COORDINATING POLICY, PLANNING AND FRONT-LINE DELIVERY RESPONSES TO PREVENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Introduction

I want to make a number of points today in relation to working to prevent domestic violence. They include that coordinated approaches:

- are key to work to address and prevent domestic violence,
- take time to develop and must be resourced,
- are required from front-line response all the way through to high level policy, and
- must be developed along the prevention continuum.

To illustrate these points, I’ll talk briefly about the nature of prevention, the nature of coordination in relation to domestic violence, and some of the history of developing coordinated approaches in South Australia with a particular focus on the Justice Portfolio. The Justice Portfolio in South Australia includes the Attorney-General’s department, the Department of Correctional Services, South Australia Police, the Courts Administration Authority, and other independent agencies funded through the AGD such as the Legal Services Commission.

Coordinated Responses?

The general importance of coordinated approaches to justice is increasingly being identified, along with the way that the absence of coordination in the criminal justice system has frustrated those seeking effective justice and the prevention of re-offending and re-victimisation.1

This is true specifically in relation to domestic violence.

So, why did attention start to shift to coordinated approaches?

Shepard, one of those associated with the well-known Domestic Abuse Intervention Program, better known as the Duluth model, writes:

“Since the early 1980’s, activists in the battered women’s movement have been working to make reforms in the criminal justice system to create a more responsive, consistent and coordinated effort to address domestic violence cases. Reform efforts have focused on reducing cultural supports for battering and shifting the responsibility for holding batterers accountable for their use of violence from the victim to the community (Pence & Shepard, 1988). While initial efforts focused on reforming individual components of the justice system, concerns about fragmentation and the absence of a shared vision and public accountability, led to the development of coordinated community responses to domestic violence (Hart, 1995).” 2

To quote Lesley Laing from the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse:

“The key message from the international research on (perpetrator) program effectiveness is that … “the system matters”. Programs for perpetrators are but one component of the co-ordinated response which is required to hold men accountable and to enhance the safety of women and children.” 3

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2 Melanie Shepard, Ph.D., 1999. “Evaluating Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence” National Electronic Network on Violence Against Women, a project of the National Research Centre on Domestic Violence, page 1
3 Lesley Laing, August 2002, quoted from a forum in Adelaide where Lesley spoke publicly on the forthcoming Issues Paper 7, of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Responding to Men who Perpetrate Domestic and Family Violence: Controversies, Intervention and Challenges. This latest review of literature on perpetrator programs is in draft form and is not yet publicly available.
Traditionally, the criminal justice system has not operated as a coordinated whole. Each agency, with good reasons, has its own operational imperatives, roles, core functions and constraints. The separation of powers from government is an issue that impacts on policy level coordination across the justice system – particularly in relation to police and courts. One of the unintended consequences of this has been the difficulty in working in a coordinated manner at both macro and micro levels to achieve an overall reduction in domestic violence as well as strong, positive and long term outcomes for individuals.

The Justice Portfolio has a series of clear roles in relation to domestic violence, but in order to be effective towards an ultimate goal of significant reduction there need to be consistent, collaborative, structured and seamless approaches within the Portfolio, across Government and in conjunction with the community.

Current evidence indicates that while specific reforms have successfully improved the response of the criminal justice system, individual components of a coordinated response have shown modest success, while combining these components in a coordinated approach has a greater impact on reducing and preventing further violence.  

The Women’s Emergency Services Network write that: “… coordination of services depends significantly on policy coordination at a departmental level. For example, the policies of Correctional Services, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid, the courts, the police and victim support services should identify a common purpose, and form policies that complement each other.”

So coordinated approaches require both on the ground collaboration and the direction and support of higher level policy and planning.

Coordination is not the overall goal, rather it is victim safety and perpetrator accountability, with the long-term goal of reducing and preventing domestic violence and the associated costs. Collaboration and coordination are easily seen politically as a panacea for a complex and difficult issue without providing the necessary support and resources to effectively address it.  

Coordinated responses are engaged as effective and efficient means to prioritise safety and accountability, not ends in themselves, and not a path to justify resource neutrality in effective implementation of domestic violence prevention work. At the same time, a realistic approach to resource constraints is essential, as is a clear understanding that inefficient use of existing resources, or failure to implement principles of good practice, cannot be justified on the grounds that resourcing may be inadequate to provide a coordinated service across the board.

