One of the respondents, Gemma said straight away that the policy, via the training, gave her permission to act:

Interviewer: and what were the benefits of the training?

Gemma: I would say permission to do something about something that's happening in the workplace.

Eunice reflected this view and elaborated on it:

Interviewer: What did you think when you saw that NCC was implementing a DV policy and they were training managers on this?

Eunice: I was quite impressed. I thought it was a bit delayed but, I thought it was very good and almost gives permission for line managers – because it is a difficult subject isn't it?

It is worth noting that Eunice and others expressed the view that this policy was long overdue.

Annette added that the supporting information provided alongside the policy helped to make a difference and that this led to a measurable improvement in her own efforts in trying to respond to a specific employee. She also expressed how long the policy had been needed:

Interviewer: now you've had the training and the policy is in place, do you think that this will enable you to do more than you were able to do previously, in this case?

Annette: Well, probably, because we do have the policy and... a few guidelines and pointers there that... makes it clear that Nordby County's supporting its employees with these kinds of issues. When I first raised it, probably nearly two years ago now, there was nothing there at that point and the HR couldn't give me any guidance other than they were looking at it and were hoping to develop a policy... which was a bit of a let-down for the employees at the time... but yes, it is definitely a positive step.

Another interviewee poignantly described how in the past an employee she was aware of, but not directly managing, did approach her manager for help because of the abuse she was living with. However she was told that there was nothing the manager or employer could do. The violence continued and the effects on the workplace also continued. As the interviewee put it: "two years' on, it's still a problem".

Maya pointed out that the training and the policy helped to increase recognition of domestic violence and acted as a spur to bring about positive change in the organisation:

Interviewer: What do you think the benefits of the training were?

Maya: That it gives a wider spectrum to people, they know where they can go for help and advice and support but also there's a procedure to follow and they're not just sitting on their own, panicking, wondering what they can do to support members of staff. But I think also to know that, you know, as Nordby County Council that there is a recognition that does go on, that it does happen, and there's been many, you know, big campaigns that NCC have taken part in,** you know, in regards to domestic abuse, and I think that it's important that they show that they're taking that seriously and that they're there to support the members of staff through those difficult times.

FINDING: In summary, the benefits highlighted by respondents in having a domestic violence policy for Nordby CC are:

1. Giving 'permission' for managers to act when worried about domestic violence possibly affecting staff and knowing what to do
2. Bringing the issue of domestic violence affecting staff into the open and letting staff know that help and support is available
3. Helping to stimulate culture change at Nordby CC as an employer

**Like most local authorities, NCC has a local domestic violence partnership forum which coordinates support services and undertakes public facing awareness raising campaigns etc. It was the domestic violence coordinator employed by NCC who first raised the idea of NCC responding to domestic violence as an employer, leading to the domestic violence policy being introduced at NCC.

2.5 Experience of domestic violence affecting the workplace

Interviews and questionnaires identified a number of ways in which domestic violence can affect the workplace. The managers in the pilot gave many examples of the consequences of domestic violence for the workplace or work conditions. This feedback came as a result of their own experience as managers at Nordby CC or from previous experience at other workplaces, and in some cases their own personal experience as employees. These included:

- A woman who it was suspected had to be at home at certain times during the day as a result of the perpetrator's demands and so left the workplace in work hours and couldn't work late – this affected her colleagues having to cover her work and/or becoming resentful because they did not understand why this was happening.
- A woman being chaotic and unreliable as a consequence of domestic violence, again affecting other members of staff and their manager.
- A perpetrator stalking a victim at work and frightening/worrying other members of staff and causing anxiety for the whole team.
- Phone calls made and text messages sent to employees at work as part of stalking and intimidation, affecting their feelings of safety and concentration at work.
- A member of staff who, when trying to defend a colleague from her abuser AFTER she had left him, was killed.
- A line manager receiving threatening text messages from the ex-partner of a member of staff experiencing domestic violence.
- Domestic violence leading to absenteeism or the need to ask for additional time off work for dealing with injuries or to meet the needs of the abusive partner.
- Members of staff being distressed and anxious at work because of domestic violence.
- Perceptions by a team involved in providing services to victims of domestic violence that one of its members known to be experiencing domestic violence may not be a suitable person to undertake this work. This was because her work with families where there was domestic violence involved encouraging victims to leave the abuser, yet she herself had 'chosen' not to leave.
- Time in supervision taken up with dealing with domestic violence effects on staff.
- Sudden absence of a worker.
- Line manager having to attend hospital when a member of staff was assaulted by ex-partner during work time.

FINDING: many of the managers had previous and recent experience of domestic violence affecting the workplace in a range of ways.

