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# 'Making Safe': A Coordinated Community Response to Empowering Victims and Tackling Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

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*This article describes an exploratory study of the Making Safe Scheme, which is a multi-agency initiative designed to provide a coordinated and integrated response to domestic violence by focusing on both victims and perpetrators. A key feature of the intervention is that it enables victims to remain in their own homes, provided it is considered safe to do so, and re-houses perpetrators. Consequently, the wrong-doer leaves the home and practitioners can work with families in their established communities to prevent further abuse. In 2008, the project was awarded the Butler Trust Public Protection Award for its innovative work with victims and offenders. The findings from this study focus on a number of themes: perpetrator accountability, the changing balance of power in abusive relationships and the increased opportunities for victims and their families to engage in recovery work whilst remaining in the family home.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, perpetrator programmes, prevention, victims.

## Introduction

Domestic violence can have a devastating impact on family life, with women and children the major victims. Adequate measures to protect victims are essential, but these are only part of a wider solution. A comprehensive policy to tackle domestic violence must also address the abusive behaviours of perpetrators. In this article, domestic violence is defined as any behaviour (physical, psychological, financial or sexual) that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and is the product of the perpetrator's desire to exert power and control over others. This article comprises three main sections. We begin by outlining recent shifts in policy towards a more victim-centred and holistic approach to domestic violence, which recognises the complexities of the nature of domestic violence and the need for a more sophisticated, multi-agency response. Particular attention is given to key issues surrounding the provision of perpetrator programmes as part of an integrated response to change perpetrator behaviour and increase victim safety. Second, we outline our study of the Making Safe Scheme; a multi-agency intervention that provides a coordinated, community response designed to prioritise safety and empower victims. Finally, we present some of the key findings from this study and discuss their implications for policy and practice.

## Policy context

The reconfiguration of crime control in late modernity has witnessed criminal justice policies and practices becoming more victim-focused, with an increasing emphasis being placed on public protection and the needs of victims of crime (Garland, 2001). In England and Wales, the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 introduced a Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and made breaches of non-molestation orders a criminal offence. Furthermore, the Act extended restraining orders to cover all offences where there is a continued risk to the victim. Risk assessment and risk management have become key tools in protecting victims and this has given rise to 'victim-centric' (Ibarra and Erez, 2005) initiatives in the US, such as structured electronic tagging programmes for certain convicted domestic violence perpetrators (Erez and Ibarra, 2007) and Sanctuary schemes in the UK, which improve the security of the homes of victims and create 'safe rooms' (Netto et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2010). Measures such as these prioritise victim safety and can prevent women and children having to flee the family home. The Crime and Security Act 2010 in England and Wales makes provision for Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders, commonly referred to as 'go orders'. The notice provides immediate emergency protection for the victim(s) by granting the police powers to remove and deny the alleged perpetrator access to a particular address for a period of forty-eight hours. The new protection order, which must be made by a magistrates' court, can restrict access to a specified address for a period of up to twenty-eight days. This victim-focused initiative, designed to provide protection in the immediate aftermath of an incident, is currently being pilot tested in three police force areas in England and the findings are expected to be reported in the summer of 2013. While the Making Safe Scheme, which is the focus of the current study, is a separate initiative, the findings reported here may provide some useful insights which will contribute towards the development of future policy and practice in this area.

The needs of the victims of domestic violence are many and varied, and few fall within the purview of the criminal justice system (Harne and Radford, 2008). Legal sanctions alone are not the answer, as the criminal justice system constitutes a 'resource not a solution' (Holder, 2001: 8). Safe and secure accommodation is undoubtedly a key priority. It is widely acknowledged that domestic violence is a major contributor to homelessness (Malos and Hague, 1997; Jones *et al.*, 2002; Reeve *et al.*, 2006; Netto *et al.*, 2009) and can be associated with repeat homelessness (Pawson, 2001) and successive moves in a relatively short period of time (Warrington, 2001). As Dobash and Dobash assert, '(t)he importance of housing cannot be overestimated . . . it ranks as one of the crucial factors affecting women's ability to find viable alternatives to a violent relationship' (1992: 93). A major reason given by women for staying in, or returning to, an abusive relationship is the lack of suitable and affordable accommodation for themselves and their children (Binney *et al.*, 1981; Bossy and Coleman, 2000). While women's refuges and temporary local authority housing play a vital role in meeting the accommodation needs of families fleeing domestic violence, they offer only a short-term solution. Furthermore, moving into temporary accommodation may be a stressful and unsettling experience, especially when families are re-housed in a new location away from informal support networks provided by relatives and friends, and children have to move schools (Saunders, 1995; Abrahams, 2007). Research shows that some women with dependent children are reluctant to leave the family home and feel a sense of injustice at having to contemplate such a move when it is their partner's abusive behaviour that is at issue (Bossy and Coleman, 2000). There

