



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report 10.5: Decrease the number of incidents of domestic abuse reported to the Police by 15% by 2023.
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Governance Group	CPA Board – 29 February 2024

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 10.5 which aimed to decrease the number of incidents of domestic abuse reported to the Police by 15% by 2023. The project was delivered between October 2021 and December 2023.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Domestic abuse significantly impacts people’s lives and across all sections of our communities. Domestic abuse can exist in all types of relationships between partners and ex partners, irrespective of gender, race, religion, or type of background although, as a form of gender-based violence, domestic abuse is mainly perpetrated by men against women. The Police and Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service agreed definition of Domestic Abuse is –

“any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse, which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere including online.”

1.2 All too often when people think of domestic abuse, they think of physical violence, but it is usually much more than that. It spans the entire spectrum of behaviour by perpetrators – including isolated incidents, as well as a course /pattern of conduct with both violent and non-violent abusive behaviour. Sometimes this will involve elements and tactics of coercive control, which can involve a range of behaviours designed to control and harm a victim. The below table shows the number of Incidents of Domestic Abuse recorded by Police nationally and in Aberdeen:

	Scotland	Aberdeen
2017-18	59209	2763
2018-19	60110	2483
2019-20	62907	2566
2020-21	65251	2610

2021-22

64807

2579

1.3 Nationally in 2018-19, the rate per 10,000 population was 112, for Aberdeen it was 110. 652 domestic abuse incidents were recorded in Aberdeen during the first quarter of 2019- 20 (Apr to Jun), against 611 during the same period in 2018-19.

1.4 These statistics do not reveal the incidence of all domestic abuse committed since not all incidents are reported to the police. In conjunction with the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS), the statistics help to assess the extent and impact of domestic abuse in Scotland. There are various reasons for such under reporting i.e., victims experience fear and shame as common effects of domestic abuse or it may also be caused by an accused physically preventing a victim reporting the domestic abuse. This will represent as a continued challenge, as victims come to an acceptance of this behaviour as 'normal' and part of the relationship. The coronavirus pandemic has created further challenges for survivors living with domestic abuse.

1.5 There needs to be city-wide recognition that domestic abuse is everyone's responsibility. The approach must be community wide and multi-agency with wraparound services for women and children and recognition of the need to avoid service generated risks and potential for re-traumatisation. But having services for women and children harmed is not enough and still places the responsibility on women to keep themselves safe rather than on perpetrators to change their abusive behaviour. There is therefore a need to intervene earlier and to have both supports for women and a range of interventions available for perpetrators. Early intervention is a challenge for several reasons. There remains a perception that perpetrators and victims have to be able to recognise that there is an issue, know where to seek support and be willing/able to engage with support before workers can intervene. In reality if we wait until that stage, women and children may have been further harmed and men neither held accountable, nor given the opportunity to change their behaviours.

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

2.1 Against this background, in October 2021 the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to decrease the number of incidents of domestic abuse reported to Police Scotland by 15% by 2023.

2.2 Eliminating and eradicating domestic abuse is a key priority of Aberdeen's Violence Against Women Partnership as part of our commitment to Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. This involves addressing the underlying attitudes and systems that perpetuate domestic abuse and wider gender-based violence. Incidents of domestic abuse reported to the police has continued to increase. Between 2020-2021 Police Scotland recorded a 4% increase in domestic abuse incidents. This was the 5th year in a row there had been an increase.

3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

3.1 Several changes were tested throughout the project and are listed below.

Domestic Abuse Training

3.2 Test the use of different forms of to better inform our staff members on domestic abuse and how to better support victims and intervene with perpetrators. We provided three different forms of domestic abuse training:

1. The Safe and Together model is an internationally recognised suite of tools and interventions designed to help child welfare professionals become domestic violence informed.
2. Dynamics of Domestic abuse training which is a full day training which explores the dynamics of domestic abuse and coercive control, how to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and how and where to refer service users on to support.
3. Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Tool (DAART) is an online e-course which is an introduction to Domestic Abuse. This has been added to the ACC Learn platform.

