



The National Office for the Prevention of
Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes

An overview by Trevor Noonan, Assistant Director,
Irish National Office for the Prevention of Domestic,
Sexual and Gender-based Violence, at the European
Commission exchange of good practice on gender
equality Madrid 16-17 April 2013

Brief description of The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Established in 2007 in response to a need for a ‘whole of Government’ approach to tackling domestic and sexual violence and charged with developing
 1. Awareness-raising strategies
 2. Intervention strategies in line with best international practice
 3. Research in the field
 4. Perpetrator intervention programmes
 5. Proposing legislative and policy change

National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014

- Published by Government in March 2010
- Primary Interventions of preventing,
understanding and recognising
- Secondary Interventions of responding,
reporting and referring
- 4 High Level Goals

National Strategy High Level Goals

- To promote a culture of prevention and recognition through increased understanding of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence
- To deliver an effective and consistent service to those affected
- To ensure greater effectiveness of policy and service planning

The National Strategy

- High level goal 2
Effective and consistent service provision for victims
- 5 Objectives
One is to address offending behaviour by perpetrators

Perpetrators objective

3 Actions dealing with perpetrators:

- Action 14: strengthening measures to manage the risks posed by perpetrators
- Action 15: strengthening measures to deal with sexual violence perpetrators
- Action 16: strengthening measures to deal with domestic violence perpetrators

Why engage with Perpetrators?

- Reduce violent and controlling behaviour by men with their current partners, ex-partners and future partners
- Improved safety for women and children
- Provide a community alternative to prison
- Part of a three part system of education and awareness about domestic violence, reduction and prevention of violence and dealing with the consequences of violence

Ireland's key policy priorities

- Strengthened co-operation and co-ordination between programmes and other relevant service providers including uniform protocols and procedures
- Improved data to understand who and why the programmes help
- A partnership approach between women's service providers and those working with men
- Safer women and children

Implementation structures to achieve these policy priorities

- Perpetrator Programmes Committee chaired by Cosc
- Ongoing bipartisan discussions with Cosc and with the stakeholders in the programmes
- Programme representative as a member of the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women

Ireland's Good Practice

- Work done by partner contacts including
 1. Governance and organisation work via membership of boards of individual programmes
 2. Parallel programmes for partners
 3. Ongoing risk assessment
- Improved data structures within programmes
- Improved governance and management of programmes since the establishment of Cosc

Challenges that have been overcome to create the Good Practice

- Resistance to programmes on ideological grounds
- Differing levels of motivation of men who present for assessment or who join programmes
- Programmes becoming a referral destination
- Completion of programmes carrying too much weight
- Systematic issues

Current structures in Ireland

- Three groups funded by Cosc to deliver a total of 13 intervention programmes
- Mandated and non-mandated programmes
- Fixed and rolling programmes
- All programmes have a dedicated partner contact system

What do Ireland's Domestic Violence Perpetrator Intervention Programmes do?

- Assess men who are referred and conduct a thorough risk assessment
- Do one-to-one work with them to prepare them for group work
- Conduct fixed or rolling group-work programmes
- Work with the partners or ex-partners of the men to improve their safety

How does the partner contact work?

- Initial meeting
- Weekly contact
- Group work
- Reporting
- Contract and terms and conditions agreed
- Local governance
- Membership of national committee

Success/advantages of partner contact work

- Improved safety for partners and children
- Changed thinking skills for women
- Contact with support agencies
- Ensures holistic programmes
- Improved outcomes for women and children
- Women feel more engaged with the system

Headline Statistics

- 13 programmes across Ireland
- €650,000 per annum
- 373 referrals; 283 screened in; 134 commenced programme; 87 completed a programme (65% completion)
- 117 women supported

Other measures to strengthen programmes

- Improved data
- Improved protocols for referrals

Success of data work

- From information on outputs towards robust information on outcomes
- Data on individual programmes and groups of programmes
- Information on impact of partner contact
- Future work: data on individual men for longitudinal or controlled group study

What does Ireland do to reduce possible recidivism?

- Allows men to redo programmes to maintain improved behaviours
- Allow men who drop out to complete programme at a later time

Issues affecting programmes

- Managing in a time of budgetary constraints
- Organisational structures in “the system”
- Relationships with partner contact organisations
- Need for more longitudinal work
- Drop out rate
- “One size fits all”
- Evidence of success
- Mandated v. Non-mandated?
- Do they make perpetrators accountable?
- Consistent standards

What does research tell us

- Dr Devaney will look at this in more detail but.....
- Indications that most men who complete a well-established programme in a coordinated community response to domestic violence reduce their violent behaviour
- Women whose partners and ex-partners take part in programmes feel safer and attribute this to the programme

Moving forward

- Improved data with random assignment and control groups
- Revised programmes taking account of findings from our data
- Further integration with the system – police, health and social services, judiciary etc

Thank you for your attention