Adequate resourcing is well recognised in the literature as a key issue for implementation of coordinated responses. It has also been consistently raised by stakeholders in developing policy and strategy in South Australia. It is important to adequately resource this work to ensure effective and sustainable outcomes.

In a paper for the Western Australian Domestic Violence Prevention Unit Gardiner (2000), identified 7 characteristics as key to effective collaboration. In order, they are:

- Mutual respect, understanding and trust, shared norms and values.
- Appropriate cross-section of members.

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4 Shepard 1999, page 8
Open and frequent communication, sharing of information.
Sufficient ongoing financial support.
Skilled convenor with organisational and interpersonal skills.
Members share sense of ownership, a stake in both process and outcome.
Multiple layers (management and workers) participate in decision-making.

Various of these elements have been important in the development of Coordinated approaches in South Australia.

**The Nature of Prevention**

Shifting now from discussion of coordination to a look at prevention.

Domestic violence prevention is not the business of one sector or portfolio. “Authority for domestic violence is shared across levels of governments, as well as between portfolio areas, which means no one level (or sector) of government can ‘go it alone’ in this … field.”

It requires a strategic, planned and coordinated approach involving all key stakeholders.

In South Australia, we believed that a strategic approach to preventing domestic violence would incorporate strategies across the prevention continuum.

In developing a policy framework for domestic violence prevention in South Australia, it was important to articulate what the “prevention continuum” meant.

**The Continuum Of Violence**

That began with a simple concept of a continuum of violence which identifies stages in the development of violence in intimate relationships. At every stage along that continuum, there are points at which prevention work can appropriately be undertaken. Not all stages are demonstrated in the lives of all people who experience or who are responsible for domestic violence. This is not a framework that in any way attempts to predict the course of development of violence in intimate relationships, simply a framework for considering prevention. Stages along the continuum can be repeated within one or over a number of relationships.

(See overhead ‘Prevention Along the Continuum’, page 15)

These stages are:
- Pre-violence.
- Violence starts.
- Accessing services.
- Recovery/rehabilitation.
- Future relationships.

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Looking at the prevention continuum encourages a much broader look at prevention than “how can we intervene to prevent domestic violence in the contact we have with perpetrators or victims?” – particularly for justice agencies where this is easily and to some extent understandably where the focus easily falls.

For the health and human services sector prevention involves concepts of primary health care, early intervention and health promotion.

I think one key issue is the way we conceptualise and articulate the goal of work in this area. I believe the goal of work to prevent domestic violence and Indigenous family violence is to contribute to safe, equitable and respectful relationships - we never just stop something, we need to know and articulate what we are heading towards or promoting, what will take the place of what we are preventing - what positive outcomes we are aiming for. The concept of promoting health and wellbeing from the health sector, and for domestic violence, promoting equitable, safe and respectful relationships is a significant contribution to the overall prevention continuum.

For the education sector prevention relates to concepts of life-long learning and crime prevention curriculum.

For the justice sector prevention relates to criminal justice, and crime prevention (of which there are a number of approaches, some of which are useful in relation to domestic violence and some of which are not) and early intervention.

**Prevention Across The Continuum**

Progress towards the vision of a Violence Free South Australia requires a coordinated approach to prevention across sectors including health, criminal justice, education, welfare, child protection, housing, Indigenous affairs, migrant, local government and non-government agencies.

It relies on a planned approach with strategies developed to intervene appropriately at each point on this continuum and includes:

- preventing the violence and abuse from ever happening.
- preventing further violence or abuse within a current relationship.
- reducing the frequency or severity of violence and abuse, though clearly this is not a sufficient goal.
- reducing the impact of violence and abuse whether or not the person experiencing violence decides to continue the relationship.
- reducing the impact of the violence on any children or young people in the family, whether or not they continue to have contact with the person responsible for abuse.
- preventing multiple offending and consequently repeat victimisation – either in a current relationship or in future relationships.
- supporting people to develop safe, respectful and equitable future relationships that are free of violence and abuse.
- supporting children and young people who have lived with domestic violence and abuse to overcome the effects of this experience and engage in respectful violence free relationships themselves in adult life.
Early Intervention As Prevention

Early intervention is one aspect of a preventive approach. It can include intervening before a problem has been identified, intervening very early in life, or intervening early after a problem has been identified and before it escalates. Developmental approaches identify critical ‘transition stages’ in human development, and ‘risk factors’ and ‘factors of resilience’ that have particular impacts at those different stages. They attempt to identify vulnerable individuals or groups and work with them to minimise risk factors and enhance resilience to increase the likelihood of positive long-term outcomes.