2.6 Prior domestic violence training

Another question that the Time 1 questionnaire asked was whether participants in the briefing session had received any domestic violence training in the past:

Any domestic violence training in the past? [T1 questionnaire]

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes and can remember a lot	10	35.7
	Yes but a long time or can't remember much	3	10.7
	No	13	46.4
Total		26	92.9
Missing	System	2	7.1
Total		28	100.0

One interviewee praised the briefing sessions and identified benefits such as getting the policy known amongst a wide selection of managers and not just limited to a few. She also compared the briefing sessions to previous training she had had:

Gemma: *I thought the women did a very good job but they were nowhere near as knowledgeable as those people that did the [Nordby] Safeguarding Children's Board training. Because they were, there was a health visitor, and there was a refuge worker and they were just streets ahead politically in their thinking about how they were coming across. But let's bear in mind I think that training by the [Nordby] Safeguarding Children's Board was 2 days training. This was half a day, so get it in perspective and completely different nature, as a manager what you do, and I think, in that respect it was very good, and they were very genuine.*

FINDING: just under two thirds of the respondents had had no prior domestic violence training or only training that was so long ago they couldn't remember anything from it.

2.7 Ability to respond to victims – what helps?

Three quarters of respondents to the pre-briefing questionnaire said that they already knew how to get help for victims.

I'd know how to get domestic violence help for victims – T1 questionnaire

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	21	75.0
	No	6	21.4
	Total	27	96.4
Missing	System	1	3.6
Total		28	100.0

However, half of these respondents had had prior training on domestic violence from which they remembered a lot:

I'd know how to get help for victims of domestic violence * Any domestic violence training in past? Cross-tabulation (T1)

		Any domestic violence training in past?			Total
		Yes and can remember a lot	Yes but a long time or can't remember much	No	
I'd know how to get help for victims of domestic violence	Yes	10	3	7	20
	No	0	0	6	6
Total		10	3	13	26

This was the case for all of the respondents to the T2 post-training questionnaire who had already reported knowing how to respond to victims in the T1 pre-training questionnaire. However, those who answered the T2 questionnaires said that they thought that their knowledge and ability to respond to victims had improved. When asked an open question about why they felt this way their answers included:

"The domestic violence training gave me confidence"

"The [Nordby] CC briefing – very informative."

"The policy to support staff"

"The policy"

Several respondents said that they would have liked to have spent more time during the training/briefing exploring how to respond in the workplace and sharing actual experiences and anxieties.

One respondent from the children and young people directorate felt that the treatment of clients who were victims of domestic violence would not give staff working in that area much confidence in their colleagues if they also needed help:

Question: *What other training do you think you might need to help you to respond better to domestic violence or otherwise promote the NCC policy?*

Answer: *More senior management commitment to the policy openly. More evidence of cultural change in the Directorate on these issues how we treat clients is an important indicator of how we will treat staff (T2 questionnaire)*

The overlap between the departmental purpose of those working in child and adult social care i.e. to support clients around domestic violence and the aims of introducing the workplace domestic violence workplace policy i.e. to support members of staff in relation to domestic violence were recurring themes throughout the evaluation. This was because many of those who self-selected to undertake the training and participate in the interviews were based in these directorates and some staff had significant concerns about the directorate's response to clients experiencing domestic violence. The question of how to ensure consistent responses to both clients and employees experiencing or perpetrating domestic violence is therefore an important consideration for organisations working in the domestic violence field and seeking to introduce a workplace policy on the issue. This is explored in more detail in appendix one.

The evaluation did not gather data from the employees who had disclosed to managers that they were living with domestic violence so cannot provide definitive evidence about what they feel helped them and gave them the confidence to disclose. Managers did however provide some insights about this through their questionnaire and interview responses. Setting, approachability of managers and opportunity all appear to help managers to respond to victims. For example, the fact that managers provide employees with regular and confidential supervision sessions out of earshot of other staff helps staff who are ready to tell someone to tell their manager. Managers' ability to show empathy or understanding is also likely to help; indeed several of the line managers spoke about having experienced domestic violence themselves. Another factor was where the employee could not hide the domestic violence from their manager – for example, if they were assaulted on work premises or the perpetrator was harassing other work colleagues.

FINDING: the briefing sessions helped managers to know how to help staff experiencing domestic violence and improved the knowledge of those staff who already had some training. The policy helped managers to feel that they had permission to act.