is some evidence to suggest that re-victimisation is less likely to occur where the victim has consistent access to advocacy support, can sustain their employment and experiences a sense of social embeddedness (Fleury *et al.*, 2000; Bell and Goodman, 2001; Dutton *et al.*, 2006). Social embeddedness is an inherent antecedent of social support and refers to the strength and depth of the relational ties a person has with other members of her or his social network (Barrera, 1986). Thus, if the appropriate legal sanctions and safety precautions are in place, in some circumstances, remaining in the family home may facilitate better victim recovery than fleeing to a refuge or alternative accommodation in an unfamiliar location.

Measures to protect victims of domestic violence are essential but these are only part of a wider solution, albeit an extremely important part. The prevalence of domestic abuse, the nature of its impact on families and the overall cost to society all highlight the need to reduce recidivism (Walby and Allen, 2004). This requires addressing the behaviour of perpetrators. However, although our understanding of the causes of domestic violence and its impact on the lives of women and children has advanced much in recent years, 'our understanding of how best to rehabilitate domestic violence offenders is still in its infancy' (Bowen *et al.*, 2002: 221). While more research needs to be conducted before we can make truly definitive statements regarding the efficacy of different types of interventions, from the research undertaken to date, it is possible to identify common features shared by the more successful programmes. Shepard *et al.* (2002) note that positive programme outcomes are more likely where there is a coordinated community response involving criminal justice agencies, other statutory bodies and voluntary sector organisations working together to protect victims and their children, while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. In this context, definitions of what constitutes 'success' in perpetrator programmes need to move beyond merely measuring recidivism. As Westmarland and Kelly (2012: 7) found, interviews with victims, perpetrators, programme staff and funders 'revealed nuanced understandings of success in which more subtle, though ultimately life-enhancing, changes were recognised'. This reflects a growing recognition that programme outcome measures need to be more diverse, given the complexity of the dynamics of domestic violence and the interconnectedness of victims and perpetrators, their families and the wider community.

In England and Wales, the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP), which is a cognitive behavioural programme based on the Duluth model, was accredited by the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel in 2003 (Bilby and Hatcher, 2004; Bullock *et al.*, 2010). While perpetrator programmes such as this should be an integral part of any community coordinated approach, stand-alone perpetrator programmes are not always responsive to individual needs, nor the broader social needs of some perpetrators (Eadie and Knight, 2002; Rees and Rivet, 2005). Furthermore, it has been suggested that domestic violence perpetrator programmes

do not provide a 'quick fix', are run for a fixed number of sessions, and they are not usually set up to provide practical advice on issues such as housing, employment, alcohol and drug abuse, parenting skills and legal issues. There are very few avenues of practical support; especially for those perpetrators who recognise they have a problem and would like to change their behaviour. (Hester *et al.*, 2006: 1)

What has been largely overlooked until recently, is that if male perpetrators are to be in a position to benefit from perpetrator intervention programmes, they may need access to other forms of support such as substance misuse treatment services or advice

on parenting. However, as Hester and Westmarland (2006) acknowledge, addressing the needs of male perpetrators is a controversial issue, especially when service provision for the victims of male violence is under-resourced. Others have also raised concern that statutory provision for male perpetrators may be funded at the expense of services to provide for the safety of women (Eadie and Knight, 2002). Clearly, what is required is a coordinated response, which prioritises the needs of victims while simultaneously addressing the behaviour of perpetrators. The Making Safe Scheme, described below, is a multi-agency initiative designed to provide a coordinated and integrated response. A unique feature of the scheme is that it enables victims to remain in their own homes by finding alternative accommodation for perpetrators. Thus, it is the wrong-doer who leaves the family home.

