

**REDUCING REPEAT VICTIMISATION OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
THE NDV PROJECT**

Paper prepared by
Sue Millbank, Director, Crime Prevention Unit,
Michael Riches, Project Officer, and Det Chief Inspector Bill Prior.

Presentation by Michael Riches, Project Officer and
Det Chief Inspector Bill Prior
SAPOL

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Introduction

Crime prevention theory and practice have come a long way in Australia in the last decade. In 1990, crime prevention was at a very early stage of development, with a few jurisdictions just beginning to come to grips with the term. The practice of crime prevention was experimental, with bearings being taken mainly from overseas work.

Ten years later, practice is much more likely to be informed by research (both national and international), learnings from similar projects and programs in other jurisdictions, and evaluations of projects and programs.

The notion of ‘partnership’ is an essential ingredient in crime prevention practice - and in some ways is almost a mantra. But it is nonetheless important. Developing partnerships enables a cross-fertilisation of disciplines and ideas, and this has the potential to produce positive change in the complex area of crime and crime prevention.

Partnerships can be formed at many levels and with a range of sectors. Developing partnerships with key stakeholders on issues relevant to them provides real opportunities for crime prevention work. For example, partnering at the local level with the ‘community’ to develop community based or locality based crime prevention; with key government agencies such as Human Services or Education for developmental or social approaches to crime prevention; with industry sectors on crime issues relevant to the sector; or with agencies of the criminal justice system for enhancing and improving practice to enable crime prevention or crime reduction outcomes.

The NDV Project involves a partnership between the Crime Prevention Unit of Attorney-General’s Department, SAPOL, (South Australia Police) and locally based service providers around the issue of domestic violence prevention.

Rationale

A key finding of international research about crime is that it is not randomly or evenly distributed across society. Some people are at much greater risk of becoming a victim of crime than others. Recent international research has been more significant, in that the past decade, studies have demonstrated that a relatively small proportion of crime victims experience a relatively large proportion of all criminal victimisations. In other words, some victims are repeatedly victimised¹.

Repeat victimisation has the capacity to be applied to some crime more than others. Break and enter (or burglary); ‘hate’ crimes; child abuse; and domestic violence are particular types of crime which seem to offer opportunities for focusing on interventions which target repeat victimisation, in order to prevent further victimisation.

The NDV Project has as its aim the reduction of repeat victimisation of domestic violence.

¹ Farrell: 1995

Theoretical perspectives of NDV

Researchers in the United Kingdom have led the repeat victimisation field². Drawing on this work, and on the notion of partnership within the criminal justice system, the Crime Prevention Unit and SAPOL in South Australia looked at ways to reduce repeat victimisation of domestic violence. Modelling a project on a similar approach in the United Kingdom (Killingbeck, Leeds), the NDV Project is a pilot project being trialed in two SAPOL Local Service Areas in metropolitan Adelaide. The project uses a 3 tiered system of operational interventions, aimed at reducing repeat victimisation of domestic violence.

On the basis that, by definition, the criminal justice system becomes involved after an event has occurred, ‘prevention’ of domestic violence within the criminal justice agency framework can mean

1. reducing repeat victimisation
2. decreasing the severity of violent behaviour;
3. increasing the time lapse between incidents;
4. reducing the capacity of the offender to offend again (perhaps with other victims).

Using this definition of ‘prevention’, the NDV Project (like Killingbeck) draws on routine activity theory³. This theory identifies three elements for crime to occur:

1. victim suitability;
2. lack of guardianship;
3. motivated offender

Addressing each element of routine activity theory underpins the operating principles of the NDV Project. Attention is focused on the victim, the perpetrator, and as the Killingbeck project report notes:

“decreasing victim suitability and demotivating offenders require the application of progressive measures of intervention to constrain the offender’s future actions. As the offender is known, providing capable guardianship is achieved by a focus on evidence gathering to secure conviction”⁴.

NDV Project Aims

The project aims to reduce repeat victimisation of domestic violence where police have attended an incident in the two project locations (both metropolitan based - South Coast and Port Adelaide Local Service Areas of SAPOL).

² Farrell; Pease; Laycock; Hamner; Bridgeman; Sampson

³ Cohen and Felson: 1979

⁴ Arresting Evidence: Domestic Violence and Repeat Victimisation. Jalner Hanmer, Sue Griffiths, David Jerwood. Police Research Series Paper 104.

