

**Statement of Principles and Best  
Practice for  
the Perpetrator Programmes  
and  
Associated Women's Services  
run by the Four Steering Groups  
of  
The South East Domestic Violence  
Intervention Programme**

**CURRENT  
2008**

SEDEVIP is a member of RESPECT UK, the association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated women's services with members from the voluntary, private and statutory sector. As a member of RESPECT the SEDVIP signs up to its Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Women's Services. The document drawn up by the SEDVIP is based on the RESPECT document with adaptations for the Irish context.

# CONTENTS

<b>Context for the four Perpetrator Programmes in the South East.</b>	<b>Pg. 6</b>
<b>Purpose of this document</b>	<b>Pg. 6</b>
<b>Mission Statement</b>	<b>Pg 7</b>
<b>Definition of Domestic Violence</b>	<b>Pg 7</b>
<b><u>1. Principles and Philosophy for working with Men's Violence</u></b>	
<b>1.1 Protect women and children.</b>	<b>Pg. 8</b>
<b>1.2 Intervention.</b>	
<b>1.3 Domestic Violence is unacceptable and must be challenged at all times.</b>	<b>Pg.</b>
<b>8</b>	
<b>1.4 The Social context of Men's violence to partners and ex-partners.</b>	<b>Pg. 8</b>
<b>1.5 Violence within same sex relationships or from women to men is neither the same as, nor symmetrically opposite to men's violence to women.</b>	<b>Pg. 9</b>
<b>1.6 Men are responsible for their use of violence.</b>	<b>Pg. 9</b>
<b>1.7 Men can change.</b>	<b>Pg. 10</b>
<b>1.8 Programmes can reduce dangerousness.</b>	<b>Pg. 10</b>
<b>1.9 We are part of a community response, which needs to be consistent and integrated at all levels.</b>	<b>Pg. 10 &amp;11</b>
<b>1.10 Accessibility of Services.</b>	<b>Pg. 11</b>
<b>1.11 Promoting Positive Relationships.</b>	<b>Pg. 11&amp;12</b>
<b>1.12 Applying the philosophy to our lives.</b>	<b>Pg. 12</b>

## **2. Best Practice, Organisational Issues**

<b>2.1 Focus</b>	<b>Pg. 13</b>
<b>2.2 An integrated approach as an essential component to behavioural change and measuring effectiveness.</b>	<b>Pg. 13-14</b>
<b>2.3 Diversity</b>	<b>Pg. 14</b>
<b>2.4 Resourcing of Services</b>	<b>Pg. 14</b>
<b>2.5 Appropriate responses.</b>	<b>Pg. 15</b>
<b>2.6 Behavioural Change - Cognitive Behavioural Approach</b>	<b>Pg. 15</b>
<b>2.7 A domestic violence intervention project should not undertake couples counselling.</b>	<b>Pg. 15</b>
<b>2.8 Perpetrator Programmes are not designed to avoid sanctions.</b>	<b>Pg. 16</b>
<b>2.9 Child Protection</b>	<b>Pg. 16</b>
<b>2.10 Recruitment</b>	<b>Pg. 16</b>
<b>2.11 Competencies</b>	<b>Pg. 17 &amp; 18</b>
<b>2.12 Training</b>	<b>Pg. 18</b>
<b>2.13 Basic Training</b>	<b>Pg. 19</b>
<b>2.14 Joint Additional training for perpetrator workers and women's support workers.</b>	<b>Pg. 19</b>
<b>2.15 Supervision</b>	<b>Pg. 19 &amp; 20</b>
<b>2.16 Preparation, planning and debriefing for group workers</b>	<b>Pg. 20</b>
<b>2.17 Worker-client relationships</b>	<b>Pg. 20</b>
<b>2.18 Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<b>Pg. 20</b>
<b>2.19 Record keeping</b>	<b>Pg. 21</b>

### **3. Best Practice For the Women's Support Services**

<b>3.1 Aims of work with women 22</b>	<b>Pg.</b>
<b>3.2 Provision of services</b>	<b>Pg. 22</b>
<b>3.3 Confidentiality</b>	<b>Pg. 23</b>
<b>3.4 Specific safety concerns</b>	<b>Pg. 23</b>
<b>3.5 Safe and Accessible Services</b>	<b>Pg. 23</b>
<b>3.6 Availability of Services to women</b>	<b>Pg. 24</b>
<b>3.7 Proactive Partner Contact/ woman informed at all times. 24/25</b>	<b>Pg.</b>
<b>3.8 Range of Services</b>	<b>Pg. 25</b>
<b>3.9 Availability of services to women</b>	<b>Pg. 26</b>

#### **4. Best Practice for the Perpetrator Programmes**

<b>4.1 Aims of working with men</b>	<b>Pg. 27</b>
<b>4.2 Focus of perpetrator work.</b>	<b>Pg. 27</b>
<b>4.3 Appropriate Interventions</b>	<b>Pg. 28</b>
<b>4.4 Programme duration</b>	<b>Pg. 28</b>
<b>4.5 Confidentiality</b>	<b>Pg. 28</b>
<b>4.6 Written Contract for the men</b>	<b>Pg. 29</b>
<b>4.7 Gender and numbers of group facilitators</b>	<b>Pg. 29</b>
<hr/>	
<b>4.8 Specific Safety Concerns</b>	<b>Pg. 29</b>
<b>4.9 Risk Assessment</b>	<b>Pg. 29</b>
<b>4. 10 Men's Programme and the Criminal Justice system.</b>	<b>Pg. 30</b>
<b>4.11 Protocol re. Referrals</b>	<b>Pg. 30</b>
<b>4.12 Protocol re. Assessments of Male Perpetrators</b>	<b>Pg. 30 &amp; 31</b>
<b>4.13 Collusion</b>	<b>Pg. 31</b>
<b>4.14 Safety of facilitators, group members and others</b>	<b>Pg. 31</b>

#### **Context for the four Perpetrator Programmes in the South East.**

The South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (SEDVIP) was set up as a regional initiative under the auspices of the South East Regional Planning Committee on Violence Against Women in response to the Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women (April 1997).