### **The study**

'Making Safe' (MS) is a intervention strategy, operating in North Yorkshire, England, which involves twelve statutory and voluntary sector agencies, including the police, the probation service, Foundation Housing and specialist domestic abuse services, including child support workers (originally funded by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children [NSPCC]). The multi-agency group prioritises the provision of safe support for victims of domestic violence and as an initiative works within the national policy framework relating to domestic violence. The voluntary scheme comprises three main strands: the provision of advocacy workers for adult victims, support for children and young people, and accommodation and key worker support for perpetrators whilst they attend the IDAP programme.

When perpetrators are re-housed, a needs assessment is undertaken and a personal plan formulated by their key worker. Tenancies are available for a maximum period of two years, after which time clients are eligible for 'floating support' for a period of up to six months. Before, during and after the time perpetrators are re-housed, adult victims have access to a Domestic Abuse Services (DAS) worker, an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor and a probation women's safety worker. Child support workers also provide counselling support for any children and assist them in constructing individual safety plans to help protect them from future harm (Wydall, 2010). As part of the multi-agency strategy, practitioners working on an individual level with clients (i.e. adult victims, children and perpetrators) meet fortnightly to share information and respond to any changes in their clients' circumstances in relation to safety planning and the provision of support.

The findings reported below are based on an exploratory study, primarily designed to identify if there was scope for conducting a comprehensive, longitudinal evaluation of MS. One of the principal research objectives, which forms the major focus of the current article, was to discover how re-housing perpetrators impacted upon victims and their children over the period of the intervention. In covering the three strands of the intervention, the study adopted a multi-method research design. This employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including questionnaires, interviews, police-recorded data and non-participant observation of a MS key workers' fortnightly meeting at which forty-seven family cases were reviewed.

MS service evaluation questionnaires focusing on the children's component of the intervention, which will be the subject of a future article, were completed by eighty-one children and young people (between the ages of five and seventeen years),

thirty-nine parents and fifteen practitioners. Individual, in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with eleven adult female victims and eleven adult male perpetrators. Included in this sample were two couples, one of whom had recently separated. Interviewees were drawn from the forty-seven family cases on the scheme. The semi-structured interviews with victims explored perceived changes in the perpetrator–victim relationship, perceptions of safety, service provision and their plans for the future. All the service users who participated in the study were initially approached by frontline practitioners and their informed consent was obtained prior to any interviews taking place. In the case of children and young people, practitioners consulted parents and the questionnaires were completed immediately following the last counselling session and posted anonymously in a ‘feedback box’ at the venue. The perpetrators were interviewed post-sentence; all but two had received non-custodial sentences. Police records provided information on the eleven perpetrators covering a three-year period; this included details of domestic violence related incidents, other offences and the subsequent action taken. Interviews were conducted with twelve service providers exploring both strategic and operational issues. Interviewees were drawn from a range of statutory agencies and third sector organisations.

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim, and a qualitative, thematic analysis of the data was undertaken using the qualitative software package NVivo. There were two stages to the analysis. Initially both researchers independently coded each interview transcript using both *a priori* and inductive codes. This was followed by a collaborative coding exercise to produce a coding scheme which was then thematically organised and the analytical categories refined.

One of the strengths of the study was that its design allowed for a comprehensive overview of the intervention by collecting data from service users and practitioners across all three strands of the scheme. Using retrospective and prospective data covering a three-year period also added an important temporal dimension. Furthermore, the adoption of a multi or mixed methods approach enhanced the validity of the research findings. Combining different kinds of information from a variety of sources helped to construct an in-depth understanding of the MS intervention from the range of perspectives of the key stakeholders. However, the study has its limitations. The victims and perpetrators who consented to be interviewed constitute a small, self-selected sample. For example, the perpetrator interviewees had all voluntarily accepted the offer of alternative accommodation and had engaged with the service provided. A more comprehensive evaluation would need to involve monitoring the outcomes for both non-completers and a closely matched comparison group of individuals who chose not to access the scheme.