2.8 Ability to respond to perpetrators – what helps?

Knowledge of where to find help and support for domestic violence perpetrators to address their violence was low before the training:

I'd know how to get help for domestic violence perpetrators – T1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	25.0	25.9	25.90
	No	20	71.4	74.1	100.0
	Total	27	96.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.6		
Total		28	100.0		

Those who did know where to get help for domestic violence perpetrators had mostly been on domestic violence training in the past:

I'd know where to get help for domestic violence perpetrators * Any domestic violence training in past? Cross tabulation at T 1

		Any domestic violence training in past?			Total
		Yes and can remember a lot	Yes but a long time or can't remember much	No	
I'd know how to get help for victims of domestic violence	Yes	5	0	2	7
	No	5	3	11	19
Total		10	3	13	26

Prior knowledge of responding to domestic violence in a professional role at work also helped. As one respondent to the T1 questionnaire said:

"I've already dealt with perpetrators and victims as clients" [T1 questionnaire]

FINDING: knowledge of where to get help for domestic violence perpetrators had improved after the briefing sessions – over half of the respondents to the post training questionnaires said they would know where to find help for domestic violence perpetrators.

Think NCC should have domestic violence policy

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	4	57.1
	No	3	42.9
	Total	7	100.0

Some of the respondents who said they would now know where to get help for domestic violence perpetrators did not know this before the briefing.

I'd know where to get help for domestic violence perpetrators T1 * I'd know where to get help for domestic violence perpetrators T2 cross-tabulation

		T2 I'd know perpetrator domestic violence help source		Total
		Yes	No	Yes
T1 I'd know perp dv help source	Yes	2	1	3
	No	2	2	4
Total		4	3	7

These numbers are too low to reach a definitive conclusion that the training itself increased knowledge about domestic violence perpetrator services, but it is encouraging and suggests that this was the case.

FINDING: training appears to have improved participants' knowledge about where to get help for domestic violence perpetrators.

This tentative reading of the changes in responses before and after the training is further strengthened by quotes from interviews, such as this one from Eunice:

Eunice: I think the big eye opener was and I had never ever considered it, is what I would do if there was a perpetrator. That to me was the real; I came away thinking ‘oh my goodness we could actually have a perpetrator in the workplace’ and I had never, ever considered that – even, all the years I’ve worked in – I don’t know what I was ever thinking...I just never, it never crossed my mind I think, I just never thought that would happen and still I think, well how would you manage that - that’s the scary part for me if there was a perpetrator. I feel confident in knowing what I have to do as a manager and a procedure to follow, but it would still be a scary part of it for me.

Eunice’s honest report of never considering the possibility of having an employee who is abusing a partner, together with the fears she expresses, are unlikely to be unique. These are views which regularly get expressed on training courses about domestic violence, to the Respect Phonenumber for perpetrators of domestic violence and in other work with social care professionals who have a duty to respond to domestic violence, in spite of that duty.

Others tentatively expressed increased confidence in their ability to respond to perpetrators at work, qualified by anxiety about the prospect of doing this in reality:

“I think this is more difficult from my personal perspective – how I would feel dealing with the perpetrator but I feel adequately equipped to point them in the right direction.” (T2 questionnaire)

“I haven’t a lot of experience with perpetrators and I think this is more about being confident you’re dealing with this in a non judgemental way.” (T2 questionnaire)

2.9 Actual help given to victims

During the training run by NS and NB with the HR team, the staff started off by saying they were not aware of any staff who had experienced domestic violence. When they learned more about the issue however they started discussing and viewing historic cases differently.^{††}

In addition, some people interviewed expressed new concerns following the training that they suspected some staff may be experiencing domestic violence. The importance of having this awareness in mind, an awareness which the training stimulated and/or refreshed, was recognised by staff.

Through the interviews, the range of ways in which support was given to colleagues in the workplace were found to be impressive and showed great thoughtfulness. Some of this help was given before the training and some after. However the evidence from interviews and T2 questionnaires suggests that prior experience of helping a victim was strengthened by the training. Those who had previously provided support appreciated knowing that they had done the right thing and were more confident to do a similar thing again, knowing that the policy backed them to do this.

Examples of help given to victims by respondents to the questionnaires or interviews included:

- Giving time off to see solicitors
- Being flexible about work shifts
- Safety planning
- Giving support in supervision sessions
- Doing risk assessment on the premises to help protect victim from stalking by perpetrator
- Offering to store and look after possessions for a victim who was considering leaving the abuser
- Covering for staff in explanations to other members of the team for absence
- Guiding staff towards absence policies which could help them
- Preventing disciplinary proceedings for sickness following late disclosure of domestic violence

One of the interviews clearly illustrated the benefit that help given to victims can have both them and the employer:

And then she actually left her partner and came in the morning and disclosed to myself and my manager...so we basically said; you know she took unpaid leave, we gave her extra leave, full support around wherever she needed to be supported... she took that time, whatever she needed we supported her for, she knew that she could come and chat to us anytime, one week she would perhaps come and tell us what she was up to, and miraculously, 3 months after she left, she became physically very well. All her symptoms, they were obviously very stress related, and anxiety.

