

## Written evidence from St Giles Trust [EOV0037]

1. This evidence primarily seeks to answer question 4: “What interventions are currently in place for perpetrators with different offending histories and how effective are they for different offender pathways?”.
2. St Giles Trust has decades of experience delivering support services UK-wide, including tailored support for women and girls.

## THE GAPS OUR WORK ADDRESSES

3. There are currently significant gaps in both the interventions provided to support perpetrators of Domestic Abuse to change their behaviour and the support offered to victims of Domestic Abuse.
4. These gaps mean that in most of the UK if a victim of Domestic Abuse reports an incident of Domestic Abuse to the police, and the police arrest an alleged perpetrator, at that point there are generally no available interventions in place to try and prevent the continued escalation of Domestic Abuse.
5. St Giles Trust is partnering with Women’s Aid (Black Country Womens Aid consortium) on an innovative pilot project in the West Midlands where we will systematically provide both support to victims of Domestic Abuse and a 1:1 targeted teachable-moment intervention to support perpetrators of Domestic Abuse to change their behaviour.
6. The purpose of the perpetrator-intervention part of this project is to intervene at a much earlier stage in the usual escalation of Domestic Abuse than most projects do, and to do so at a critical point (directly after the perpetrator is arrested) to maximise the possibility of positive behaviour change and desistance from Domestic Abuse.
7. Our staff, who will be intervening to support perpetrators to change their behaviour, receive specialist training from Women's Aid on Domestic Abuse to ensure the staff can all use the common non victim blaming language, dispel Domestic Abuse myths and challenge the root-cause behaviours that perpetrators exhibit.
8. This pilot project is currently being set up and will run in the West Midlands.
9. There are a number of gaps in support for victims and interventions for perpetrators that this pilot project is seeking to address:
  - a. Current Domestic Abuse behaviour-change interventions as part of Out of Court Disposals are underutilised. This is due in part to the lack of an appropriate person (non-police) to build rapport with the Domestic Abuse perpetrator at their most vulnerable point (immediately

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after arrest and in Police custody). These Out of Court Disposals are also underutilised because of relatively low levels of police understanding of them and willingness to use them.

- b. Currently, there are few perpetrator-behaviour interventions that can begin at the police custody suite stage. Many interventions can only be accessed once someone has been convicted of a Domestic Abuse offence. This means that, given the proportion of perpetrators who are not convicted, many perpetrators are not engaged in any interventions to address their behaviour. There is also a gap where most interventions are currently not available for perpetrators who are on bail awaiting trial. **The Committee should consider recommending that more Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions are available before conviction and during bail. The Committee should also consider recommending a series of pilot projects are funded to identify the most effective point for targeted Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions.**
- c. Additionally, some interventions can only be accessed by perpetrators who have completed a custodial sentence for Domestic Abuse. In our experience the best interventions are timed to be as close as possible to the incident of Domestic Abuse, which is why interventions that can begin in the police custody suite are so important. **The Committee should consider recommending that Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions should be made available at the arrest stage. Early intervention prevents future escalation of harmful behaviours.**
- d. Currently, there are generally not independent caseworkers present in police custody suites to build rapport and trust with Domestic Abuse perpetrators at this teachable moment. This means this critical opportunity to support behaviour-change is generally missed. In our experience across a number of services that engage 'difficult-to-reach' people at critical points (Accident and Emergency departments, police custody suites, etc) we have found that it is critical that these services are delivered by independent people who have the ability to build trust. Those caseworkers can provide increased identification, assessment and positive engagement with necessary interventions for perpetrators of domestic abuse, while prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of their victims and children. **The Committee should recommend that interventions are led by caseworkers from the third sector because our experience shows that interventions by the police or other state agencies don't have the same opportunity to develop trust and can be perceived as neutral.**
- e. Often we have seen Domestic Abuse perpetrators referred to general interventions to deal with anger-management or violence. In our experience these are ineffective as they do not address the particular nature and root cause of Domestic Abuse. **The Committee should investigate the extent to which Domestic Abuse perpetrators are being engaged via general interventions that are not specifically about Domestic Abuse.**
- f. Some Domestic Abuse interventions are only available to perpetrators whose index offence is categorised as a Domestic Abuse offence. This causes problems in the many occasions where the offending should be recognised as Domestic Abuse but the index offence is not categorised as relating to Domestic Abuse. **Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions should be available to people who are reasonably believed to be perpetrators of Domestic Abuse, not only those who have a specified index offence.**