Repeat Offending And Repeat Victimisation

Repeat offending and repeat victimisation is the common scenario of domestic violence, which is a pattern of controlling, abusive and violent behaviour over time. It highlights the importance of a preventive focus because domestic violence is rarely a ‘once off incident’.

Repeat victimisation highlights the value of intervening early, and developing primary prevention approaches in order to prevent the development of entrenched patterns of behaviour including multiple offending, that may cause compounding trauma and long-lasting effects enduring over generations through the impacts of domestic violence on children and young people.

So in South Australia, with the range of approaches to prevention available to us we have not attempted so far to develop an overarching ‘theory’ of prevention in relation to domestic violence, but have attempted to provide a framework that reflects and appropriately incorporates the prevention approaches of key stakeholders while demonstrating the range of the prevention continuum and encouraging stakeholders to consider how they can either broaden their own approach to prevention, and/or partner differently with other stakeholders in prevention initiatives.

A Brief History of Coordinated Approaches in South Australia

South Australia has been a pioneer, and is still at the leading edge in a number of areas, along with other Australian jurisdictions, in developing the grass-roots responses and the policy frameworks:

- to deal more effectively with the men who perpetrate, the women who are subjected to, and the children and young people who are impacted and affected by domestic violence, and
- to contribute to the broader systems change and social/cultural change that will prevent domestic violence.

South Australia provides a number of promising examples of coordinated approaches. I won’t attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of specific initiatives because 20 minutes isn’t enough time to do that, but I will briefly cover some aspects of a number of these initiatives as they relate to the theme of this paper.

If you want to follow up any of the South Australian initiatives further, other sources of good information on the Violence Intervention Program (VIP), the NDV Project and other State policy directions are available on-line, or get in touch with me (see Online information, page 15).

So, a little about history and context in South Australia. The years and events I have selected are specific for the purposes of this paper, so there are many dates and developments not included, including the ‘passing’ of some of the initiatives named. The fact that the ‘timeline’ may have a gap of years does not indicate that nothing was happening in that time.
1970’s

As we all know, Women’s Emergency Services have provided key front-line responses to domestic violence across Australia since the 1970s when women activists in the community raised the profile of violence towards women in intimate relationships as assault and a public issue.

The term ‘domestic violence’ did not exist in the early 1970s, but it soon became a rallying point for women activists. As feminists moved into policy positions, domestic violence became a focus for public policy concern, and understanding grew of the extent of the problem of violence against women in private.9

1982

In 1982, the first Domestic Violence Action Group (DVAG) was formed in South Australia. It comprised a group of counsellors working with women who were victims and with men who were perpetrators of domestic violence. The Group developed a training manual and provided training for baseline awareness and response, and for more ‘advanced’ work to support women who were victims, and engage men who were perpetrators for change. The DVAG provided workshops in most Australian jurisdictions. 10

1985

In 1985 the Domestic Violence Service was established with Commonwealth funding obtained by the DVAG.11 The Service had a State-wide role including providing change oriented work with perpetrators of domestic violence, providing support for victims of domestic violence, providing education and training for workers in the field, and community development work.

In 1985 the State Government commissioned a report into the various aspects of domestic violence within South Australia. A Domestic Violence Council was established to undertake this work.

1987

In 1987 the Domestic Violence Council Report was published and released by Government with an extensive list of recommendations spanning all key government agencies.

1988

In 1988 the Domestic Violence Prevention Unit was established within the Department for Family and Community Services as a specialist unit to oversee implementation of the Council’s Report. The Domestic Violence Prevention Committee was also established with broad representation from key agencies and interest groups to assist the DVPU and to advise government. One recommendation for local community level input on domestic violence was to establish DVAGs as a model of local community networking and action. 12

Until this point, although the Domestic Violence Act was proclaimed in 1994, most of the prevention response to domestic violence through the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s was through the health, community and human services sectors. It is really only in the 1990s and into the 2000s that the criminal justice sector has begun to orient itself more towards domestic violence prevention. This is still an emerging development for justice to be working collaboratively with other agencies and exploring the development of coordinated responses.