Own my Life Training

3.3 Test the implementation of Own my Life training to educate and empower women who have been subjected to abuse to regain ownership of their own lives and to equip and resource practitioners with the most up to date research and understanding about male violence.

Awareness raising materials and events

3.4 Test the use of awareness raising materials and events as a means of encouraging victims of domestic abuse to self-refer for support.

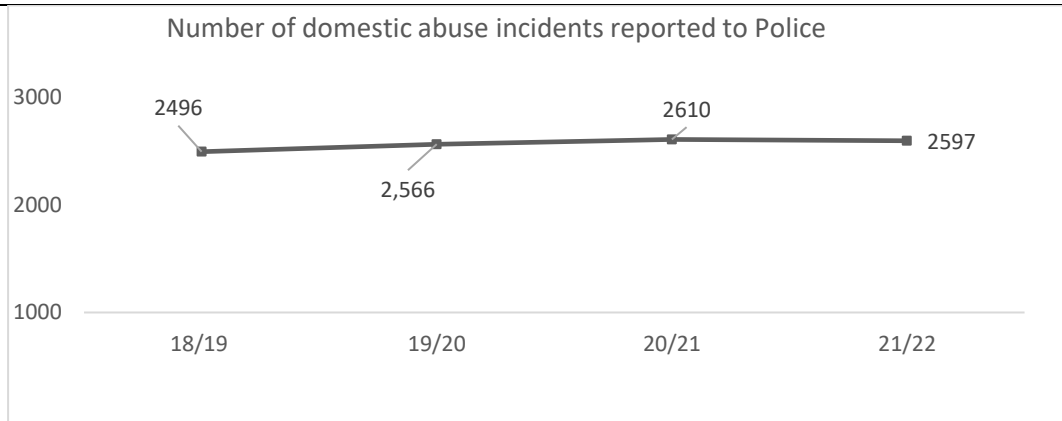
Domestic Abuse Support Database

3.5 Test the implementation of a Domestic Abuse Support Database. In 2019, Aberdeen was one of four pathfinder areas in Scotland that was successful in receiving funding to develop and implement a Technology Enabled Care (TEC) project. The purpose of the of the Pathfinder was to explore how TEC (technology enabled care) could play a role in supporting delivery of multi-agency services for people aged 18+ who experience domestic abuse within Aberdeen city. It was found that people experiencing domestic abuse can have difficulty recognising the signs of abuse. It was also found that there are challenges for those experiencing domestic abuse in accessing support and information safely. Support agencies and providers were identified as having problems knowing where to go for up-to-date information about different services available and making the right referral at the right time.

3.6 This resulted in a recommendation for “one true source” of information on services in the form of a Domestic Abuse Support Database which will allow those who receive disclosures of domestic abuse to make the right referral at the right time. The database was fully launched in December 2023. We will have challenges collecting data from the support database due to being unable to add Cookies onto the sight as this present a safety risk to those who may access the page.

4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 The project has not achieved the aim of a 15% reduction in report domestic abuse incidents. Latest available data, as shown in the chart below, shows there has been a 0.5% reduction in domestic abuse incidents reported to Police Scotland from 2020/21 to 2021/22. This is the first time in a 5 year period that there has been a reduction. Official Police statistics are normally reported in November of each year however, there has been a delay with the publishing of 22/23 statistics.