In addition to this, staff on the training course with NS and NB recognised other policies and work tools they had previously used to guard staff members against other forms of harassment as being potentially useful for implementing and supporting the domestic violence policy. An example of this was how one staff member had been harassed by a member of the public. Following a number of incidents, the Council’s legal team wrote to the member of the public citing relevant sections of the Telecommunications Act and the Harassment Act and made reference to taking legal action against him if he did not stop. This worked.

^{††} Furthermore, when NS & NB went back to NCC after the training took place a month later, they learned that in the intervening period that the HR team had been supporting a woman experiencing domestic violence and violence committed in the name of so called ‘honour’

2.10 Actual help given to perpetrators

No-one reported at Time 1 that they had responded to a member of staff who was a suspected or known perpetrator of domestic violence and all said that they hadn't ever had a colleague or member of staff who they suspected was a perpetrator.

This did not change at Time 2 or in interviews.

A resource gap identified during the training run by NB and NS was lack of perpetrator programmes in the NCC area. Following the training, the HR staff became more involved with NCC's domestic violence partnership and supported the establishment of a fledgling intervention programme to work with men using domestic violence in their intimate relationships.^{##}

RECOMMENDATIONS: that Nordby CC supports the domestic violence partnership to establish a well run accredited domestic violence intervention programme working with perpetrators of domestic violence and their partners and ex—partners. This will be an effective response to perpetrators who are clients or employees of Nordby.

Sufficient funding should be allocated but also seen as a cost saving initiative as the lack of such help eventually results in increased police, social services and other financial and human costs.

As there is no monitoring system to measure the number of disclosures or discussions with managers about domestic violence in place at Nordby CC it is not currently possible to give accurate data about, for example, the number of calls to Occupational Health which may have been about perpetrators of domestic violence. There are recommendations about this gap elsewhere in the report.

2.11 Other evidence of the policy

2.11.1 Posters

Part of the implementation of the policy was putting up bespoke posters about support for employees as victims or perpetrators of domestic violence around the workplace and supplying these on the organisation's intranet for downloading and printing off by managers. This was left up to managers. One manager said that the cost of printing them off was not inconsiderable and another manager said that they had found the posters difficult to find on the intranet at first. Respondents to the questionnaires were asked if they had seen a poster up in the last six months.

Seen poster in last 6 months in NCC – Time 1 questionnaires

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	11	39.3
	No	16	57.1
	Total	27	96.4
Missing	System	1	3.6
Total		28	100.0

Seven out of eight of the respondents to Time 2 questionnaires had seen a poster within the last six months.

FINDING: Seven out of eight of the respondents to Time 2 questionnaires had seen a poster within the last six months.

^{##} <http://www.juicytraining.com/The-Wake-Up-Programme.html>

2.11.2 Visits to the relevant section of the NCC intranet

Another indicator of the value and use of the policy is the number of hits on the NCC intranet section supporting this pilot. This data is supplied by the HR manager who took a lead in the latter part of this pilot project. A 'visitor' is someone reaching one page about the domestic violence policy. A 'hit' is someone clicking on more than one page in this section of the intranet:

Year 2010 Month	Visitors	Hits
May	11	219
June	66	169
July	47	153
Aug	106	193
September	20	215
Oct	17	175
Nov	15	98
Dec	6	111
2011		
Jan	14	56
TOTAL	302	1389

This suggests a considerable level of interest in and use of the resources on the intranet. Out of a workforce of 40,000 (where 20,000 are based in schools and are not covered by the policy and where and 8,000 of the remaining 20,000 staff do not have access to the intranet) this is a good indicator that the managers have found the policy significant enough to consult the resources. It does not tell us if they were satisfied with what they found. Some of the interviewees mentioned using the intranet resources.

RECOMMENDATION: that subsequent monitoring of the policy includes examining intranet hits and using a simple survey for asking managers what they think of the resource.

2.11.3 Calls to national helplines

Respect runs the Men's Advice Line for male victims and those working with them and the Respect Phonenumber for male and female perpetrators of domestic violence and those associated with them. Refuge, in partnership with Women's Aid, runs the Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline (NDVH) for female victims of domestic violence and those working with/supporting. As a result, there existed the potential to provide data on the use of national helpline services before and during the pilot.

Unfortunately, no data about calls made from the Nordby area to the Men's Advice Line and the Respect Phonenumber existed before the pilot as the system of data collection for these two lines was only instituted at about the same time as the pilot was launched.

FINDING: during the pilot and after the Nordby policy was launched, calls to the Men's Advice Line and Respect Phonenumber from Nordby were 75 to the Respect Phonenumber and 53 to the Men's Advice Line.