11 Domestic Violence Action Group, 1990
1996

The Ministerial Forum for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

In 1996, following discussion with the Minister for the Status of Women, the Attorney-General convened the Ministerial Forum for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

The Ministerial Forum provided a mechanism for high level collaboration to pursue the commitment of the South Australian Government to the prevention of domestic violence. Its membership comprised six ministers from the key portfolios for a whole of government approach and also included five non-government agency Chief Executives.

Domestic Violence Courts

Also in 1996 the Elizabeth Magistrates Court (Northern metropolitan area) established the State’s first specialist domestic violence court. The goals of the domestic violence court were to:

(a) ensure that perpetrators of domestic violence are made aware that violence in all its forms in the family home will not be tolerated.
(b) ensure the safety of victims of domestic violence including the children.
(c) seek to have perpetrators of domestic violence urgently address the issue of their violent behaviour.\(^{13}\)

1997, 1999

The VIPs (Violence Intervention Programs)

1997 and 1999 mark the establishment of the two VIPs currently operating in South Australia.

The Northern VIP (NVIP) was established in 1997. It operates in the Elizabeth/Munno Para area of northern metropolitan Adelaide and is auspiced by the Northern Metropolitan Community Health Service.

The Central VIP (CVIP) was established in 1999 and operates in the central metropolitan area of Adelaide, auspiced by the Salvation Army.

The model for the VIPs was based on the community response models implemented overseas - particularly those in Duluth, Minneapolis and Hamilton, New Zealand. While the two VIPs are essentially similar, there are also differences between them. The South Australian VIPs have also developed some unique approaches quite different from international models.

Each of the two VIPs is based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the auspice body and the local Magistrates court, Police and related Prosecutions, and the Department of Correctional Services (DCS).

When the NVIP was established, the response to domestic violence in SA involved a wide range of organisations, few of which, apart from shelters for women, had a specific focus on domestic violence as their core business. Some had developed specific training or approaches to working with domestic violence, but these related to the particular aspects with which they had involvement, such as policing incidents, change-oriented work with men who perpetrate, or supporting women. The main focus was on services for women as the victims of domestic violence. There was no co-

\(^{13}\) Michael Frederick, 2000, “Reducing Domestic Violence: Is a Specialist Domestic Violence Court An Integral Component in The Court’s Resolve To Reduce Domestic Violence?”., The NDV Project newsletter, Issue 3, July 2000, Crime Prevention Unit., Attorney-General’s Department
ordinated approach to providing better services to women, men and children, to ensure the incidence and effects of the violence were minimised, or to address issues of the safety of women and children or the accountability and responsibility of men who perpetrated domestic violence. This was not unique to South Australia, but matched interstate and overseas trends.\textsuperscript{14}

VIPs provide integrated and coordinated interventions that include the criminal justice system and are aimed at reducing domestic violence for perpetrators, victims and children. The intervention promotes the safety of woman and children and challenges men’s use of violence against their partners or ex-partners and children.\textsuperscript{15} Domestic Violence Courts at Elizabeth (Northern) and Adelaide (Central) Magistrates Courts are convened regularly to deal with all domestic violence cases in these regions, including perpetrators referred to the VIPs.

The 3 key features of the VIP model are aimed at providing timely and consistent services for people affected by domestic violence. They are:

- incorporation of a criminal justice response,
- interagency collaboration, and
- specialist domestic violence interventions.

While not a formal evaluation, a review of the VIPs for the purpose of considering future funding in 2001 found very wide spread support for the success of the Program to date. One of the key findings is that the Program is achieving significant changes to the system.