In July 2003 the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform funded the Men's Development Network to coordinate the SEDVIP to assist with the further development of the Programme in the four areas that make up the SEDVIP, Carlow/Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford.

- Members of these four steering groups represent Women's Refuges, The Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse counselling centres, Women's Aid Carlow, Victim Support, Independent Mothers Projects, Local Area Networks on Violence against Women, Community Development Groups, Family Resource Centres, Health Board workers ( Including childcare, social workers, mental health, clinical psychologists), Counsellors and Psychotherapists, Probation Services, The Gardai and Men's Groups.

**The primary aim in working with male perpetrators of Domestic violence is to promote the safety, rehabilitation and empowerment of women and children. Every intervention and decision made in this work must be chosen with this in mind.**

**Purpose of this document is to;**

- Provide guidelines for respectful, ethical and accountable domestic violence intervention systems to increase the safety of women, children and other family members.
- Provide a framework for such interventions as part of a co-ordinated multi agency response.
- Establish a respectful, humane, consistent, and appropriate intervention.
- Enhance public awareness of domestic violence issues, and reinforce the concept that violent behaviour is unacceptable.
- Promote best practice amongst service providers.
- Assist agencies and individuals (including funders, referrers and clients) to identify effective interventions and services.
- Contribute to and influence the wider debate about the causes of domestic violence, and to continually review practice in the light of new understanding.
- Enhance public confidence in domestic violence intervention service.

**Mission Statement**

To provide a facilitated programme to address and challenge the offending behaviour of violent men, in order to break the cycle of abuse perpetrated against victims of Domestic Violence

### **Definition of Domestic Violence (RESPECT, March 2004)**

Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling behaviour, some of which is criminal, that includes but is not limited to physical assaults, sexual assaults, emotional abuse, isolation, economic abuse, threats, stalking and intimidation. This behaviour is used in an effort to control the intimate partner (or ex-partner) based on the perpetrator's sense of entitlement. The behaviour may be directed at others with the intention of controlling the intimate partner.

Social and institutional power structures support some groups using abuse and violence in order to control other groups in our society e.g. institutional racism, parents' violence to children. The unequal power relations between men and women account for the vast majority of domestic violence being from men towards women rather than vice versa.

The primary focus of the SEDVIP and the work of its members is men's violence towards women partners (ex partners).

## **1. Principles and Philosophy for working with Men's Violence**

### **1.1 Protect women and children.**

The primary aim of a domestic violence intervention programme is to promote the safety of women and children. This is the foremost objective of the programme and it informs the work on every level.

As part of this intervention we;

- Hold men accountable for their violence towards women.
- Promote respectful, egalitarian relationships.
- Work with others to improve the community's response to domestic violence.

### **1.3 Domestic Violence is unacceptable and must be challenged at all times.**

There are many forms of violence which are used to control and dis-empower:

### **1.4 The Social context of Men's violence to partners and ex-partners.**

All attitudinal and behavioural change work with men must be done with an awareness of the social context of men's violence to partners and ex-partners. Such violence is largely about the misuse of power and control in the context of male privilege. It is a direct consequence of the inequalities in relationships between men and women rooted in the patriarchal traditions that encourage men to believe that they are entitled to power and control over their partners.

From this perspective, men's violence is defined as learned and intentional behaviour rather than the consequence of individual pathology, stress, substance use or a 'dysfunctional' relationship. Violence often involves an attempt by men to get what they see as rightfully theirs. A man using violence does so to impose his will regardless of the wishes of the other person. In the context of domestic violence this means using violence to control women and children.

Although many people have been working for change for some time now, our social history has largely been one of unchallenged male dominance in all spheres of public life, reinforced by and allowing male dominance in the family. Gender socialisation of girls and boys to accept and continue gender roles has further reinforced male dominance. In this social context until recent times men's violence to family members was largely hidden and private and surrounded by shame and secrecy and this is still often the case. Men's violence is often condoned and colluded with and denial about the nature and extent of it and its effects is widespread. People outside the family have been reluctant to intervene, and the response of the Police and the legal system has often further disempowered women by failing to offer them the equal protection of the law.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Dobash & Dobash, 1979 p24; Dobash & Dobash 1992; Edelson & Tolman 1992 p18; Gondolf 2002 p3; Hague & Malos 1993; Haraway & O'Neil 1999; Paymar 2000 p232; Schechter 1982; Websdale & Chesney-Lind 1998 p79



### **1.5 Violence within same sex relationships or from women to men is neither the same as, nor symmetrically opposite to men's violence to women.**

In keeping with the above statement and mindful of our brief, to provide safety for female victims of domestic violence and their children, the South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme focuses primarily on men's violence towards women. The perpetrator is assumed to be male and the victim female. We understand that there are cases where domestic violence does not reflect conventional power relations, for instance, where it occurs in same-sex relationships, or where women are violent to male partners.