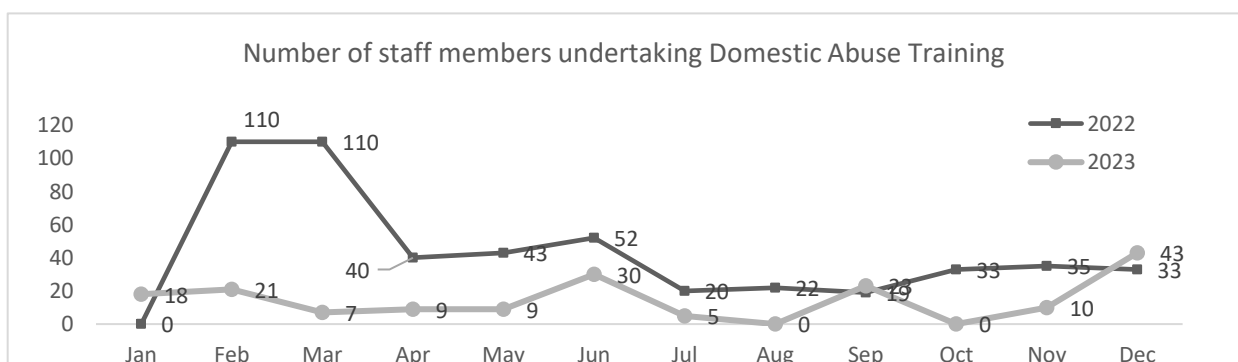


4.2 Due to the nature of domestic abuse and the fact that it is still a predominantly hidden crime with a lot of shame and stigma attached to it, it is still largely unreported. From previous improvement project work, the project recognised that the number of people reporting to Police did not correlate to the number of people who seek support in Aberdeen for domestic abuse. In addition, we know from research, that up to 1 in 5 victims of domestic abuse do not report to Police. From the project, as well as local research it is known that many victims of domestic abuse don't recognise that what they are experiencing is abuse so further targeted awareness raising is needed and will be continued. In light of this position it is proposed that a revised aim focusing on increasing the number of domestic abuse incidents reported to Police be included in the refreshed LOIP to ensure that victims can access support needed and that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

4.3 There has, however, still been some positive work undertaken throughout the project as detailed below and we propose to build on this.

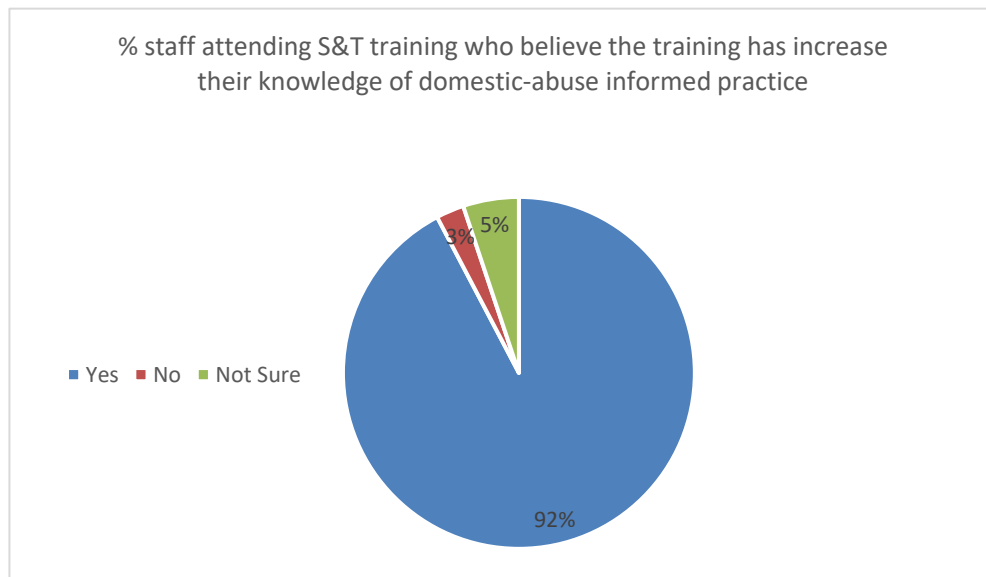
Training

4.4 The chart below details the number of multi-agency staff members who have undertaken some form of domestic abuse training. A total of 692 staff have completed Domestic Abuse Training in 2022 and 2023.