The details of the calls to these lines are as follows:

Category of caller	Men's Advice Line in 2010	Respect Phonenumber, 2010
Friend/family member	7	1
Person calling about mutual abuse	1	1
Person using (perpetrating) abuse	1	34
Victim of abuse	22	6
Professional	22	32
Not abuse – unhappy relationship	0	1
TOTAL	53	75

However, it was possible to compare data about the levels of calls from people in the Nordby area to the NDVH before and after the pilot.

FINDING: there was a small increase in calls from women in Nordby to the national domestic violence helpline between 2009 and 2010

2.12 Suggestions for improvements to the NCC policy

All of the interviewees had suggestions for further improvement to the implementation of the NCC policy which would also be useful for Refuge and Respect to consider when working with other organisations to put domestic violence workplace policies in place. Bridget, one of the interview respondents, expressed these as follows:

Bridget: *Well, given the extent of the problem which came as a shock to me, I think probably [N] CC workplaces should all have details of, copies of the poster in staffrooms, things like that. And we need to make the training opportunities more widely available, increase awareness of it. We have an employee support service which is a telephone service. Now there used to be an occupational health service that we could refer people to but it has gone now to a helpline, presumably those people who deal with the calls there are trained in dealing with domestic violence issues, if not, I hope they will be.*

These suggestions have been further explored and made the subject of recommendations later in this report in the analysis section. Eunice's comments also show the anxiety of managers still not sure what their role is, or perhaps anxious about fulfilling it:

Eunice: *It's a difficult subject isn't it? I wondered whether really you needed to have staff on those sorts of briefings as well because not all managers are proactive at taking stuff back and we can all stick a poster up but what does that mean to staff? Whereas we, I'd gone back and did it in the staff meeting and that; someone seeing posters slapped around can be quite unnerving for some staff as well that actually – its scary do they know its me? But it could be couldn't it? So I, we actually always go back, talk to staff about it, do all the, the managers do it who have been on the briefing because staff who don't go on the intranet won't know anything else apart from the poster will they? It was good...*

Meanwhile Gemma had some suggestions about how to increase commitment at senior level to the policy:

Gemma: *Well I think it [NCC] needs to, it definitely needs to make sure that male employees are attending these training sessions cos that doesn't seem to be, well, I don't know whether, they must have picked that up. Because if I was those trainers, it might have just been my course that there was no men on it, but if there was more than one with no men on, I'd be doing something about that. And I think they've got to be delivering that training to senior managers, and get them on board. Now maybe they've, senior managers must have passed, councillors and senior managers must've passed the policy, do you know what I mean? So I'm with that, but they'll have been a group of them that, cos passing a policy and understanding exactly what it means for the workforce are different things to me.*

Another respondent suggested ideas about how to improve access to services and encourage peer-to-peer support:

I think a directory of contact really you know um sort of that I could just pick up and say well such a place offers this or that you can access this and almost what I think would be very useful is possibly to have a group of people within the organisation I'm talking about NCC now that have either been the victim or you know who can maybe buddy up with somebody or if they won't, they can't actually say it themselves then maybe someone can do it on their behalf, someone just to listen and say, look I got through this.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Evidence of need for an organisational response

The numerous and often very serious examples given by the respondents in this evaluation of how domestic violence has already affected the Nordby CC workplace and staff and also how they have responded or would like to respond demonstrate a clear reinforcement of the need for the policy. Domestic violence clearly has safety and welfare implications for all staff, not only the victim (or perpetrator). The management implications include having to deal with resentful team members who don't know the real reasons for staff absence or the mistrust team members have when they know reason for absence and conclude that it makes the employee unfit for the job. Lack of awareness about domestic violence and misunderstandings can lead to difficult and stressful workplace environments.

It is unsurprising given the seriousness of some of the experiences of domestic violence at work that were uncovered during the pilot, that the managers saw the need for and were committed to implementing an organisational response. It was gratifying to find that many line managers could give examples of how they had fulfilled or partly fulfilled that need. Some managers who took part in the training expressed surprise that NCC had not taken action to implement a domestic violence workplace policy sooner.

The fact that most managers emphasised the importance of NCC addressing all aspects of the well-being of its employees could be indicative of the personal qualities of those individuals, or of the mindset of people who work in a public sector organisation. It may also be an indication that the people who agreed to be interviewed (and those who put themselves forward for the briefing sessions in the first place and so were available for interview) had pre-existing levels of concern about victims of domestic violence. In any case, the recognition that the pastoral and functional aspects of management can and should be improved to ensure managers are better able to respond to domestic violence is welcome and supports the need for having workplace policies about domestic violence in this and other organisations, not only public sector organisations.

The evidence about the prior training and the connection between this and the existing ability of some participants to respond to domestic violence seems to suggest that the briefing sessions were subject to a self selection bias. In other words, a pre-existing commitment towards supporting domestic violence victims, which was strengthened by prior training, may have been a factor in participants' decision to attend the briefing.

