

Make a Change: Policy Position Paper – A summary

Make a Change provides a community-wide, early response to people who are concerned about their abusive behaviour in their current, or previous, intimate relationships and are motivated to change. It was developed by Respect, in partnership with Women's Aid Federation of England. Make a Change is referenced as a 'best in class intervention' for perpetrators by the Home Office in the Standards for Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Interventions and the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Intervention Fund (2023).¹

The programme aims to offer support at the earliest possible point, often before other perpetrator programmes can, and ideally before the need to involve a professional agency, such as the family court, social services, or police. It forms part of a Coordinated Community Response through its three strands: **expert support**, which consists of a group behavioural change programme for perpetrators and separate support for survivors; **community outreach** to empower friends, family, neighbours and colleagues to know how to respond and what help is available; and **workforce development** to build professionals' confidence and skills to recognise perpetration, respond safely and effectively, and refer to local services.

The challenge:

- Each year, more than two million adults in the UK experience domestic abuse – an estimated 1.6 million women and 757,000 men.² These figures are likely to be an under-estimate and hide the fact that domestic abuse disproportionately impacts women, who typically experience higher rates of repeated victimisation and are much more likely to be seriously hurt or killed.
- Currently, less than 1% of domestic abuse perpetrators receive specialist intervention.³ Domestic abuse perpetrator programmes (DAPPs) are not universally available and there is a lack of provision, creating a postcode lottery of services.
- Where a DAPP is available, it is rarely widely accessible. Participants are commonly mandated to attend by police, court, or social services and few programmes are funded to work with low-level offenders. This makes services inaccessible for people who want to change but don't fit the criteria or can't afford the cost to fund themselves.
- Pathways into DAPPs outside of the criminal justice system are limited. Results from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's mapping of services show that fewer than half of survivors were able to access the community-based support they wanted/needed, and only 7% of survivors who wanted their perpetrator to receive support to change their behaviour were able to access it.⁴
- Perpetrator provision is rarely joined up with existing local survivor provision. In line with the Respect Standard, intervention with perpetrators must be accompanied by a corresponding integrated support service (ISS) for survivors focused on their safety and freedom. Domestic abuse provision in most areas includes a Women's Aid member service for survivors, who are expertly placed to deliver this ISS support where they choose to do so.
- Professionals who encounter domestic abuse lack confidence to engage with perpetrators. Friends and family are often the first to know and often may not know what to do or what help is available. This contributes to perpetrators remaining invisible in addressing domestic abuse, where too often the onus is put on survivors to reduce the risks to themselves and their children.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1127284/Domestic_Abuse_Perpetrator_Standards.pdf; <https://www.find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/domestic-abuse-perpetrator-intervention-fund>

²<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020#sex>

³ <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Call-to-action.pdf>

⁴ <https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/national-mapping-of-domestic-abuse-services/>

Proposed solutions:

- Every local authority needs a DAPP, delivered in line with the Respect Standard. In 2015, Project Mirabal found that DAPPs are effective in reducing harm and increasing survivor's 'space for action' – a person's freedom to act and think without being influenced by another person's abusive behaviour.⁵
- DAPP provision should include an early response programme such as Make a Change that is free of charge and accepts referrals from multiple sources, including from survivors and through self-referral.
- Diverse routes to DAPPs are needed, including ways to reach perpetrators outside of the awareness of agencies and the criminal justice system. Early Make a Change evidence indicates that participants who self-refer are more likely to complete the programme. In 2021/22, 46% of referrals we received were self-referrals and 84% of people who completed the programme had self-referred.⁶
- Commissioners should promote a collaborative rather than competitive funding environment. Make a Change encourages a partnership approach between Respect accredited perpetrator services and Women's Aid member services to deliver the DAPP and ISS respectively. This brings together services' respective expertise, while strengthening multi-agency working and referral pathways.
- Professionals need training to build the knowledge, skills and confidence to address perpetrator behaviour. In 2021/22, 90% of attendees on Make a Change's 'Recognise, Respond and Refer' training said it gave them a better understanding of domestic abuse, 98% felt more confident discussing abusive behaviour with people and 95% felt they now had practical skills to engage with perpetrators.⁷
- The wider community needs access to information and education on what to do and where to signpost to if they suspect someone they know is using or experiencing abuse. In 2023, Make a Change is developing and piloting a programme to support the general public in their role as friends, family and neighbours, as well as supporting employers with their duty of care towards staff.

Recommendations:

- **Specialist domestic abuse services and programmes for perpetrators need substantial, long-term funding to create sustained universal provision.** The Treasury must deliver funding to ensure every locality has a DAPP and, locally, commissioners, local authorities and partnerships must ensure that provision includes a community-based response that is free of charge and accepts self-referrals, such as Make a Change. This funding must be part of a wider coordinated strategy and is in no way be a substitute for investment in the full range of support services required for survivors.
- **Commissioners should support existing local services where possible and explore collaborative commissioning.** In the case of perpetrator services, this can be through the dual delivery of the DAPP and ISS by local perpetrator and survivor services with Respect and Women's Aid and/or Imkaan accreditation.
- **Comprehensive, coordinated training on the role of survivor support and perpetrator behaviour change programmes must be developed** and embedded for commissioners and wider professionals. It should connect the workforce and include the development of clear pathways that professionals can use to support survivors and hold perpetrators to account, as part of a Coordinated Community Response.

Find out more and get in touch at www.makeachange.uk.net

⁵ <https://projectmirabal.co.uk/>, Kelly, L. (2003): <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400086>

⁶ Make a Change Lincolnshire data, unpublished

⁷ Make a Change Recognise, Respond and Refer data, unpublished