We support research into the needs of male and female victims of violence within same sex relationships and male victims of domestic violence perpetrated by women. We also support any research into working with female perpetrators of domestic violence as part of our commitment to the reduction of violence within our society.

### **1.6 Men are responsible for their use of violence.**

The use of violence is a choice for which each man is responsible and for which he should be held accountable. Their violence is always the result of a decision to attack and is functional and intentional.

"Men who batter are not 'sick' or in need of 'treatment' or 'cure'. They are strategic actors who use violence as a means of control to get what they want". (Ferguson and Synott)

Although a man may have been socialised to believe in his right to control women and children, or even have been trained to use violence, he can still choose to take responsibility and learn non-violent ways of relating. Some men who seek assistance with stopping their use of violence have also experienced violence themselves and may use this as a justification for their own violence. Workers need to keep separate at all times the issues relating to a man's own experience of being violent and his responsibility for his own violence against others. Any excusing, condoning or minimizing of this use of violence on the basis of his own pain and difficulties reinforces his use of violence rather than challenging it.

Violent behaviour is a choice and the perpetrator is 100% responsible for his behaviour.

### **1.7 Men can change**

Men can change their attitudes and behaviour and learn positive, equal non-violent ways of relating, just as they learned that violence got them what they wanted in terms of power and control "All things that are socially constructed can be changed" Duluth.

Although men who use violence do so to assert and maintain power and control with damaging effects on others, they also report a range of negative effects for themselves. These include shame, guilt, hating themselves for what they do and frustration at not having the kind of relationships with their partners and families

they would like to have. Often they feel powerless themselves and use violence to try to increase their sense of power. Clearly, although it involves giving up the misuse of power and control and the privileges of dominance, men also have a lot to gain from learning to have positive, equal and non-violent relationships. Workers can challenge men with the nature and consequences of their violence and the fact that they choose to use it. They can invite men to take responsibility to stop using violence and learn non-violent ways of relating to others. Programmes should embark on this work with an active commitment to wider social change aimed at ending oppression on the basis of gender.

### **1.8 Programmes can reduce dangerousness.**

Perpetrator programmes cannot 'cure' violent men or guarantee drastic changes, as behavioural change is a long and complex process. However, research<sup>2</sup> demonstrates that, of perpetrators who complete a domestic violence programme:

- some will stop their violence and significantly change their abusive behaviour
- some will stop their violence but maintain their controlling and intimidating behaviour
- some will continue their violence

Although not all men will end their abuse, in the majority of cases, domestic violence perpetrator programmes can **reduce dangerousness**.

### **1.9 We are part of a coordinated community response, which needs to be consistent and integrated at all levels**

Intervention programmes for perpetrators must support the ongoing work of many people working for change at all levels, including;

- Those working to challenge and change gender socialisation.
- Those working to improve community awareness about domestic violence.
- Those working to improve the response to domestic violence by the health and legal systems.

There should be a consistent focus between agencies, which holds men accountable for their violence and expects them to address and change their behaviour. Without this, women and children will be further disempowered and lose access to options other than continuing to live with violence.

"Only when a woman is safe can the process of empowerment legitimately begin. To attempt to empower a woman who is still a victim of her spouse's control is to further emphasise her powerlessness". (Stark & Flitcroft 1998.)

The long-term prevention of domestic violence requires a clear and consistent message from all individuals and social agencies that domestic violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

---

<sup>2</sup> Dobash & Dobash 1992; Gondolf 2002

Men need to know that their use of domestic violence will not be condoned by anyone and that everyone will respond to protect the rights of others to safety and autonomy. This includes responses from individuals and community agencies as well as the Gardai and the legal system. The legal remedies available to protect women and children must be used consistently and be enforced.

Women and children need to know that they will be taken seriously and that their rights will be enforced. Women need to have other options that address their needs available to them, to know about them and to be supported in making changes in their lives.

Groups for male perpetrators of domestic violence should be rooted in an organizational framework which makes them answerable to women for their standards, content and process. This could be done by creating an inter-agency structure in which women's organizations play a central role.

**Note; the development, management and monitoring of each of the four local area domestic violence intervention programmes will be vested in the local steering group under the coordination of the Support and Advisory Group to the South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme.**

#### **1.10 Accessibility of Services**

All women and men should have access to group programmes and other services which are helpful for resolving their experiences of domestic violence. This includes people with specific needs, such as those experiencing geographical, isolation, those with learning difficulties, language barriers and those with substance use difficulties.

#### **1.11 Promoting Positive Relationships**

In addition to working to prevent the negative and destructive behaviours and beliefs associated with men who perpetrate domestic violence, we believe all work with perpetrators and victims of domestic violence must actively promote an alternative, positive and constructive model of human relationships, based on the following principles;

- Respect for the autonomy and self-determination of all individuals
- Belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings
- Willingness to negotiate and compromise
- Acceptance of power as a shared and negotiated commodity
- Determination to seek and apply non-violent ways of relating.
- Refusal to accept, tolerate or practice beliefs or behaviours which breach the above principles.