Respondents in key informant interviews for the Review reported a number of changes including:\textsuperscript{16}

- better assessment by workers of the needs of women and children and the readiness on the part of the male perpetrators to take responsibility for their violence;
- increased collaboration and comments of workers in different agencies demonstrated respect for each other’s work and skills;
- Community Corrections workers working in a different paradigm with improved accountability to victims, and more active case management;
- referral processes had improved and were more appropriate;
- new protocols and guidelines were jointly negotiated and continue to be improved;
- the police see more value in and are encouraged to go to case conferences;
- new tools have been developed by both police and prosecutions for taking evidence;
- the introduction of the Domestic Violence Courts (DV Courts) had made a major difference to the process and experience;
- court orders are more realistic and achievable;
- police have improved recording of domestic violence call-outs, and are more pro-active when attending incidents;
- police and prosecutions in specialist units are working together better to expedite referral to the DV Court.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Morgan Disney, June 2001, page 10.
It is considered that the strength of existing interagency relationships is a key factor in the ability to replicate the VIP in other areas. The Central VIP is currently being used as a service development model for agencies in the southern metropolitan area of Adelaide as a development from the NDV Project (discussed below). Several rural communities in South Australia are also exploring how to apply the principles of a coordinated approach to develop VIPs in the local context.

1998-9

SAPol CFIUs (Child and Family Investigation Units)

In 1998–99, the South Australia Police Department underwent a substantial restructure, leading to the evolution of the existing Police Domestic Violence Units into Child and Family Investigation Units (CFIU). These Units include child abuse detectives and domestic violence police. There is one CFIU in each of the 6 metropolitan Police Local Service Areas. Country areas are not serviced by such specialist Units. These specialist units have been key in the later development of the NDV project.

2000

DVAGs

By 2000, there were 32 DVAGs across South Australia bringing a range of service providers, and in some cases consumers, together with the shared aims of working toward the elimination of domestic violence and increasing community awareness of violence. Several have specific issue/population focus, such as the Nunga DVAG, the NESB DVAG, the Children & Domestic Violence Action Group, and the Lesbian DVAG.

The State Collaborative Approach for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

In 2000 the Ministerial Forum for the Prevention of Domestic Violence endorsed the State Collaborative Approach for the Prevention of Domestic Violence as the strategic policy framework for South Australia. A key aim was to support and encourage collaboration and coordination across government and between government and non-government agencies in their efforts to develop prevention approaches. While in many ways there was nothing new about this direction at the frontline service level, it was new for this to be endorsed broadly at a whole-of-government level.

The statement of vision; short, medium and long-term aims; statement of principles (drawn from the principles underpinning the Commonwealth PADV initiative); and key strategies and priority actions contained in the State Collaborative Approach provide a clear policy and planning framework and a foundation for a statewide strategic plan for the prevention of domestic violence and family violence in Indigenous communities.

Implementation of the State Collaborative Approach was planned at the local level through local service networks - particularly through DVAGs - and involved engaging agencies at the local level to ‘sign-on’ to implement the Approach with other agencies at the local level.

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20 Department of Human Services, 2000, Greater Than The Sum of The Parts: Collaboration to Address and Prevent Domestic Violence
NDV Project

The NDV Project commenced operation as a pilot project on 13 March 2000 and continued formally until 31 March 2001. The aim of the project was to reduce repeat incidents of domestic violence, where police have been called. It was modelled on a domestic violence intervention project in Killingbeck, Leeds in 1997.

The Project was run in partnership between the Crime Prevention Unit of the Attorney-General’s Department and the South Australian Police. It involved trialing a 3 tiered system of operational interventions with domestic violence incidents in two metropolitan Police Local Service Areas (6 such areas cover the whole of metropolitan Adelaide).

“The Project literature reports that up to 70% of police time can be spent attending domestic violence incidents. There is a high level of acceptance that traditional methods of policing domestic violence have not been effective for families nor efficient for police. This project aims to benefit both families and police through improved policing of domestic violence incidents, and subsequent reduction in police time absorbed in repeat attendance.”

“For women who are victims of domestic violence, the attending police officers are often the first point of contact with the justice system. As such, improved police practice is a first step to enhancing women’s access to justice.”

While evaluation is not yet complete, preliminary indications are that:

- community stakeholders, service providers and a number of women assisted by the police support and value the changed police practice.
- the Project acted as an impetus for increased focus on collaboration and prevention among community service providers.
- confidence in referring women to the police had increased.
- Patrol Officers are enthusiastic.
- accuracy of Police reporting of callouts to domestic violence had increased.