Whilst this was, in some cases, directly connected to the nature of the work undertaken by the directorate in which the manager worked or due to the fact that some managers were already supporting employees as victims of domestic violence, this was not always the case. Disclosures of personal experience of domestic violence made in some of the interviews to NS and NB seemed to indicate that commitment may have also arisen from personal experience.

It is helpful to support those managers who are already knowledgeable about domestic violence and committed to tackling it. However, in order to ensure that a domestic violence policy is thoroughly embedded into organisational culture and practice, the training sessions will need to involve those who are less committed and knowledgeable.

RECOMMENDATION: that future training in Nordby, and other organisations wishing to implement a domestic violence policy, targets managers across the board, not only relying on self selection.

3.2 Evidence of change and extent of change

The evaluation clearly showed evidence of a better understanding of domestic violence by those who participated in the training, as well as a better understanding of how to respond to domestic violence. The examples given by interview participants and some questionnaires strongly suggest that the policy and training directly helped to bring about these changes. Having a domestic violence policy and providing supporting training and resources to guide managers does help organisations to identify and respond to domestic violence in the workplace. This makes workplaces safer and also helps to fulfil the duty of care employers have towards staff.

Based on the evidence gathered, the extent to which the changes can be said to be permanent is limited; the numbers of participants on the briefings and completing evaluations were not large and there are notable gaps in participation. This is important given the prevalence of domestic violence and the size of Nordby's workforce. It seems highly likely that the numbers of disclosures mentioned in interviews for this evaluation are only the tip of a much larger and potentially very dangerous iceberg.

As noted earlier, NCC's workplace response to domestic violence was previously ad hoc and not monitored in anyway. As such, the evaluation was not able to measure the extent to which managers, HR or the Occupational Health helpline responded to domestic violence before or after the pilot. A monitoring system would help Nordby evaluate the effects of implementing the policy on an annual basis.

RECOMMENDATION: that Nordby, and any other organisations implementing a domestic violence policy for employees, should institute the use of monitoring for managers, HR and OH to measure the numbers of victims and perpetrators identified, those coming forward and the responses given. This information should be kept in as simple a way as possible to ensure that managers complete the relevant forms as consistently as possible. It should be reviewed annually as part of the process of reviewing the policy and its effects.

3.3 The domestic violence policy

The domestic violence policy and the procedure contained within it were welcomed by the managers in this evaluation: significantly, the most commonly cited reason given was that it gave them 'permission' to act. The example given of the interviewee who reflected on how a member of her staff was unable to respond to an employee he was managing is a poignant and sad reminder of how lack of 'permission' can leave a victim vulnerable and the workforce affected in the long term. This permission is now implied by the existence of the policy; however it is worth noting that a proactive response to domestic violence it is not actually explicitly outlined in the policy or procedure.

The domestic violence policy and procedure signals a commitment to tackling the issue of domestic violence that is welcomed by Nordby employees. This evaluation has, however, identified some areas for improvement in relation to implementation. For example, although some managers interviewed did feel better equipped to respond to issues related to domestic violence, they still remained nervous about proactively asking a member of staff if domestic violence was affecting them. For managers to be able to raise the subject of domestic violence they will need guidance about how to approach staff, how best to record information and how to refer staff to sources of support.

The managers in the evaluation had had training which helped to equip them to do this better, though many had already had some previous training and some commented that the training could be improved. Suggestions included spending more time on the detail of how to respond and space for managers to share their experience. However, there will always be some managers who have not had the training so it will be important for written guidance – for example, the Refuge/Respect toolkit – to be available.

The supporting sheet of links to relevant policies and procedures on the NCC intranet is therefore very welcome and is a useful resource to supplement the policy and some managers commented on this positively. However, as already highlighted, there is no guidance on how to monitor the impact of the policy, or when it will be reviewed or by whom. All of these things could help Nordby to take their existing commitment to responding to domestic violence in the workplace and improve it significantly. For example, the Refuge/Respect toolkit contains many resources, including a monitoring form, that NCC could usefully adopt without having to spend significant amounts of time and energy developing its own.

RECOMMENDATION: that other organisations wishing to adopt a domestic violence workplace policy should consider monitoring the policy from the start; introducing clear guidance for managers about how to respond to and record domestic violence suspicions, allegations or disclosures. This should include details on when the policy will be reviewed and by whom.

3.4 Specific factors which helped with implementation of the policy

The domestic violence policy was best received, understood and supported by managers who had received previous domestic violence training. This means that some managers had pre-existing knowledge of the tools needed to respond to domestic violence and knowledge of the challenges involved. This is an excellent start to implementing a policy which some managers and staff may feel is irrelevant to the business of a large organisation. However to ensure the policy is integrated across the workforce so that it is sustainable in the long term, all managers need to attend a briefing about it and NCC may decide to make this a mandatory requirement.