### **1.12 Applying the philosophy to our lives.**

It is our philosophy that at all times practitioners working in the field of domestic violence should attempt to apply these principles to their own lives. Both in and outside of work, practitioners should, through their own behaviour and attitudes, demonstrate a holistic application of the philosophy.

## **2 Best Practice, Organisational Issues**

### **2.1 Focus**

The core focus of interventions with domestic violence perpetrators is always the safety of women and children.

Research in the USA<sup>3</sup> has found that 'program outcomes appear to be substantially influenced by how well the police, the courts, probation, women's services and other community services all work together'. Therefore it is essential that Programmes are actively involved in local fora which promote coordinated community responses to domestic violence.

### **2.2 An integrated approach as an essential component to behavioural change and measuring effectiveness.**

---

<sup>3</sup> Gondolf (2002) p 23

▪ **(A) Parallel support Services for Women**

Intervention programmes for the perpetrators of domestic violence should be provided only if there are well developed and parallel support services for women in the same location. If these are not offered the work may actually increase the danger to women.

**A Women's Service** making contact with clients and working to provide practical and emotional support for women to find ways to regain some control over their own lives. This includes those working to provide all services that support and empower women and children.

One of the main reasons women give for staying in a violent relationship is that their partner has promised to change. When men attend a perpetrator programme (or any other form of intervention such as counselling or anger management) many women will put their trust in the professionals to protect them and their children. It is essential, therefore, that specialist support is offered to women which can help them to:

- develop realistic expectations about their partners' behaviour change
- assess risk
- monitor whether or not their partner is changing and make decisions accordingly
- safety plan

Perpetrator workers can assist this by feeding back safety concerns to support workers. So, ***even if men do not change their behaviour, by working together in an integrated way, the perpetrator programme and the associated women's service can help to increase the safety of women and children.***

▪ **(B) A Perpetrator Programme** working to help men end their abusive behaviour towards their partners and other women.

When men regularly attend a perpetrator programme, their behaviour is under scrutiny. As well as following a curriculum of material designed to help them stop their violence, programmes require men to disclose any violence or abuse they have used during the last week.

To assess risk, perpetrator workers can use:

- men's disclosure and / or changes in how they behave in the group
- information from her
- information from other professionals, such as the Gardai or social workers

The fact that perpetrator workers are focusing on men and holding them to account on a week to week basis for his behaviour towards their (ex)partner and children, can mean that ***risk factors are picked up and acted upon more quickly.***

- **(C) Interagency Steering Groups that are used to hold all the agencies accountable to the victim and to challenge the tolerance of domestic violence.**

Note; ( Four Local Area Domestic Violence Intervention Programme Groups and the Support and Advisory Group to the South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme)

### **2.3 Diversity**

Programmes should have an active commitment to meeting the needs of the communities they serve. Programmes should take steps to ensure that they have local knowledge of the demographic profile of their community.

### **2.4 Resourcing of Services**

Programmes should take an integrated approach to funding their services to ensure that both the perpetrator programme and the associated women's service receive sufficient, equitable resources to enable them to achieve best practice described in this document. When applying for funding it is useful to include a 'unit cost' which covers both the work with the man and the woman.

At local level, perpetrator work should not take funding away from existing services to women and children.

### **2.5 Appropriate responses.**

**Couples work, anger management, mediation and restorative justice are not appropriate responses to men's abusive behaviour to women.**

Working with male perpetrators of domestic violence differs from therapy or counselling in some significant ways:

- Work with a domestic violence perpetrator should focus on him as the abuser and the one with the power to change his behaviour.
- The primary client of domestic violence perpetrator work is the woman not the man.
- Unconditional positive support is offered to that side of the man that wants to change. Workers are expected to be judgmental and honest in their attitudes to the violence and abuse and they are expected to hold fast to the organisation's understanding of it rather than accepting the perpetrator's or victim's understanding.
- The work is structured and workers as well as clients will place issues on the agenda.

## **2.6 Behavioural Change - Cognitive Behavioural Approach**

Behavioural change is a long-term process and intervention programmes should reflect that i.e programmes with a minimum attendance of 28 sessions and not create unrealistic expectations of change in a short term period. The programme will adopt a cognitive behavioural approach which views violence as learned behaviour that can be altered. However it must be noted that this approach is not anger management. "Outcome studies suggest that violence/abuse elimination occurs from reconstructing client's entrenched belief systems and assumptions about masculinity and its perceived entitlements and enhancing victim empathy and cooperative decision making (Healey et al 1998) rather than from the management or control of anger." (Ahimsa March 2003)

## **2.7 A domestic violence intervention project should not undertake couples counselling.**

For a number of reasons;

- **Safety of the woman.** When couples counselling is useful, it allows both parties to express their feelings. If a woman expresses her anger over abuse in the session she may be at risk afterwards.
- If the woman does not speak out in the couples session it ceases to be an equal forum and could serve to exacerbate the already unequal power relations between the man and the woman.
- When couples counselling is offered to help sort out domestic violence issues, there is an implication that the woman has some responsibility for the abuse and should change in some way to help stop it. In order to stop abusing the perpetrator must realise that he is responsible for stopping his abuse whatever his partner does.

Because abusive and violent men operate from a position of entitlement it is counterproductive for a woman to begin the process of counselling until she has established a position of equality within the relationship.

## **2.8 Perpetrator Programmes are not designed to avoid sanctions.**

A referral to an intervention programme should never be used as an alternative to granting a barring order or safety order.

