



MWIA CASE STUDIES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES

Case 20: A Family Safely Together

Notes

- *Respect* is a national domestic violence charity working with the perpetrators
- DVPP: Domestic Violence Perpetrator Program
- ISS: Independent Support Service associated with the DVPP

Objectives

- To show the effectiveness of a DVPP in stopping domestic violence at its source by managing risk and changing behaviour of perpetrators.
- To show the impact of domestic violence on children.

Narrative Case

Jason rang the Respect helpline following an incident of violence where he had grabbed his partner Elly by the hair and thrown her to the floor, causing bruising to her face and a sprained wrist. This was not the first time Jason had been violent but it was the first time Elly had been visibly injured.

The helpline workers spent some time talking with him about what had happened and then referred him to a local DVPP. Elly was initially reluctant for Jason to involve outside agencies. She felt that she and Jason had a good family and a good way of life. They both had successful jobs and two children together. She felt ashamed at admitting that she was a victim of domestic violence as she always imagined this was something that happened to other people. Nonetheless, when ISS contacted her, she agreed to regular updates about Jason's progress.

On the programme, Jason quickly learned to be non-violent, but he struggled to be non-controlling.

Jason was asked to conduct a re-enactment exercise in the group. With the guidance of DVPP workers, he re-

enacted the worst incident of violence he had committed, step by step, stopping just before he used violence. Until this exercise he had always maintained that the children had never been aware of the abuse. However, during the re-enactment he had to account for the children's whereabouts and it quickly became obvious to him and the group that the two children were aware and very distressed by him hurting their mother.

This was an important contributory factor in getting Jason to end his verbal and emotional abuse. He had already developed an increased awareness of his own stresses. Further awareness of the effects of his behaviour upon the children as witnesses to violence helped positively motivate Jason to remain non-abusive. This was confirmed by the ISS contact with Elly and by the end of the programme Jason had achieved a sustained period of non-violent and non-abusive behaviour. Elly felt that she and the children were safe to continue living with him, knowing that the ISS was there should things change.

Learning Points

1. Women are often reluctant to disclose abuse, because they are ashamed. Having children and not wishing to 'rock the boat' is another reason to remain silent.
2. Domestic violence and abuse is more commonly associated with poverty or hardship, but can occur in any social class.
3. Knowing that children are aware of their father's abuse of their mother is a very important factor in changing the perpetrator's behaviour. Many men are not aware of the distress they are causing their children.
4. Children from families where domestic violence has occurred are more likely to become perpetrators themselves
5. Without the DVPP/ISS it is more likely that domestic violence will continue, perhaps leading to more serious violence, greater impact on the children, police call-outs, and involvement of the criminal justice system and health services. Recurrence of domestic violence with a new partner is a real risk.