## **Advantages of remaining in the family home**

### *A stable home life*

Ideally ‘the home’ can be perceived as providing a number of ‘territorial satisfactions’, one of which is security, in both its psychic and physical forms (Porteous, 1976). As a stable refuge from the outside world, the home constitutes a private realm where individuals can develop a sense of what Giddens (1984) terms ‘ontological security’ (Saunders, 1989). Ontological security can be described as ‘a security of being’, which refers to ‘the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the

constancy of their social and material environments' (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998: 27). The home becomes a cornerstone of routinised daily activity but can only effectively function as a place where people find ontological security if it is free from violence and abuse.

In all but one of the eleven families studied, the victims remained in the family home once the perpetrator had been re-housed and therefore did not experience temporary homelessness. The majority of victims (who were offered support from MS at the point of disclosure) commented that prior to accessing the scheme they had tolerated the abusive relationship for longer than they would have liked because they did not want to make their partner homeless. At crisis points, one or both parties would suggest that the perpetrator leave the family home. On many occasions this had resulted in the perpetrator returning to the family home after spending only a few days with friends or other family members. Not only was this not helpful in resolving the problems caused by the abusive behaviour, but it was also disruptive and unsettling for the children involved:

Before [Foundation Housing] he [perpetrator] would threaten to leave ... really upset everyone but I was like 'yes, go on ... go!' We'd get about a day's or two days' peace, then he would be back ... and you could feel the tension in the house again. We were all so weary. When he went to Foundation ... there was no sense of pressure anymore, I could start to plan ahead rather than being afraid that I was about to say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing. The change in me and the kids was enormous, I knew I, well we [the children], had a long way to go mind ... you know to get over it. (Female service user: 7)

#### *Time and space for recovery work*

Home life, prior to the abusive partner being re-housed, was described by women as being oppressive and anxiety laden. The home can be the site of both personal and 'altruistic fear' (Warr and Ellison, 2000) and the situation can be exacerbated where there is evidence of substance misuse. Many women reported feeling a heightened sense of personal safety in their own homes, and expressed less altruistic fear for their children once the perpetrator was living elsewhere. Similar findings have been reported by studies of other interventions designed to safeguard women in their own homes, such as Sanctuary schemes (Netto *et al.*, 2009; Jones *et al.*, 2010) and the use of electronic monitoring (Erez and Ibarra, 2007). Women also reported that once they had the time and the sense of space to begin seeking help, they could make better use of the formal and informal networks in their communities:

[Before MS] he was always there, behind me, watching me, I felt completely bound up. Everything I did with or without him was controlled by him watching, his eyes ... I thought I was free when he was out the house, but until he went into the housing I didn't realise how much he totally ruled my day and the kids too, our fear of upsetting him and what would follow ... him going [into housing], the weight off was unreal, and I had a sense, a space and much, much more time to think clearly ... it was strange after so long, you know, to really make my own decisions. Once I got used to it I felt so much stronger. (Female service user: 3)

A recurrent theme throughout the interviews with victims was that they noticed an immediate change in the emotional atmosphere in the home as soon as the perpetrator moved out. Many expressed an initial sense of relief at being freed from having to monitor

and manage their partner in such a way as to create a peaceful home life. This 'absence effect' (Erez and Ibarra, 2007: 109) gave the women time and space in which to consider their options, seek help and begin the recovery process. Westmarland and Kelly (2012) also describe how victims can experience an expanded 'space for action', which is ultimately empowering, once they are no longer subjected to perpetrators who attempt to regulate and control their routine, daily activities.

Adult victims did not feel 'situationally coerced by their circumstances' (Hoyle and Sanders, 2000); the choices they made were felt to be genuine choices. All the victims felt in a better position to begin recovery work both for themselves and their children. Knowing the perpetrator was accommodated elsewhere made staying in the family home a viable option. Not having to flee the locality and seek temporary accommodation in a new area meant that women could remain in employment and maintain existing familial support networks. The respite from exposure to abuse had a therapeutic effect and also provided women with an opportunity to assess their personal situation and plan for the future.

### **Addressing the power imbalance in abusive relationships**

While the ultimate goal for some women was to end the relationship, others saw a period of temporary separation as offering them time and space for reflection. At the time of interview, five of the women had chosen to end the relationship with their abusive partner; six women were temporarily separated and had yet to make a final decision regarding their respective relationships. In some respects, women in this latter group felt that they were no longer facing the situation on their own, they were supported by a DAS worker, and as a result felt less isolated and experienced a growth in self-confidence. In a number of cases, there was evidence that women saw themselves as having some control in determining the future of their relationships.