Intervention programmes should be seen in terms of their preventative strategy role and additional to general sanctions. Optimism about outcomes of intervention programmes might give rise to a false sense of security and consequently put women's safety in jeopardy.

Domestic violence is a criminal act and a legitimate concern of the Criminal Justice System.

## **2.9 Child Protection**

Programmes should have a commitment to child protection and have an active child protection policy and procedures,(in line with current legislation and Health

Board guidelines ensuring that the needs of children are incorporated into all aspects of their work.

### **2.10 Recruitment**

In recruiting staff for both men's programme work and associated services, projects should seek to appoint staff who can demonstrate commitment to the principles listed in section 1, in particular nos. 11 & 12.

Staff should be able to;

- give clear reasons about their motivation to work in this area.
- be able to demonstrate self-awareness, in terms of learning and growing from personal and professional experiences.
- Demonstrate a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development is also desirable.
- be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major theoretical perspectives on domestic abuse and how they inform their practice.

Programmes should ensure that staff do this work by choice.

Programmes should carefully consider the implications of including ex-perpetrators on the staff team. At interview all staff should be asked about their own experience of perpetration of domestic violence and how that might proactively or negatively impact on their work.

If staff have ever used violence or abuse in their intimate relationships in the past they should be prepared to give a full, honest account of this and to demonstrate the steps they have taken to change their behaviour. Before they work with clients they must have been violence-free for a significant period of time. This is likely to be at least 5 years.

### **2.11 Competencies**

Quality programme delivery is a significant factor in successful intervention outcomes.

Some suggested competencies are:

#### **Knowledge of Domestic Abuse**

- Understanding of the effects of domestic abuse on victims/survivors and children.
- Understanding of the definitions of domestic violence and abuse.
- Awareness of the cultural, societal and gender related aspects of domestic abuse.
- Understanding of the tactics used by abusers to maintain dominance and oppression.
- Understanding the dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships.

#### **Assessment and interview skills**



- Ability to conduct a suitability assessment on perpetrators
- Ability to use relevant risk assessment procedures.
- Knowledge of risk and dangerousness indicators.
- Ability to place women's safety at the centre of any assessment and management of risk.
- Skills in interview techniques.
- Ability to screen for additional needs, e.g substance misuse or mental health concerns.

### **Programme delivery**

- Effective participation in the preparation and de-brief of group sessions.
- Understanding the need to maintain programme integrity.
- Knowledge of and skills in dealing with group dynamics.
- Ability to address responsiveness issues.
- Ability to develop appropriate co-working relationships.
- Ability to be receptive to feedback on delivery style.

### **Child protection knowledge**

- Knowledge of how children may be used by abusers as part of their abuse.
- Knowledge of child protection policies and procedures.
- Skills to deal sensitively with the issues posed by abusers who are also parents.
- Knowledge of what constitutes respectful parenting.

### **Support skills**

- Maintaining case records and completing paperwork in a timely fashion.
- Knowledge and appropriate use of IT.
- Ensuring that any interventions delivered to perpetrators are informed by the views of victim/survivors.
- Understanding the limited confidentiality and worker responsibilities within the agency's confidentiality policy.
- Ability to liaise with appropriate agencies in order to ensure women's safety.
- Aptitude to identify and respond to own learning needs.

This competency based approach should include effective supervision, ongoing training and regular appraisal of staff and provide support for staff to help them develop necessary proficiency.

However it needs to be recognized that not all staff can reach the level of competency required for this work. Therefore policies should be in place for redeployment of staff that are unable to demonstrate effective practice. Organisations should ensure that staff do this work by choice.

Staff performance should be measured against set competencies consistent with an equal opportunities approach.

This competency based approach should include effective supervision and appraisal of staff, and provide support for staff to help them develop necessary proficiency. However, it needs to be recognised that not all staff can reach the level of competency required for this work. Therefore policies and procedures should be in place for redeployment of staff that are unable to demonstrate effective practice.

### **2.12 Training**

It is the responsibility of programmes and practitioners to ensure that they have sound training relevant for their methods of working.

Training should be undertaken by agencies which adhere to the South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme's Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice.

### **2.13 Basic Training**

For all workers this must include training in the following areas:

- Domestic violence awareness
- Women's perspectives / experiences
- Children's experiences
- The law and domestic violence
- Child protection issues
- Diversity issues
- Substance use
- Integrated working
- Understanding adult learning
- Understanding the process of change
- Risk assessment and risk management

### **2.14 Joint Additional training for perpetrator workers and women's support workers**

- A minimum of five days training on programme delivery and related issues
- Group-work skills
- Programme suitability assessment, including Motivational Interviewing techniques
- Awareness & understanding of how the perpetrator programme works

All workers running groups should have the opportunity to be mentored by an experienced co-worker before working without an experienced co-worker.

---

## **2.15 Supervision**

There are specific stresses in this work. Programmes must build in provision for appropriate supervision / consultancy aside from line management with appropriate external<sup>4</sup> supervisors, who are accountable to the programmes and to the principles of the programme. Supervision at least once a month is a minimum.<sup>5</sup>

Supervisors need to have appropriate knowledge and experience of the working of the Intervention Programme and professional qualifications in the field of supervision.