4.5 The chart below details the number of staff who have attended training who fed back that the training increased their knowledge of domestic abuse informed practice. Domestic abuse informed practice involves partnering with the non-offending individual, recognising their strengths as well as holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour. 92% of staff attending training felt that their knowledge had been increased. This is a positive outcome as

the more confident staff are to be able to recognise and respond to domestic abuse, the early the intervention can be to provide support to victims.



4.6 Some of the feedback from the training is as follows:

'The training was fantastic. I've really reflected on my own practice, recognising my use of mutualising language and failure to hold the perpetrator responsible. It is so refreshing to be promoted to really highlight survivor strength and to partner with them. This training has really prompted my thought process with assessing and planning where domestic abuse is being perpetrated.'

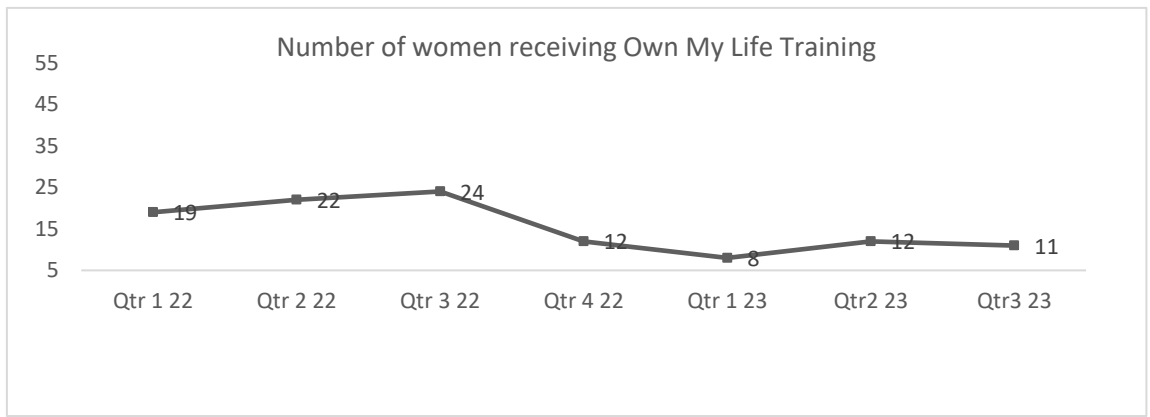
'This is a practice changing and much needed. Using a child centred model is so useful in working with perpetrators and avoids much of the challenges of working with domestic abuse. It also keeps the child at the centre. The use of language and holding perpetrators accountable is also very useful.'

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'The tools within the training were useful; ensuring that as professionals we are working in a domestic abuse informed manner - training has opened my eyes to how I have been guilty of not always writing / practicing like this previously.'

Own My Life Training

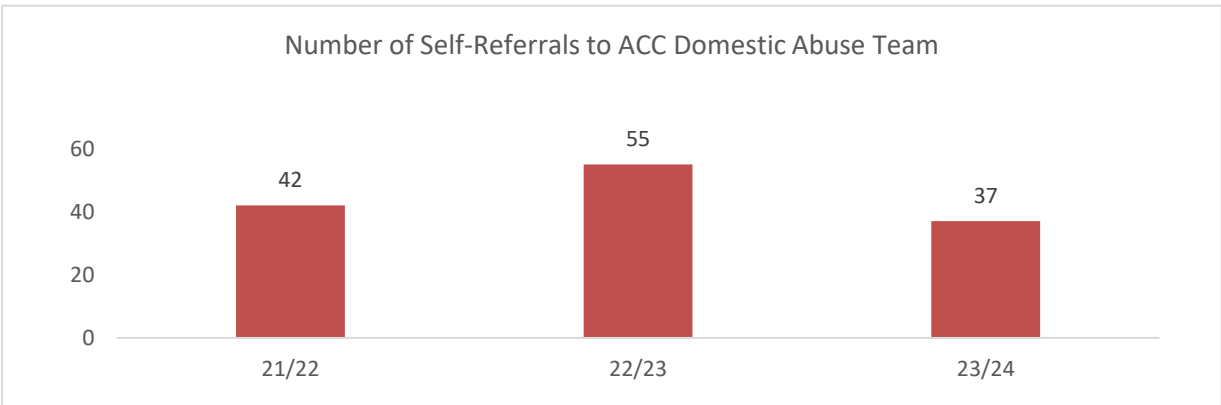
4.7 The chart below details the number of women who have undertaken the Own My Life training. Own my Life training is An innovative, creative & educational 12-week course supporting women who have been subjected to domestic abuse by a partner to regain ownership of their lives. Grampian Women's Aid have held three courses face-to-face and one virtual. The DAT Team has held three courses face-to-face. 77 women in total received Own My Life Training in 22/23 with 31 further receiving this to date in 23/24.



