



MWIA CASE STUDIES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES

Case 19: Managing Ongoing Risk

Notes

- DVPP: Domestic Violence Perpetrator Program
- ISS: Independent Support Service associated with the DVPP
 - Contacts all partners, relevant ex-partners and new partners of every DVPP participant
- MARAC: Multi Agent Risk Assessment Conference

Objectives

- To show how important DVPPs are in the prevention of abuse by tackling the cause of the problem

Narrative Case

Zoe and Ben had approached Relate couples' counselling agency, saying they were having difficulties in their relationship but wanted to stay together. During the screening process, it became clear that Ben was violent and abusive to Zoe. Ben was referred to a DVPP. The ISS contacted Zoe.

Both were assessed using a risk assessment tool. Ben's account was significantly minimised in comparison to Zoe's.

While on the DVPP Ben began talking about various controlling behaviours he was continuing to use, as well as past abuse against Zoe. It became apparent that Ben was extremely jealous and controlling. During the session on sexual abuse he talked about coercing Zoe into sex and sexual acts. Ben seemed unaware that this was abusive and continued to show no understanding that this was unacceptable.

The DVPP worker, the ISS worker and their manager identified a much higher risk than previously assessed. The ISS met with Zoe and carefully discussed the things which Ben had mentioned in group. Zoe had felt too ashamed of what had happened to mention the sexual abuse previously and was very upset, but confirmed that Ben was regularly abusive and

continued to be so. She admitted she was very scared of Ben and he'd recently started saying that he'd never let her go. She agreed that it would be a good idea to involve other agencies through a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the ISS worker helped her to start planning for her safety.

Ben found out that he had been referred to a MARAC without his knowledge and threatened Zoe. He then aggressively confronted the DVPP workers. However, by the time he did this, Zoe had phoned the ISS worker saying she wanted to leave. The jealous and controlling behaviours, coupled with Ben's statement about not letting Zoe leave, led the DVPP and ISS workers to believe there was a high risk of violence or even homicide. The ISS worker arranged a refuge place for Zoe immediately. The DVPP worker knew that Ben was likely to be angry and upset when he discovered that Zoe had left and rang to offer extra support. They talked to him about letting go and helped him plan strategies to keep him from harming himself, Zoe or others. Ben remains a high risk to Zoe and any future partners, but by focusing support on him the DVPP was able to contain the risk he posed at this critical time.

Learning Points

1. Careful selection of participants into a Domestic Violence Prevention Programme (DVPP) is essential
2. Support for partners, relevant ex-partners, and new partners, with advocacy, information about the programme and their partners' attendance, is an integral part of any DVPP
3. Victims are often reluctant to admit they are being sexually abused because they are ashamed.
4. Refuges are an important part of domestic abuse services, especially if there is a risk of homicide or serious injury. Adequate funding for refuges must be ring-fenced.