The needs of supervisees can be met in a variety of ways and should cover the following areas:

- Exploring the personal impact of the work
- Looking at how workers' own issues impact on their practice
- Exploring the relationship between co-workers
- Ensuring worker accountability and adherence to minimum standards and principles
- Supporting workers in critically examining their interactions with clients and exploring group process and dynamics
- Supporting workers in dealing effectively with diversity and the consequent power issues
- Ensuring workers further develop skills and identify training needs
- Delivery style

Supervisors have the responsibility to ensure that workers' practice is appropriate and consistent with the aims of the work.

## **2.16 Preparation, planning and debriefing for group workers**

Projects must ensure that group workers have adequate time for preparation, planning and debriefing with their co-workers. This is an integral part of the work. Such time is separate from form-filling, record-keeping and tidying up. Minimum requirements are:

- ½ hour planning time immediately before a group
  - ½ hour de-brief time immediately after a group
- Less experienced workers are likely to need more time.

## **2.17 Worker-client relationships**

Workers and projects should maintain clear professional relationships with clients. Workers should not engage in intimate, sexual, social, or economic

---

<sup>4</sup> external to that project - not necessarily to the organisation as a whole

<sup>5</sup> IACP guidelines

relationships with clients during the time they are in a professional relationship and for a minimum of two years afterwards.<sup>6</sup>

Workers should not be expected to work with clients known to them personally and vice versa.

---

### **2.18 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Internal and / or external evaluation is essential and integral to this work.

Projects should have effective procedures for monitoring the quality of their services which prioritise measuring ways in which the safety and quality of life of women and children are increased.

Programmes should work in a transparent way and be open to the notion of external audit and evaluation.

### **2.19 Record keeping.**

Each of the local perpetrator programmes must keep a written record of attendance. This material is important for collation of statistics for funding, research and evaluation purposes as well as for general records. Referral information, assessment forms and attendance records should be kept centrally by each of the four local perpetrator programmes in a secure location.

---

<sup>6</sup> IACP guidelines

### **3. Best Practice For the Women's Support Services**

#### **3.1 Aims of work with women**

- to promote the physical safety and emotional & psychological well-being of women whose partners/ex-partners have been referred to a perpetrator programme.
- to promote the physical safety and emotional & psychological well-being of any children involved.
- to promote realistic expectations with women regarding their partner's/ex-partner's attendance on a perpetrator programme and ensure that the service offered to men doesn't put women and children at further risk.
- to promote women's empowerment.
- To give women opportunities to develop insight and understanding about domestic violence and not just focus on men's progress on the perpetrator programme

#### **3.2 Provision of services**

Services should be provided to:

- the woman who was the subject of a man's recent abuse
- any subsequent partner
- any ex-partners who the man has contact with and / or who are suspected of being at risk

These services must either be provided directly by an associated women's service or by an appropriate partner agency and should be staffed by women only. It is not appropriate for perpetrator service workers to provide this service.

These services should be woman-centred, designed to fit around the specific needs of each individual woman and children.

Women's service workers should not be asked to undertake work that undermines trust, leads to a conflict of roles, or compromises women's safety.

When programmes provide services to more than one partner or ex-partner of the same man they should ensure that:

- a different worker provides support to each woman
- strategies are in place to make sure that the women do not meet and in particular that they do not attend the same women's group.

### 3.3 Confidentiality

Programmes must explain their confidentiality and child protection policies to women. This includes informing women about their partner's/ex-partners limited confidentiality and what information they may or may not have access to. (see 4.5 for more details).

Programmes should explain to women how information is shared between perpetrator workers and women support workers.

Programmes must give women, and others at risk from his violence and abuse, **complete confidentiality in relation to the man**. This means that programmes should take steps to ensure that men are **never** told whether their partner/ex-partner has had contact with the women's service and in particular that no information on the nature or content of such contact is divulged.

Where information sharing arrangements exist between the programme and outside agencies (such as the Gardai and social services) programmes must explain clearly to each woman how information may be shared including:

- which agencies information might be shared with
- what type of information might be shared

Women should have to opt-in to such information sharing arrangements by giving their written consent.

In some cases sharing information may increase safety, in other cases sharing information may increase risk. In all cases workers have a duty to use their own discretion – in consultation with their supervisor and / or line manager – so as not to increase the risk to the woman or others

### **3.4 Specific safety concerns**

Projects must pro-actively contact women as a matter of urgency if they have specific concerns for their or their children's safety.

### **3.5 Safe and Accessible Services**

The SEDVIP is responsible for ensuring that services are safe and accessible to all women by providing services:

In a safe environment in accordance with the woman's needs.

Accessible to women with disabilities

Accessible to women with language needs

Which meet the woman's cultural needs

### **3.6 Availability of Services to women**

Services to women should be available for a reasonable period (Months if necessary) after their partner/ex-partner has left the perpetrator programme. If at the end of this time the woman still has support needs, further work or appropriate referral to other services should be done.

### **3.7 Proactive Partner Contact/ woman informed at all times.**

Unlike many women's services which are reactive – i.e they provide services to women who have contacted them – associated women's services are given the contact details of women whose partners/ex-partners have been referred to the perpetrator programme. These women are known to be experiencing / have experienced domestic violence. Instead of waiting for the woman to call, the associated women's service will pro-actively contact her.