Whilst the nature and purpose of some of the directorates within NCC may have helped develop existing commitments to domestic violence, some of these staff also reported their despondency at some of the attitudes towards domestic violence and domestic violence victims shown by their colleagues. The fact that colleagues responding to domestic violence were felt not to display a good level of victim empathy and topic knowledge meant that some commented they would have no confidence in the same colleagues supporting them in the workplace (for more discussion on this point refer to appendix one).

An important element in implementing the policy at NCC was the presence of key ‘champions’. These included the domestic violence coordinator as well as senior members of the HR team and union. Not only did their professional commitment ensure participation from staff across the local authority, but they were also committed to supporting the pilot so that the process was useful for both NCC and Refuge/Respect. Such people are critical for ensuring the sustainable implementation of such a significant policy.

RECOMMENDATION: that Nordby enables the individuals who have had a significant role in implementing this policy to continue to have this role; to widen it to include the provision of training for all NCC staff; and to develop a system of monitoring and reviewing the policy.

RECOMMENDATION: that other organisations wishing to implement a domestic violence policy should identify a ‘named’ manager/managers who has/have responsibility for the policy to take the lead on its implementation, monitoring and review.

3.5 Evidence of need for further change

The lack of male managers self-selecting themselves for the training is not uncommon when the issue of domestic violence is being discussed. Furthermore, NCC has a predominantly female workforce. However, for a significant change in organisational culture, NCC needs to engage male line managers to ensure a consistent response to victims and perpetrators as well as other staff. In the future, councillors could attend mixed briefings and demonstrate a high level of organisational commitment to the policy. Given that councillors are usually doing other full or part time work, this may not be practical, yet councillors do have meetings as a whole group, as party groupings or specific committees and these occasions could be used as opportunities for short briefings on their responsibilities under the policy.

RECOMMENDATION: that Nordby and other organisations implementing a domestic violence policy and approach should ensure that male managers attend briefing sessions. In the case of local authority organisations, councillors should also attend briefings to demonstrate organisational commitment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Refuge and Respect strongly commend Nordby CC for having the courage to implement a workplace domestic violence policy and for giving it such commitment. The pilot addressed most of the aims that it set out to achieve and this evaluation has identified learning and recommendations for going forwards.

The experience of responding to domestic violence by managers working for Nordby CC supports the need for a strong organisational response to domestic violence in the workplace. In a time of financial hardship and funding cuts, the issue of domestic violence could be seen as a low priority. However, the truth, as shown by this report, is just the opposite. The cases uncovered as a consequence of rolling out this policy appear to represent only the tip of the iceberg.

Domestic violence affects every medium and large organisation, whether they know it or not, and many small ones too. It costs organisations money through lost productivity as well as negatively affecting staff morale and team working. If employers fail to pick domestic violence up, these costs, both financial and human, increase. And they are costs which no public or private organisation can afford. They do not have to. The Refuge/Respect toolkit for employers offers a comprehensive range of information and resources sufficient to implement a fully operational approach to responding to domestic violence. The toolkit cannot, however, do the work of organisations in making a domestic violence policy really work. This requires commitment to training, support and if necessary a review of organisational culture and practices in relation to domestic violence at every level. This may appear daunting at first but the rewards are significant.

Refuge and Respect hope that Nordby will now be able to take the process to the next stage. It's in the best interests of the organisation and staff to do this and we believe that Nordby has the capacity and commitment required.

5. Specific challenges for directorates providing services to families affected by domestic violence.

How to promote consistent, reliable responses to domestic violence at work

The links between professional practice towards clients and responses to colleagues experiencing domestic violence are complex. The challenges and tensions outlined in sections 2.7 and 3.4 about the overlap between supporting clients and work colleagues around domestic violence provides some useful insights into the more general challenges related to implementing a consistent response to the issue. The surprise some practitioners feel when they discover that they may have to respond to domestic violence affecting work colleagues rather than clients is also coupled with the anxiety about how to respond, and the consequent contradictions between responses to clients and responses to staff.

It is worth noting that this is not only something that was experienced by the staff involved in Nordby's work with vulnerable adults and children during this pilot. NB/NS were also taken aback in one of the interviews they carried out by a very full and frank disclosure of extremely serious domestic violence. NS/NB discussed this with TD and it was noted that this is a common trap that many professionals in specialist domestic violence organisations sometimes fall into, despite the fact they develop training and resources which highlight the possibility that domestic violence can happen to anyone.

During this discussion, it was also identified that professionals have a tendency to respond proactively every time they hear about or suspect domestic violence. This could be because they spend such a lot of time telling people how important that it is to take action that they couldn't not. However, professionals also benefit from detailed and up to date knowledge of what can help and what might not.