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- i. Categorisation of incidents as Domestic Abuse is also not consistent between Police forces and some are less able to spot where a pattern of criminal behaviour has Domestic Abuse as a root cause. **The Committee should consider recommending a review by Violence Against Women and Girls experts of the current Domestic Abuse training for police officers to ensure it reflects the root causes of Domestic Abuse and supports proper categorisation of offences.**
  - g. Systems for police to notify Domestic Abuse victim services do not always work as they should, with frequent delays and errors. This can leave Domestic Abuse victims exposed to potential safeguarding risks. Our pilot model addresses this because the caseworkers we have working with the Domestic Abuse perpetrators are in direct contact and able to share relevant information with the caseworkers working with the victims (this is a benefit of having both caseworkers operating within the same project). **The Committee should consider recommending that all perpetrator behaviour-change interventions should prioritise ensuring the safety of the victim, including through effective and timely information sharing.**
10. The ONS report that Approximately 1 in 5 adults aged 16 years and over (10.4 million people) had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16.<sup>1</sup> Domestic Abuse takes various forms including coercive and controlling patterns of behaviour. The most common perpetrators of DA, particularly physical or sexual violence, are known to the victim. It is crucial to place accountability for domestic abuse on the perpetrators, but resources and support are often insufficient to do so.

## HOW OUR MODEL WORKS

11. Convincing perpetrators of Domestic Abuse to engage with our service, and through us to engage with longer-term interventions to support desistance, is complex and requires our caseworkers to be able to quickly build trust. **It would not be possible to build trust in this way if the service was delivered by the police.**
12. We have extensive experience of the benefits of structuring interventions around reachable/teachable moments. We have an existing in-custody service we deliver within West Midlands Police custody suites service which works with under 25s immediately after their arrest. Our model includes using this moment to build trust, gain an understanding of the causes of the offending behaviour and having a consequences conversation with the client. We then continue to work with the perpetrator after they leave police custody to increase perpetrator engagement with supportive interventions, while also increasing their understanding and awareness of domestic abuse.
13. Our caseworkers will support and encourage perpetrators to access Choose2Change. This is a long-term behaviour change programme delivered by Relate. They will do this by highlighting the consequences and impact of abusive behaviour and potential underlying triggers/causes of domestic abuse. The work delivered by Relate for perpetrators of Domestic Abuse is accredited as determined

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2022>

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by Respect Standards and their primary aim to 'do not harm' to victims and children is at the heart of what they do.

14. Through this process, we bridge the gap between services, transfer trust from early responders to Domestic Abuse behaviour change providers and other support agencies including existing teams within the custody suites e.g., Liaison and Diversion, Youth Offending, Local Authority Children and Adult services and Healthcare providers and Drug and Alcohol support services. Our trauma-informed intervention during the reachable/teachable moment will improve chances of gaining trust and consent and increase engagement with case workers and wider support. This approach will lead to increased/improved: (i) Positive engagement of perpetrators into supportive DA interventions, (ii) Referrals to Domestic Abuse programs and support services, and (iii) Understanding and management of triggers, all with the ultimate goal of preventing re-offending and repeat Domestic Abuse.
15. Longer-term our caseworkers will also provide ongoing 1:1 support in the community for further engagement with community-based support services/groups i.e., mental health, addiction, finance, benefit and debt, therapy, and mentorship programs. Consistent support will enable perpetrators to maintain their commitment to non-abusive behaviour, strengthen their motivation, and cement long-term impact. Through this work we reinforce the learning from the behaviour-change intervention and support them to put this learning into practice. This also improves multi-agency working and join-up to strengthen the whole system response to Domestic Abuse. This long-term holistic person-centered approach is needed to deter the perpetrator from re-offending which therefore reduces the risk towards the DA victim.
16. Overall, the project aims to provide increased identification, assessment and positive engagement with necessary interventions for perpetrators of domestic abuse, while prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of their victims and children.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Interventions are led by caseworkers from the third sector because our experience shows that interventions by the police or other state agencies don't have the same opportunity to develop trust and are therefore far less likely to be engaged with.
2. Early intervention prevents future escalation of harmful behaviours. More Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions should be available at the point of arrest, in particular at the point of first arrest for an offence linked to Domestic Abuse.
3. A series of pilot projects should be funded to identify the most effective point of time for targeted Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions.
4. Domestic Abuse perpetrators should not be engaged with general interventions that are not specifically about Domestic Abuse.
5. Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions should be available to people who are reasonably believed to be perpetrators of Domestic Abuse, not only those who have a specified Domestic Abuse index offence.

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6. There should be a review by experts in violence against women and girls of the current Domestic Abuse training for police officers to ensure it reflects the root causes of Domestic Abuse and supports proper categorisation of offences.
  7. All perpetrator behaviour-change interventions should prioritise ensuring the safety of the victim, including through effective and timely information sharing with Domestic Abuse services that victims are engaging with.
  8. Projects that can demonstrate robust evidence of success in reducing perpetrator re-offending should qualify for automatic re-funding and should be supported to expand.
  9. Funding should be provided for longer-term interventions to allow projects time to demonstrate effectiveness.
  10. There should be improved structures for information sharing about the most effective interventions between Police and Crime Commissioners.
  11. Interventions to support perpetrator behaviour-change should also include wraparound support to address the other factors that are contributing to offending behaviour.

***September 2023***