Perpetrators often aim to isolate women. Using a proactive approach to contact and support women means that services can reach women and children isolated in their experience of domestic violence, some of whom will not have accessed any other form of support. Research has shown that most women positively welcome such contact. (Burton et al 1998)

#### **Initial contact:**

Unless the woman has directly and specifically requested otherwise, she should be informed of the following, by post or telephone call within one week of her partner's/ ex-partner's first contact with the programme.

#### **1. *Information about the perpetrator programme.***

- Her partner's/ex-partner's referral to the perpetrator programme

- Information about the programme, specifically detailing how men may use and abuse the programme materials, for example by telling her that her behaviours are abusive, by telling her to take 'time outs' or by insisting that she needs therapy or counselling either during or after his attendance on the programme.
- Information about how she can access information about the programme and her partner's/ex-partner's attendance.
- Discouraged from having unrealistic expectations of men changing as a result of their attendance on the programme.

## **2. Information about services available to her**

- Details of the programme's Women's Support Services and how to access these services
- Information about the Women's Support Services Confidentiality policy
- Clear messages about men's violence.
- Details of other specialist services, including Rape and Sexual Abuse counselling Services, Women's Refuges, Women's Aid, Gardai, Legal Aid, M.A.B.S, and other appropriate local and national services.

## **3. Pro-active phone contact**

Women should be proactively contacted by phone in order to

- Check that she received and understands the postal information
- Reach out to her to offer support
- Check out what her practical and emotional needs are
- Check if she has any particular needs ( language, disability)

The Women's Support Services should continue to attempt contact until contact is made. It is not enough to expect the woman to contact the women's service herself.

Pro-active phone work must take place within a clear safety procedure which minimizes risk to the woman.

## **4. Further contact**

Women should also be informed without delay of the following by post or telephone call;

- When her partner/ ex-partner is assessed as unsuitable for the programme
- When her partner/ ex-partner completes the programme
- When her partner/ ex-partner drops out of the programme
- When her partner/ ex-partner is breached or suspended from the programme.



### **3.8 Range of Services**

In addition Women's Services must offer support to all women clients in at least one of the following ways

- A number of individual sessions to plan strategies maximizing her safety and for emotional support.
- A Women's Support Group, providing mutual support and the chance to explore the effects of the violence and abuse and what it means to them, with other women who have experienced domestic violence too.

Some women may need more support, some may need less. The women's service should structure their services so that they are flexible and able to offer additional support to women who need it most – in particular where there is high risk.

### **3.9 Availability of services to women**

Services to women should be available for at least 3 months after their partner/ex-partner has left the perpetrator programme. If at the end of this time the woman still has support needs, further work or appropriate referral to other services should be done.

## **4. Best Practice for the Perpetrator Programmes**

### **4.1 Aims of working with men**

The primary aim in working with perpetrators of domestic violence is to increase the safety of women and children. Every intervention and decision made in this work must be chosen with this in mind.

Secondary aims are to;

- Hold men accountable for their violence towards women.
- Promote respectful, egalitarian relationships.
- Work with others to improve the community's response to domestic violence.

### **4.2 Focus of perpetrator work.**

**All programmes should contain the following core elements.**

- An understanding of what constitutes violent behaviour.
- That Violent behaviour is a choice.
- That the perpetrator is 100% responsible for his behaviour.
- That violent behaviour is functional and intentional.

Workers should undertake to challenge men's

- use of physical violence
- use of sexual violence, sexual abuse and coercion
- tactics which seek to deny, minimize, justify and/or blame.
- and change attitudes and beliefs which support domestic violence.
- expectations of power and control over partners/ex partners.

And to

- develop men's capacity to understand the impact of his violence on his partner and children both in the long and short term.
- acknowledge and question the social and gendered context of domestic violence.
- Develop men's ability to have safe and appropriate contact with their children. *(Note; workers should be aware that some men will not achieve this and that no contact is preferable to unsafe contact)*
- encourage men to adopt positive, respectful and egalitarian ways of being.

- focus on men as perpetrators and not as victims.
- avoid collusion with the perpetrators' justification for their behaviour.

### **4.3 Appropriate Interventions**

The ideal setting for intervention work with perpetrators should be group work.

Where group-work is genuinely not possible – for example in remote rural areas or for clients with additional needs – a planned, structured programme of individual work may be considered. This should adhere to the same principles and standards as for group-work and should be delivered by male and female co-workers.

### **4.4 Programme duration**

As behavioural change is a long term process programmes should run for a minimum of 56 hours.

The experience of projects in the UK and abroad as well as research evidence<sup>7</sup> suggests that longer programmes are more effective in changing the underlying attitudes of perpetrators.

Where possible the running of rolling programmes should be explored to allow easy access in the case where men are court-mandated and there might be increased risk to the women.

### **4.5 Confidentiality**

Domestic violence perpetrators pose a risk to their partners, ex-partners, children and sometimes others. If workers have reason to be concerned for the safety of any persons due to the client's abusive behaviour, they have a duty not to keep confidential those concerns. This duty may include informing, reporting, or warning other agencies or persons including any current, ex- and new partners.

Therefore, in the interest of minimising the risks to others, men should be offered limited confidentiality. These limits should be explicit and include that:

- Information will be available to the man's partner/ex-partner on his attendance and whether he drops out of the programme or is suspended from it
- If workers believe that he poses a particular risk to his partner/ex-partner or others, they will inform all relevant people, including his partner/ex-partner.
- Information will be provided to any probation officer, Garda or other relevant official involved with him or his family, as requested.