Feedback from women who attended the training was positive, with 100% of attendees stating that ‘the course helped them to better understand their life’. 100% of attendees also stated that they would recommend the course to other women. None of the attendees who gave written feedback gave permission for this to be used in any public way, however, the feedback was positive.

Self-referrals/ new domestic abuse phonenumber

4.8 The chart below details the number of people who have self-referred to Aberdeen City Council’s domestic abuse team. There has been a 31% increase in the number of self-referrals for support to ACC Domestic Abuse Team were made from 42 in 21/22 to 55 in 22/23. In the first three quarters of 23/24 there have been 37 self-referrals to date. The current data for this year looks to be on par with 22/23 figures. Promotion of the new domestic abuse phonenumber is ongoing to raise awareness of the service and ability to self-refer for support. Awareness raising has included press releases, social media posts and leaflets.



5 HOW HAVE OUR COMMUNITIES/PROTECTED GROUPS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT AND THE IMPACT OF THIS

5.1 Engaging with those with lived experience of domestic abuse is a sensitive and challenging process which should be handled in a trauma-informed manner. The majority of community engagement therefore has been with survivors/victims via specialist support services. The change ideas around awareness raising and the domestic abuse support database came

from research which involved discussions with those with lived experience as well as the practitioners who work in domestic abuse support services.

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR AND SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

6.1 The project improvements will continue to be monitored and sustained by the project team. Given the continued importance it is proposed that improvement activity in relation to domestic abuse continues with a revised to be included in the refreshed LOIP. The improvements within this project however still remain relevant and will be key to driving the next project aim. Ensuring that people who experience domestic abuse are able to confidently report to the Police and to access appropriate and timely support is a key priority of the Violence Against Women Partnership and will continued to be monitored within our Implementation Plan.

6.2 In addition, domestic abuse data will continue to be gathered and collated quarterly for the local Violence Against Women Partnership data dashboard. The dashboard is fed into the Chief Officers Group for oversight.

7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

7.1 The project focused specifically on decreasing the number of incidents of domestic abuse reported to the Police. From previous improvement project work we recognised that the number of people reporting to Police did not correlate to the number of people who seek support in Aberdeen for domestic abuse. In addition, we know from research, that up to 1 in 5 victims of domestic abuse do not report to Police. For this reason we will continue to upscale and spread some of the improvement work that this project has undertaken.

7.2 Training will continue to be scaled up and rolled out across multi-agency frontline services including education staff, health visitors and police officers.

7.3 It is clear from not just our project, but local research that many victims of domestic abuse don't recognise that what they are experiencing is abuse so further targeted awareness raising is needed and will be continued.

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that whilst the aim had not been achieved, positive outcomes have been achieved as a result of the improvement activity; and
- ii) note that further improvement activity in relation to domestic abuse is being considered as part of the refresh of the LOIP with a new aim of increasing incidents of domestic abuse to Police Scotland proposed.

Opportunities and Risks

Opportunities:

To offer Domestic Abuse training to further non-specialist services to non-ACC partner organisations and staff groups.

Risks:

Domestic Abuse services become overwhelmed and demand for support increases waiting lists and wait time for people experiencing domestic abuse.

Consultation

Community Justice Group
Violence Against Women Partnership

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

[10.5 Decrease Incidents of Domestic Abuse](#)

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