

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Domestic Violence Paper

In the 12-month period from January 2019 to December 2019: there were 31,705 domestic abuse incidents recorded by the Police Service in Northern Ireland (PSNI). This figure represents an increase of 399 (1.3 per cent) on the previous 12 months and was one of the highest annual figures recorded since the start of the data series in 2004/05. Figures such as these highlight the stark and continuing problem that domestic abuse presents and is an indication of the scale of this behaviour within society in Northern Ireland. No area or subsection of the population are exempt. Domestic violence and abusive behaviours are a society-wide problem, and requires a holistic response, within which, multiple agencies must play a role.

In response to the growing problem of domestic abuse in N. Ireland, PBNI developed a number of interventions and programmes to tackle domestic abuse. PBNI deliver a number of accredited programmes, such as BBR which is court mandated intervention, and also the Respectful Relationships Programme (RRI) for lower risk/need individuals, recognizing the importance of early intervention with domestic abuse perpetrators, PBNI developed, using a 'problem solving justice approach' is the Promoting Positive Relationship Group Work Programme (PPRP). This programme aims to address such concerning behaviour at the earliest possible stage, ie before such individuals enter the criminal justice system. The Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy (NI), also recognized the need to engage in a strategic plan to target this societal problem and provide early intervention approaches for perpetrators who are at risk of committing serious acts of abuse and entering into the criminal justice system. PBNI have led in the design and implementation of this intervention and have trained a number of Probation Officers and Psychologists in the delivery and implementation of the PPRP.

PPRP is a 24 session, group work-based intervention developed for adult males who have demonstrated the potential to be abusive in intimate relationships and whose children are assessed 'at risk' by Social Services. The men we work with have not been convicted of an offence, have not been before a court, and therefore this is a model of early intervention where probation are able to provide intervention at the earliest possible stage. We are working upstream to prevent individuals entering the criminal justice system. The programme promotes inter-agency working and involves both statutory agencies e.g. PBNI as the lead facilitators, in partnership with Social Services; and community organisations such as Women's Aid, who provide additional support to participants' partner(s). The principal aims of the programme are to ensure the safety of women and children and prevent further abusive behaviour. Central to this are regular practitioners' meetings, where all agencies involved with a particular family meet formally, to discuss any ongoing concerns in relation to risk as well as progress on the programme.

PPRP is evidence-based and designed to target key treatment areas such as healthy relationships and parenting, with an emphasis on providing participants with a range of cognitive and behavioural skills and tools to support and promote the use of positive behaviours within their intimate relationships. Sessions have also been designed to incorporate individual learning styles, to engage participants in visual, audio or kinaesthetic activity, such as role-play or communicating through other means.

PPRP was initially piloted in one Health Trust area, and following successful implementation and a positive evaluation report, this intervention has now been rolled out across all Health

Trust areas in Northern Ireland. The evaluation report completed in June 2019 found that the aims of the programme had been achieved and evidenced a need for PRPP to be offered to un-adjudicated men across N. Ireland. This was also evident in the initial number of referrals made to the project and the number of successful completions which was 80%. This is a very positive reflection and attributable to the sustained level of multi-agency working which has contributed to its' success across N. Ireland.

PBNI's approach to developing effective intervention to tackle domestic abuse is fundamentally an integrated approach. We work in partnership with a range of organisations including the Police Service, Social Services and Women's Aid. We are continually pursuing innovative ways to address domestic violence and challenge and change deeply imbedded behaviours in order to reduce reoffending and prevent further victims of this heinous crime. PBNI is an innovative and creative organisation, who always look at new approaches to tackle domestic abuse and other offending behaviours. PBNI continue, as always to review practice models and our evidence base, to ensure that the services we deliver to offenders, and to reduce the number of victims in our society, help change lives for safer communities.