Project objectives include:

- a reduction in the number of repeat incidents of domestic violence
- an increase in the amount of time between incidents of domestic violence
- a decrease in the severity of domestic violence incidents
- an increase in the rates of victims or others reporting domestic violence to police
- an increased commitment on the part of police to reducing the incidence of repeat domestic violence

While the main focus of the project is clearly on reducing repeat victimisation, there is also an understanding that the project has the potential to enhance police responses to the issue.

This is so for two reasons. Firstly, policing domestic violence is well known to be difficult. Officers are usually called to intervene at a potentially explosive time in the lives of individuals well known to each other, and attending officers can often be put in a difficult, and sometimes, dangerous position. Recent information in South Australia suggests that most assaults on police occur when attending a domestic violence related incident. The project is therefore interested in assessing whether, and if so to what extent, police officers support the project.

Secondly, it is now known that domestic violence incidents account for more police resources than any other single reported crime.⁵ If the project has the capacity to reduce repeat incidences of domestic violence, then it stands to reason that police time and resources in attending these incidents will also be reduced. This is another element which will be assessed during the trial project.

NDV Project model

The project model involves implementing measures of increasing intensity for both the victim (in terms of support) and the perpetrator (in terms of police attention). Level 1 measures are introduced after the first police attendance; Level 2 after the second; Level 3 after the third.

The project model drew upon Killingbeck, though it was modified to suit South Australian conditions, and the operations of SAPOL. A Design Group was established in 1999, and this group included SAPOL, CPU, Local Service Area Child and Family Investigation Unit senior officers⁶, local service providers, and Dept Human Services.

In particular, changes to the data collection and recording was required to enable the monitoring and evaluation of the project to be undertaken; and the project implementation through SAPOL was designed to be consistent with the structure and responsibilities of officers of SAPOL (though some modifications to police operational procedures in the two project sites have been made as a result of the project). Some changes to the Levels of Intervention also took place (for example, a safety plan was incorporated into Level 2 for the Victim, and modifications to the strategies for offenders reflected the nature of the legal system in South Australia).

⁵ See for example NSW Ombudsman report 1998-99

⁶ In South Australia, each Local Service Area of SAPOL has a Child and Family Investigation Unit attached to its staffing compliment. These Units are responsible for attending to domestic violence, family violence and child abuse matters coming to the attention of police.

The project recognises that the first police attendance is likely to be to an already repeated incident.⁷ However, the Project Steering Committee made the decision to commence all interventions at level 1, principally for reasons of project rationale, expediency and evaluation. (This is consistent with the Killingbeck project).

The project trained over 500 police prior to the commencement of the interventions. The training aimed to familiarise all SAPOL officers in the two Local Service Areas with the project model, so that all officers attending domestic violence incidents would consistently follow the set procedures for the project. The focus of the training was to encourage attending officers to follow procedures, collect evidence when attending incidences, regardless of whether a charge was made; and to ensure the attendance was recorded through a DVR⁸ or PIR⁹. Officers were also advised that a form PD207a (the victim does not want police action) can only be completed by the Child and Family Investigation Unit (ie not police attending the call out).

It should be noted that the focal point of the NDV project is not to create an ‘arrest’ policy relating to domestic violence, nor to promote a ‘three strikes and your out’ approach to policing. Rather, the project emphasises the need to further target and progress the policy of positive action by Police when dealing with domestic violence incidents. The rationale for this is that at the very least, it demonstrates to both victims and offenders that the occurrence of domestic violence is taken seriously by Police; and at the more positive end of the spectrum, it provides Police with more evidence in the event the matter proceeds further through the criminal justice system.

Officers from the Child and Family Investigation Unit from the respective SAPOL Local Service Areas are central to the project implementation. Following receipt of a DVR or PIR which is domestic violence related, the Child and Family Investigation Unit will implement the appropriate Level of Intervention. This is an important part of the project. The Design Group were well aware that asking attending Police officers at the call-out stage to do more than attend to the incident in the normal way (ie by adding the implementation of the appropriate Level to their tasks) would run a risk of ‘implementation failure’ for the project. Attending officers are often called away from incidents in order to deal with other matters, and the Design Group considered that the skills of Child and Family Investigation Officers would provide more consistency in the implementation process for the three Levels of intervention.