For example, Gemma found the domestic violence training undertaken within the pilot helpful for her work with clients in social care as it provided her with information and research to help guide and support her challenges of colleagues she felt were responding in unsafe and inappropriate ways to clients who are perpetrators:

***Gemma:** they sent him on anger management, they disbelieved that this woman had ever been subject to domestic violence, and she was having credibility issues, without a doubt. But often that's the case when you're dealing with very vulnerable people. But eventually, he did physically assault her so everyone could see and he was convicted of it, but they actually thought anger management was a suitable dispense somehow. And that was a recommendation from the child protection conference, as if it's a protective factor. How can it possibly be a protective factor when we know that domestic violence isn't about uncontrolled anger?*

The quest for consistency is something worth pursuing. Another respondent (to the T2 questionnaire) said that the culture of the organisation needed to change, to respond better both to clients and to employees:

"Perpetrators can often be manipulative and suck you into their dynamic and agenda. Working with employees who are perpetrators is very different than working with clients who are perpetrators. I think few managers would have the necessary skills in this area, as most people would end up feeling sorry for them! If our treatment of women clients who are victims of domestic abuse is anything to go by in Child Protection there is a lot more work to do. We still use phrases such as "six of one and half a dozen of the other", quite a high-level manager said that to me less than a month ago. We also use the phrase "failure to protect" of mother's who are being beaten to a pulp by their partners but who cannot protect their children. The language is all wrong and indicative of our professional response."(T2 questionnaire)

The comments above suggest a wide spread lack of skills in engaging with fathers who are perpetrators of domestic violence. This will adversely affect the overall response to domestic violence, in that it will lead to a reliance on work with mothers while failing to directly engage with fathers on their behaviour and reducing risk.

Anxiety and concern about responses to clients experiencing domestic violence existed before the launch of the NCC domestic violence policy but the implementation of the policy framed these in contrast to the spirit and aims of the policy. The anxieties felt by some managers about how to respond to colleagues rather than clients is a fruitful discussion and could benefit both sets of responses. It is likely that responses to clients would benefit from the thoughtfulness and care demonstrated instinctively to colleagues and friends. It is also likely that responses to colleagues would benefit from being more proactive, whilst still supportive, approach. This would help staff and managers to respond well and promote safety at work as well as safety for the victims at home.

The concerns expressed by one of the managers about whether or not it was appropriate for staff currently experiencing domestic violence to respond to domestic violence in their case load is likely to be shared by other managers in social care. It is interesting that one of the concerns about this was the suggestion that as the member of staff hadn't left her abuser, she would in some way be setting some sort of bad example or unable to suggest strongly to clients that they should leave. These are coupled with the comments by one manager who was surprised at realising for the first time that staff could be perpetrating as well as experiencing domestic violence. In a refuge or other dedicated specialist domestic violence or women's support service, having personal experience is probably more expected and staff are more prepared to respond to this.

Nevertheless, for an employee in a specialist domestic violence service, it is likely that there would be questions, about whether it was reasonable and ethical to expect someone who is currently being victimised to deal with others in a similar situation or if this is wise for the clients. It would also be useful for Nordby to reconsider whether their approach to clients, that of focussing on getting the victim to leave rather than the violence to stop is the correct one. The default setting for many organisations in their written and unwritten procedures for responding to domestic violence is to focus on getting the victim to end the relationship. It is vitally important that organisations wishing to improve how they respond to staff and/or colleagues remember that the underlying assumption that this will create safety is not a safe assumption and in many cases that the risk will increase. Additionally, risks of witnessing violence increase for many children after separation.

Reflecting on the reasons why they don't do that for staff and the consequences of both approaches could be useful for improving responses to clients as well as staff. It can be extremely beneficial for practice with clients to consider what they would want for their colleagues, friends and family as a response and then try to make their work with clients more consistent with this level of care and response.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Nordby and other organisations, including Refuge and Respect, should consider paying particular attention to the tensions and challenges of directorates who respond both to clients and staff experiencing or using domestic violence, in order to learn from both sets of experiences and improve both.
2. In particular, they should consider the differences in the personal 'instincts' as well as the written procedures guiding how to respond to each. The consequences of these different responses could also be usefully explored.
3. Specifically, Nordby and other organisations working with vulnerable adults and children would benefit from reviewing the efficacy and consequences of any procedures for responses to clients and staff which have a default and explicitly proactive approach of focussing on getting the victim to end the relationship with the abuser.
4. Nordby and other organisations providing services to families affected by domestic violence should review their responses to fathers who are perpetrating domestic violence to ensure improved engagement and that they are offered interventions that reduce the risk.



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