As research shows, women living in abusive households can be subjected to a variety of controlling behaviours, which fall short of physical abuse. Included in these behaviours are bullying, financial abuse, emotional intimidation and threats to physically hurt children and/or pets (Dobash *et al.*, 1996; Randall, 1997). Indeed, violence between intimate partners has been defined as a 'pattern of coercive control' (Pence and Paymar, 1986), whereby the perpetrator uses threats as a way of exerting power over the victim (Stark, 2007; Kelly and Johnson, 2008). This imbalance of power in abusive relationships and the controlling behaviours of perpetrators severely restrict the opportunities for women to make the choices which are most likely to lead to a cessation of violence and abuse. The temporary removal of the perpetrator from the family home, for a period of up to two years, not only provided immediate respite from the abusive behaviour but also empowered victims by enabling them to make choices while remaining embedded in their communities. The knowledge that the perpetrator had to demonstrate a change in behaviour over a prolonged period gave victims a sense of power in their relationship:

He'd just go off to the pub before [FH], which made matters worse, I think . . . having to stand on his own two feet for once made him think about his behaviour, the IDAP [Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme] really helped him . . . sort of grow up in a sense, learn a bit of self control . . . be a man . . . that and working with [the key worker]. He started to think about the person he was and see some good in himself . . . He was still a bastard at times, but he began to turn

himself around . . . and he really wanted us [the relationship] to work, but now I was saying, 'Well . . . if you deal with the drink, we may try again'. Putting him in there [FH] gave me more control, things between us, well . . . he had to behave if he wanted his family back. I felt so much more able to say things I hadn't dared to before. (Female service user: 7)

Although in many cases perpetrators were not supposed to visit the family home and/or contact the adult victims and their children, it is clear from both interviews with victims and perpetrators that some contact did take place. However, this contact tended to reflect a positive change in the balance of power between victim and perpetrator. Where victims felt there was a future for the relationship, they saw the extended period in alternative housing as providing their partners with an opportunity to show that they could address their problems and change their behaviour. In this sense, victims saw themselves as being in a stronger bargaining position than previously. In some instances, victims spoke of giving their partners specific goals to achieve, such as reducing their alcohol consumption, meeting with the NSPCC worker or addressing their abusive behaviour. A theme throughout the accounts of victims was that they had noticed a positive change in the behaviour of their partners/ex-partners. The three most commonly perceived changes were an increased motivation to address substance misuse issues, greater independence and an improvement in communication skills.

### **Perpetrator and key worker perspectives**

For perpetrators, participation in the two-year scheme was voluntary. Key workers approached perpetrators at various stages in the criminal justice process, and in other settings, to explain what the intervention involved. The perpetrators in this study required accommodation because their bail conditions or sentence prohibited them from returning to the family home and alternative accommodation was either unavailable or unsuitable. The offer of accommodation was described by many as a 'life-line' and they commented on the timeliness of the intervention at such a critical point in their lives:

The housing has helped me in more ways than one . . . without that house, I would be going looking for solace in drug dealers' houses. You know, there's only so long I can spend in my mum's [house] because that starts to get irritating and she's moaning . . . I'm thirty-odd and she's like sixty-odd and it's like, 'Give it a break mum'. I've heard it all my life now. So it got to the stage where if I didn't have my own base . . . I would have fallen back into drug use, prison, courts, police stations, getting chased by the police. (Foundation Housing tenant: D)

Our data show that re-housing perpetrators and providing each individual with a key worker had beneficial outcomes. The key worker role was multi-faceted and required challenging neutralising behaviours towards women and others, acting as a mentor, teaching perpetrators basic life skills and helping them to develop more positive thinking patterns. The key worker, who came from a non-enforcement background, helped in motivating men to make positive changes in their lives. Intensive support was provided early on to help increase perpetrators' basic skills, such as cooking and managing finances. However, ongoing support was necessary to help the men test out newly acquired skills and set out personal goals. Although motivation could fluctuate over time, expectations as to what could be achieved appeared to increase:

Interviewer: So, over that two-year period, how would you say you have changed as a person?