Many operational Police not included in the pilot are keen to implement the model in their own Local Service Areas. As mentioned in discussion of the VIPs, the impetus of the NDV project in one of the pilot LSAs has promoted an initiative to develop a VIP approach at the local level. Collaboration and coordination to ensure strong relationships and cooperation between all key stakeholders has been and continues to be an essential part of the process.

The challenge for sustainability and replication of the model is identified as maintaining the integrity of the model, particularly in managing its uptake across other police areas, including extending it to country where the model would by necessity be applied differently.

21 Documents sourced include: “Project Aims and Rationale”, “Interim Report: NDV Project”.
24 urbis keys young, 2002, pages 75-78.
Rekindling Family Relationships: Framework for Action

In 2001 the Rekindling Family Relationships: Framework for Action was endorsed as the State framework to address Indigenous family violence and signed by all members of the Ministerial Forum, and key Aboriginal elders. The Framework was developed to stand with the State Collaborative Approach. It outlines the State Government's commitment to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities through a community development approach. The Framework is currently being implemented through a series of workshops facilitated across the State to assist communities to understand the Framework and develop local implementation plans.

South Australian Domestic Violence Prevention Plan

In 2001 the Ministerial Forum for the Prevention of Domestic Violence initiated development of a South Australian Domestic Violence Prevention Plan. This built on the State Collaborative Approach. The draft Plan provides a strategic approach at the statewide level to domestic violence prevention as a tool for stakeholders to use in developing their own policy, planning and curriculum frameworks and as a mechanism to support and promote coordination and collaboration. Ideally, such a Plan would be articulated into appropriate business and operational plans and strategies for portfolios, departments and agencies at the local level and would guide priority setting, resource allocation, and the development of strategies and services.

Concurrently with the drafting of this Plan, two key Portfolios, the Department of Human Services and Justice, also began developing their own Portfolio level plans - the mid-level to this macro-level.

DHS Interpersonal Violence Policy

In 2001 the Department of Human Services initiated development of and consultation on an Interpersonal Violence Policy.

Justice Portfolio Domestic Violence Policy Statement and Strategic Plan

In 2001 the Justice Portfolio also initiated development of the Justice Portfolio Domestic Violence Policy Statement and Strategic Plan. This was based on the following ideas:

“The criminal justice system can play a catalytic role in fostering social change (Holder25; Morgan Disney, July 2001). It does this by conveying to the community that the use of violence and abuse in relationships is harmful and unacceptable, and that domestic violence will be treated seriously. In addition to its other key front-line response roles, the Portfolio has an important shared responsibility with other key organisations to participate in community education and community awareness raising about the nature and unacceptability of domestic violence, about the serious consequences, and about the options for support for victims and change for perpetrators.”26

Evidence suggests that to be most effective, the criminal justice response should be coordinated across the Portfolio and work across systems with a focus on collaboration, early intervention, prevention and community education.

While the Justice Portfolio was actively involved in significant coordinated endeavours, such as the VIPs and the NDV, coordination was more a by-product of participation in such initiatives than of higher level policy direction. One focus of Portfolio policy development is to chunk up learnings from the program level to adopt coordinated approaches more broadly and consistently across Portfolio agencies in order to achieve effective outcomes. This can contribute both the leadership and the infrastructure support to validate, consolidate and extend these initiatives.

Several of the key features that stand out to me from this brief overview of history, is the time that has gone into establishing some of the interagency relationships that lay the groundwork for coordinated approaches to be developed and implemented successfully, and the long-term commitment of many of the front-line workers who have succeeded governments, programs and projects.

**Implications of Coordinated Approaches**

Developing coordinated approaches, grounded on the principles that we have established and endorsed nationally through the Commonwealth Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative and adopted at the State level to underpin responses to domestic violence, requires rethinking by a number of agencies of how they have traditionally approached their “core business”, who they have traditionally seen as their client group and how they participate with other stakeholders.