At the commencement of the project, the Steering Committee oversighting the implementation of the project recognised the need to keep all stakeholders regularly informed of progress, in order to foster and encourage their continued support for the project. Providing this level of information about the project was seen as particularly important for attending police officers, who can easily become disinterested in a project when little information is provided about its progress. Consequently, all SAPOL officers in both Local Service Areas are regularly informed on the current data relating to the project, and a newsletter is distributed to a range of stakeholders and service providers to keep them informed as the project progresses. Feedback from key service providers in both project locations is being actively sought by the project. This information is sought for a number of reasons; firstly to identify the effect the

⁷ Studies have established that between 6 and 20 assaults of domestic violence are likely to take place before the first police attendance.

⁸ Domestic Violence Report, SAPOL

⁹ Police Incident Report, SAPOL

project has, or does not have, on their service, and the resource implications this may have; and secondly, to identify whether the project changes the reporting rate to services for domestic violence matters.

After 3 months of implementation, the project has undertaken 427 interventions, with most of those at Level 1.

Problems encountered

Key considerations for the project design were

1. the possibility of the project increasing the capacity of the offender to escalate the violence
2. the potential to increase the call on local service providers to respond to victims or perpetrators
3. the possibility of increasing police resourcing for domestic violence incidents
4. the probability that police call outs to domestic violence will increase, thus increasing police statistics for that offence

Escalation of violence

To date, there is no evidence that this has occurred. This is clearly something which the project team is continually mindful of, and is monitoring. The project is also monitoring complaints about the project, more particularly complaints about the police role from perpetrators.

Increase call on local service providers

The project has put in place an ongoing monitoring system to collect data on whether calls to local service providers increase, decrease, or remain stable, as a result of the NDV project. To date, there has been no discernible increase. Anecdotally, service providers have indicated strong support for the project, as have victims. One more interesting feature to emerge recently is that there has been a slight increase in the number of men seeking access to 'perpetrator group' programs in one area; while the other area has seen no change in the level of access to programs.

Increasing police resources

The evaluation plan put in place includes monitoring the project in order to identify the level of resources required to operate the project. The rationale of the project is to reduce repeat victimisations, which ultimately, should reduce police attendance at domestic violence related incidents, thereby saving police attendance time. There does however, need to be a balance with the increased amount of time police officers spend in implementing the levels of intervention. This will be clearly tracked through the evaluation.

In the short term, the project has required additional clerical assistance, to enable the letters to be provided within a short time frame following police attendance.

Increasing domestic violence offences

It is well known that domestic violence is under-reported. The project is actively encouraging the reporting of domestic violence and hence it is possible that there will be an increase in the number of incidences reported to police in the two project sites.

What is of more interest to the Steering Committee, however, is the number of incidences which police attend, and which are then recorded through the PIRs or DVRs, thus enabling the Child and Family Investigation Unit officers to implement the appropriate levels of intervention.

Operational issues

An emerging operational issue arose during the first few months of the implementation of the project. This related to the severity of an incident, and the capacity for police to direct a Level 3 response, even though it was the first call out for the victim. This situation has arisen on a number of occasions, and is usually characterised by a particularly violent incident, serious threat to the life of the victim, or others.

The issue for resolution became one of balancing the project rationale (ie increasing levels of intervention, and measuring reduction through the implementation of the levels), with operational imperatives (ie ensuring the safety of the victim).

In terms of the project rationale, the difficulty in jumping directly to Level 3 has to do with compromising a number of key elements of the project. Firstly, the project's rationale of escalating levels of intervention is lost if level 3 is implemented on the first call out. This then means the police have no increased response following the next call out to that victim (which is often inevitable, given the seriousness of the first call out). This has the potential to damage police credibility in the eyes of the victim.

The Steering Group considered this matter, however, recognition of the importance of victim safety, and accountability to the victim was considered paramount. Consequently, the issue has been resolved by enabling a component of the Level 3 response (in particular use of a duress alarm) in specially agreed circumstances at level 1 or level 2.