Interviewee: A lot brighter, character wise ... Um, I think ... with Foundation's help and support, through the [information] pack, through the budgeting plan. I certainly can manage my finances a lot easier. It does help a lot. It is the way they are with you; it makes you feel anything is possible, you know, I've got more faith. People always said 'You're no good'. I felt 'What is the point' ... [The key worker] says 'It is never too late to change' and I feel he is right now. So it's given me the space, and everyone says there is a difference [in me], for the better you know. (Foundation Housing tenant: G)

The significance for perpetrators of a non-judgemental response from practitioners has been noted in other studies (Stanley *et al.*, 2012).

Perpetrators had led chaotic lifestyles and through working with the key worker they developed a sense of relative order and stability. The support of the key worker was felt by perpetrators, and a range of practitioners, to be particularly useful during the IDAP, as it encouraged engagement with the programme. The key worker acted as a role model, reinforcing the message that abusive behaviour was unacceptable. However, it was acknowledged that working with perpetrators could be difficult at times:

it's a thin line, you can't let them get away with bad-mouthing their partners, yet you have to try to see things how they see them. Some of their views on life are very mixed up, so you unpick all of that mess ... and help them to re-think how they should see things, in what you do and your attitude towards others, but you also have to be someone they want to emulate. It's finding the moment; you only know that by spending time with them. (Key worker: 1)

Practitioners felt that timing was crucial, especially when seeking to encourage perpetrators to address their unhealthy lifestyles and seek specialist help. Perpetrators identified substance misuse issues and communication skills as the two most important areas they needed to address in order to improve their relationships with significant others. These two areas were also mentioned by victims when commenting on perceived changes in the behaviour of their partners/ex-partners.

When relating their life histories, perpetrators gave the impression that they felt they had had little control over the direction their lives had taken. Their life chances were viewed as being determined by the situations in which they had found themselves. A number spoke of feeling constrained and overwhelmed by the daily challenges of adult life:

I've always lived with a woman, always depended on having my mum or a girlfriend. Never felt I was my own person. Um, I just didn't feel independent, you know, I just didn't feel me. After spending so many years away in jail, you know. At fifteen I was a little bit taken aback by [the] outside world. So when I finally got out, you know and realised what I'd wasted and stuff, all that, I just wanted to be by myself and have me own company. (Foundation Housing tenant: A)

Over half of the perpetrators expressed a wish to return to their respective partners at some future date and five did so during the period covered by the study. These male interviewees were aware that if they wanted to be part of a family, and move back into the family home, they had to make the necessary changes within themselves:

Because if I did have a big argument with her I just go back to the flat and I'm by myself, you know, and I don't want to die a lonely man. So yeah, I do want my family. It is up to me . . . it is my choice. (Foundation Housing tenant: A)

The idea of being in a position to make responsible choices and ultimately earn back a place in the family home featured in a number of accounts of interviewees. This contrasted sharply with the early life narratives, in which perpetrators expressed a lack of autonomy.

From a multi-agency perspective, the key worker also played a significant role in the safety planning process by providing feedback on individual clients (perpetrators) at the fortnightly MS meeting. Victim support workers (from both the adult victim and children strands of the scheme) also provided feedback at these meetings. The information given by key workers helped to develop more accurate and dynamic safety strategies for families. Given that victims can be at greatest danger at the point of separation, when the perpetrator senses a loss of control (Wilson *et al.*, 1995; Fleury *et al.*, 2000), re-housing the perpetrator and the allocation of a key worker provided an important source of informal monitoring and surveillance of the perpetrator's activities.

While there was unanimous support for the MS approach, data from non-participant observation of one of these meetings, and information from interviews with managers and practitioners, revealed that occasionally there was friction between practitioners who worked with perpetrators and those who worked with victims. For example, tensions were observed when comparisons were made between service provision for victims and perpetrators. Careful management was required, not only when allocating resources, but also in ensuring that a 'them and us' mentality did not develop amongst practitioners and undermine the overall ethos of MS in its joint aims of empowering victims and tackling perpetrators. Whilst collaborative working did pose a challenge at times, there was a general acknowledgement by practitioners that an integrated approach was good practice, both in the interests of making victims and their children safe, and enabling them to remain in their communities.