For example, some of the questions which arise for me in relation to justice more broadly include:

- If key principles in work with domestic violence include priority on the safety and wellbeing of women and children, and on accountability and responsibility of the perpetrator for their behaviour, what implications does this have for the work of agencies who may have traditionally seen their ‘business’ as focused on “the offender”?
- How could such an agency contribute to a coordinated response to the offender that addresses issues of safety for the victim and children?
- If an agency did not see their business as extending beyond the offender, what collaboration with other stakeholders/agencies is required to provide a coordinated response that appropriately responds to the priority on the safety and wellbeing of the victim and children?
- If current best available evidence of effective intervention with perpetrators is that coordinated approaches are required, what are the ethics of maintaining and continuing to resource practice that may compromise victim safety, and is not based on current evidence of good practice?
- To what extent do the relationships and models within criminal justice agencies mirror power imbalances, unequal or disrespectful relationships and/or conflict resolution based on power-over rather than non-violent means?
- How do we best address perpetrator behaviour and at the same time work to maximise victim safety at the whole-of-system level?

And how does it translate into practice? I was recently at a forum in Adelaide organised by the South Australian Office for the Status of Women at which Lesley Laing of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse was talking about future directions in the domestic violence field. This was based particularly around the draft issues paper in progress titled “Responding to Men who Perpetrate Domestic and Family Violence: Controversies, Interventions and Challenges”. In the question time at the end of the paper Julie Felus, coordinator of the CVIP, commented that she believes we need to move away from the language of Men’s/Perpetrators programs when talking of our service responses, to language of coordinated programs. She suggested that there should be no such thing as a men’s/perpetrator program without women and children being part of the picture. To quote Julie (from my scribbled notes) “The role of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) worker in the CVIP is not to provide services to men - they provide services to men, women and
While the DCS Court worker does not provide direct service to women or children, the reporting back, accountability processes and priority on safety of woman and children that are part of the program build service outcomes for women and children into service provision to men by the DCS Court worker.  

It appears to me that, if the goal of the work is the safety and wellbeing of those subjected to the violence, and accountability to the women and children subjected to the violence, those goals cannot be achieved within the framing of a stand-alone “men’s” or “perpetrator’s” program. Taking coordinated approaches means we cannot compartmentalise our thinking, language, policy development or service responses in that way. This is not a linguistic trick to fit some new “political correctness” but a fundamental shift in how many agencies approach the work we do.

Conclusion

The policy and planning approach we have been using in SA is to address the macro- (whole of State), mid-(Portfolio/Department) and micro (frontline program/service) levels of policy and strategy and endeavour to have them aligned in relation to broad policy directions and also to on-the-ground operational practice. We are exploring how best to further develop coordinated approaches. This is still emerging territory for exploration by justice agencies.

How do we best build the capacity of governments, organizations and communities across diversity to work well together towards the safety of women and children, the accountability of men who perpetrate domestic violence, and towards equitable, safe and respectful relationships?

Our experience in South Australia to date is that coordinated approaches are key to this and work well when resourced appropriately and supported with the appropriate infrastructure. It is important to remember the goal of coordination and not accept it as primarily tool for cost-saving or ‘doing more with less’.

Coordinated approaches have emerged out of a historical context which many of the people working in the domestic violence field today are part of also. It is not just ‘new approaches’ such as coordination that make the difference, but also long term commitment of people who have a heart for the work and to making a difference in relation to domestic violence.

To paraphrase the Honourable Ross Cameron MP from his speech at the opening of the conference yesterday morning, how do we make domestic violence and its prevention a “Matter of being my business?” How do we best work towards greater coordination of policy, planning and front-line response, when in part that means improved human relationships at all levels?

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27 Julie Felus, August 2002, comment in a domestic violence forum in Adelaide where Lesley Laing spoke publicly on the forthcoming Issues Paper 7, of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Responding to Men who Perpetrate Domestic and Family Violence: Controversies, Intervention and Challenges. Recorded in note form and transcribed for this paper as accurately as possible within the limits of my note-taking ability and memory.

28 From further personal communication with Julie Felus on this matter.
On-Line Information


- The Crime Prevention Unit website has information on a number of the domestic violence prevention areas covered in this paper http://www.cpu.sa.gov.au/sa_dvp.htm

Prevention Along the Continuum

Education
- Essential learnings
- Crime prevention curriculum
- Professional, occupational & vocational curriculum

Human Services
- Health & Well-being
- Housing
- Child Protection
- Health promotion; primary health care; primary, secondary and tertiary prevention

Justice
- Law & Order
- Justice & Safety
- Crime prevention approaches

Crime Prevention, Health Promotion and Education for Life