Early Findings

The main achievements of the Killingbeck project included:

- a reduction in the number of repeat victimisations
- an increase in the number of single (rather than multiple) attendances by police
- an increase in the time interval between attendances
- the identification of chronic offenders
- encouragement of victims to seek assistance

The NDV Project has been in the field for 4 months. No conclusions are available on whether the project has been successful in reducing repeat victimisation, however, a number of interim findings are beginning to emerge. These include:

- a high level of support from SAPOL officers for the project (over 70% of officers surveyed at the 3 month mark strongly supported the project)

- a significant increase in the recording (as distinct from reporting) of domestic violence incidents through SAPOL (400%). This is enabling the Child and Family Investigation Unit officers to implement the appropriate levels of intervention.
- anecdotal information from victims and service providers that the project rationale is positive as it puts the responsibility on to the perpetrator to modify their behaviour
- support from one local magistrate, who has established an informal Domestic Violence Court as a result of the project
- at this early stage, statistics are suggesting that the number of repeat call outs is small. This is encouraging as it suggests that
 - ⇒ police recording rates are improving, and importantly,
 - ⇒ the intervention strategies are having an impact

Evaluation

A comprehensive, and robust, evaluation of the NDV project has been designed. This includes a Program evaluation (ie the merit of the model; its implementation process; and its resourcing requirements), and an outcome evaluation (ie whether the aims of the project were achieved. If so, to what extent; and if not, why not).

The evaluation will include data analysis (both the independent data base designed to support the NDV project, and police data), survey instruments (for both perpetrators and victims), and surveys of police and service providers. The final evaluation report will be available in the second half of 2001.

Conclusion

The NDV Project, like the Killingbeck Project on which it is modelled, is based on a number of imperatives. Developing police responses to domestic violence which aim to provide an 'early intervention' response along the criminal justice continuum has the capacity to both reduce repeat victimisation (clearly a positive outcome for victims), and to enhance the way in which police respond to the issue. The project rationale enables the Police to be more proactive in responding to domestic violence. It also gives a clear message that the balance of responsibility has shifted from the victim, to the perpetrator, with the focus of police attention on behaviour change by the perpetrator (while still providing support to the victim).

The Project also promotes 'intelligence' led policing, using a problem oriented response to domestic violence. It is widely acknowledged that policing domestic violence is difficult, and that attending officers can often be put in a difficult, and sometimes, dangerous position. Providing police with a structured way of dealing with domestic violence, which includes an intensive follow-up process through the levels implemented by the Child and Family Investigation Unit officers, can offer a safer, and ultimately it is hoped, a less resource intensive but more effective way of policing domestic violence.

Domestic violence prevention can be developed in a number of ways - from working with children and young people through counselling, peer education, advice, and the education curriculum; developing targeted community education campaigns; providing victim support; and developing approaches aimed at promoting changes in behaviour by perpetrators.

The NDV Project has a specific focus to domestic violence prevention - that of reducing repeat victimisation by enhancing the way in which Police respond to incidents. In terms of achieving broader prevention outcomes, it is hoped the NDV Project will make a contribution through the criminal justice system response to this issue.

Clearly, domestic violence incidents will still come to the attention of the criminal justice system. However, the potential of the NDV Project, when linked with inter-agency responses through DV specific courts (such as the Violence Intervention Project in South Australia), has the capacity to considerably reshape the way in which domestic violence related matters are attended to by the criminal justice system.

Levels of Intervention

Level	Victim	Perpetrator
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Letter 1 Victim's Information Kit supplied Offer of Personal Safety Plan Phone call or visit from CFIU investigator to offer support and explain cycle of violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Letter 1 Perpetrator's Information Kit Supplied Gather Evidence Child Abuse Hotline notified if children are present If arrested, consider refusal of bail
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Letter 2 Personal visit from CFIU Investigator to set up neighbour support system, discuss restraining orders and provide advice about security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Letter 2 Personal visit from CFIU Investigator, with information provided regarding available services and consequences of actions. Child Abuse Hotline notified if children present Gather Evidence Directed Police Patrols (Over 2 weeks) Follow-Up Phone Calls (Over 2 Weeks) If arrested, consider refusal of bail.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Letter 3 Personal visit from CFIU Investigator to take out restraint order, offer personal safety plan, extend or establish neighbour support system. Agency meeting (with victim and advocate) to identify solutions Offer of duress alarm (in specific circumstances only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Letter 3 Gather Evidence Charge offender with criminal offence (victim has no say) Directed police patrols (over 2 weeks) Targeted attention to offender in line with intelligence led policing. Child Abuse Hotline notified if children present. Personal visit by CFIU Investigator to discuss consequences of actions.

Items in RED - Indicate Patrol Responsibility
 Items in BLUE - Indicate CFIU Responsibility
 Items in Purple - Indicate Dual Responsibility