## Discussion

The MS scheme is an example of an initiative which identifies and addresses the needs of victims and perpetrators and embraces the key aims of protection and prevention. From a prevention perspective, it needs to be acknowledged that perpetrator programmes do not work in isolation, but should be viewed as one component in a coordinated effort to reduce domestic violence. According to Gondolf (2002: 2) 'batterer intervention programs are part of a broader intervention system. They depend on – or at least are related to – arrest practices, court procedures, probation supervision, battered-women's services, and other community services.' As such, a comprehensive evaluation needs to take account of the 'batterer intervention system' and not just focus solely on the treatment programme undertaken by perpetrators. Indeed, 'it is the layering and interlinking of interventions that produce the conditions in which individual change is fostered and sustained' (Blacklock, 2001: 71).

Re-housing perpetrators and providing them with a key worker is a unique feature of the MS scheme and has beneficial consequences for both victims and perpetrators. From the victims' perspective, four positive outcomes were identified. First, re-housing the perpetrator resulted in immediate respite from the daily fear and anxiety caused by the

controlling presence of the perpetrator. Second, not having to flee the family home meant women and their children were spared the hardships associated with having to move into temporary accommodation and settle in a new area at a time of crisis. Third, where victims were well-established in a particular locality, they had existing formal and informal social support networks on which they could draw should they choose to remain in the family home. Finally, women need to be empowered if they are to be free to take whatever action they feel is necessary to end the violence. In those relationships where women were not seeking a permanent separation, they felt emboldened and in a stronger bargaining position in the relationship. The redressing of the balance of power resulted in women experiencing an increased sense of choice and a measure of control. However, it must be remembered that women's capacity to make choices is constrained by a complex range of factors. As Stubbs (2002: 44) asserts, women are not atomistic individuals but are 'highly interconnected to others' and domestic violence interventions need to take account of this more complex view of women's agency. For far too long there has been a tendency for victim services and perpetrator interventions to operate separately, thus failing to acknowledge the interconnectedness between victims, perpetrators and their families. At an operational level, the challenge facing agencies is how to develop closer working relationships in light of this interconnectedness. Inter-agency collaboration is more likely to produce better informed safety planning and lead to more positive outcomes. However, given the level of commitment practitioners display towards their particular client group, whether victims or perpetrators, working closely together does not always make for a comfortable alliance. Nevertheless, a unified, holistic approach is essential and at a strategic level this needs to be reflected in terms of the allocation of resources.

The findings reported here suggest that re-housing perpetrators can have positive outcomes. From a wider policy perspective, Domestic Violence Protection Orders are similarly designed to enhance the safety of victims by offering them protected space in which to explore their options, which represents a potentially significant step towards improving the safeguarding of women in the immediate aftermath of a violent incident. However, as this study shows, victims need sufficient time and space in which to recover and consider the options for themselves and their children. The Domestic Violence Protection Orders currently being piloted only offer a short-term intervention (up to 28 days) and it is not yet clear to what extent they will form part of a coordinated community response, integrating work with perpetrators, victims and their families, which is a feature of MS. The strength of the MS initiative is that it provides a highly focused, longer-term intervention and unlike Sanctuary schemes does not place the onus on victims to protect themselves.

Domestic violence offenders are a heterogeneous group (Gilchrist *et al.*, 2003) and, as such, in terms of perpetrator programmes, it is unlikely that a standard 'one size fits all' intervention programme will work for all perpetrators (Rees and Rivett, 2005). While intervention programmes like MS may not be a panacea, they do form a significant element in any 'intervention system' which incorporates legal sanctions, social measures and community responses. As noted above, the holistic approach offered by MS had benefits for victims and their families. For perpetrators, having alternative accommodation and access to a key worker appeared to give them the motivation to engage with, and potentially benefit from, programmes such as the IDAP. While safeguarding victims must be a priority, taking a longer-term view of the potential for repeat victimisation, it needs to be recognised that 'if adequate services are not provided for men who perpetuate domestic

violence, they may move on to offend against other women in the future' (Hester and Westmarland, 2006: 1).

While this exploratory study has its limitations, we feel that it helps us to understand the potential benefits for victims when perpetrators leave the family home as part of a structured intervention. Some of the tentative findings and emerging themes identified warrant further investigation. These will be explored in a future comprehensive study based on a larger sample of cases and utilising a broad range of measures to evaluate 'success'.

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