---

<sup>7</sup> Gondolf (2002) p150

- If workers are concerned that the man is a threat to the welfare or safety of children they may take steps to increase the safety of those children by involving another agency.

Programmes must ensure that their conditions of confidentiality are communicated to and understood by the men they work with. Every man should be required to agree to and sign a statement which details the limits to their confidentiality. If a man refuses to do this, he should not be offered a place on a perpetrator programme.

#### **4.6 Written Contract for the men**

The male participants must sign a contract before they can be admitted to the perpetrator programme.

#### **4.7 Gender and numbers of group facilitators**

All groups must have a minimum of two facilitators. Programmes should be delivered by a mixed gender team. Best practice suggests that all groups and programmes should be delivered by a mixed gender team with continuity of facilitators. Group workers should not be pressurised to work with more men than they feel comfortable or safe to work with effectively. Ideal group numbers are 8-10 with a maximum of 12 men.

---

#### **4.8 Specific Safety Concerns**

Programmes should ensure that information regarding specific concerns for the safety of a man's partner/ex partner, children or others is passed on to the women's service immediately. ( see section 3.4)

#### **4.9 Risk Assessment (Currently the SEDVIP does not provide risk assessment reports to outside agencies)**

Risk assessment is different to assessment of suitability for the programme. Projects need to be clear about what types of assessment they are able to carry out. Assessment of risk and of re-offending must not be undertaken without including a clear acknowledgement of the limits of such assessment processes as well as an explicit acknowledgement of whose perspective and what information the assessment is based on.

Projects should not undertake assessments for programme suitability for court mandated referrals without access to the witness statements and other relevant

reports. For other referrals, projects should make every attempt to access all available reports.

Projects can assess men's progress or motivation in groups, their understanding of programme materials and their attendance, and report their concerns to outside agencies / persons and endeavour to contribute to the risk assessment processes of other organisations. Workers need to understand that men can present themselves as having positive attitudes and behaviour towards women their partner/ex-partner whilst in the group, trying to demonstrate that they have changed, but continue with their abuse outside of the group. When providing reports to outside agencies it is essential that workers stress that any signs of change in the group are no guarantee that real change is taking place

#### **4.10 Men's Programme and the Criminal Justice system.**

Domestic violence is a criminal act and a legitimate concern of the Criminal Justice System. Perpetrator Programmes must ensure that that men do not use their attendance on a perpetrator programme to avoid the legal consequences of their behaviour. Programmes should actively engage with criminal justice agencies.

#### **4.11 Protocol re. Referrals**

Referrals may come to the group through a wide variety of sources.

These may include;

The Probation Service, the Gardai, G.P.s, HSE, Social Workers, Community Groups, Women's Groups, Counsellors, Counselling agencies, Psychiatrists, Partners and Self-referral.

The acceptance of any referral must be based on the assessment criteria adopted and recommended by the S.E.D.V.I.P. If it is decided that any individual will not be accepted onto the programme, this will be communicated to the referring agency. If requested, information regarding a man's level of attendance will be passed on to another agency. (However, facilitators will not make value judgments on the man's progress)

#### **4.12 Protocol re. Assessments of Male Perpetrators**

Assessments should be carried out upon referral to determine whether a man is suitable to attend the perpetrator programme.

It is recommended that facilitators carry out assessments. Where people other than the facilitator carry out assessments it is imperative that the facilitator communicates with the assessor before the man joins the group and that the contracting process takes place between the facilitator and the man at his first meeting with the group.

Assessment should take the form of at least one face-to-face interview, using the standardised assessment form. This form is a useful tool that gives structure to the interview and assists the facilitator in deciding if the criteria for acceptance are being met.

It is important that the confidentiality policy is made clear before the assessment meeting begins.

It is essential that the men are not accepted on to the perpetrator programmes if there is no real hope of successful behaviour change as this is likely to give his partner ex/partner false hope that he will change.

Acceptance criteria should include that:

- he can acknowledge that he has been violent and abusive (i.e he is not in complete denial)
- he sees his violence and abuse as a problem
- he is able to accept some responsibility for his use of violence and abuse
- he agrees to the conditions of attendance including giving contact details for his partner ex/partner.

Additionally projects should determine whether there are any additional issues which might prevent men from engaging with or benefiting from the programme, such as; substance misuse, language difficulties, literacy difficulties or severe health problems.

These issues in themselves should not necessarily preclude men from receiving services, but might indicate that they need additional support such as:

- parallel attendance on a substance misuse programme
- individual sessions with an interpreter if necessary
- extra help with written work.

Projects should not undertake assessments for programme suitability for court mandated referrals without access to the witness statements and other relevant reports.

For other referrals, projects should make every attempt to access all available reports.

#### **4.13 Collusion**

All facilitators must be aware of men's tendency to deny their violence altogether, or to minimise it. It is important that this is challenged within the group and that the possibility of collusion on the part of other men or the facilitator is guarded against. This is an area where the value of having two facilitators, (one male and one female) within the group becomes apparent.

#### **4.14 Safety of facilitators, group members and others**

The S.E.D.V.I.P is committed to ensuring the safety of all facilitators and men attending the perpetrator programmes and promoting and fostering an ethos of non-violence. Any element of risk in working with violent men should be minimised by following clear guidelines at both the assessment stage and within the group.

