Domestic Violence interventions: The evidence

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The scale of the problem

1/4 women worldwide
1/5 women in the EU

Costs to survivors (and their children)
- Physical injury
- Fear & distress
- Shame
- Anxiety
- Physical ill health
- Depression
- Financial hardship
- Isolation
- Substance misuse

€228 billion
Tackling Domestic Violence

- Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025)
- Istanbul Convention
- World Health Organisation
Interventions

- Multi-agency coordinated approaches
- Restorative justice
- Protection orders
- Perpetrator interventions
- Specialist domestic violence courts
- Specialist victim services
- Preventative interventions
- Legislation
Limitations of the evidence

- Most research has been conducted in North America
- Poor data collection
- No one offence of domestic violence and abuse
- Principle Offence rule
- Under-reporting
- There are few studies with robust research designs
- Varied definitions of domestic abuse and coercive control
- Varied measurements of domestic violence and abuse
Multi-agency approaches are often viewed as the most effective way to tackle domestic violence and abuse at both an operational and strategic level.

They aim to:

- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of system responses
- Coordinate services
- Enhance safety and wellbeing for survivors and their children
- Increase the accountability of the perpetrator

(Klevens et al., 2008)
Numerous research studies have examined the effectiveness of Coordinated Community Responses (CCRs)

Outcomes

- Increases in arrests, convictions, and sentences including programmes
- Reductions in recidivism
- More positive interactions between survivors and criminal justice agencies

“CCRs to DV may be effective at enhancing system, offender and victim outcomes following DV incidents”

Johnson & Stylianou (2020, pp.14)
Psychological programmes are designed to change the behaviour of perpetrators and reduce reoffending.

They aim to work with the perpetrator to:

- Increase understanding about the features of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Motivate change
- Develop attitudes and beliefs that support equality within relationships
- Develop skills for accepting and/or managing unhelpful thoughts
- Develop skills to manage unhelpful emotions
- Develop the interpersonal skills needed for a healthy relationship
The evidence

Numerous research studies have examined the impact of programmes designed to reduce intimate partner violence and abuse.

Outcomes

- Desired behaviour change
- No behaviour change identified

"we do not yet know what works best, for whom, and under what circumstances".

Akoensii et al., (2013, pp.1220)
Cordier et al., (2021)

- POs were not effective in completely stopping or preventing repeat abuse.
- Qualitatively, victims reported that they thought POs were effective and that they made them feel safer.
- The evidence to support Protection Orders as a standalone intervention is mixed.
- POs issued alongside an arrest for an offence were found to significantly reduce the rates of reoffending.
- PO were less effective when perpetrators had a history of stalking behaviours or higher rates of arrest and/or violence.
- POs were less effective when victims stayed in the relationship with the perpetrator, were unemployed or from a low income family.
Take away messages

- Domestic violence and abuse are major public health concerns
- Investment and commitment to tackling domestic abuse is essential
- Whilst the evidence to support varying interventions is mixed, there are many promising findings
- There is a convincing consensus that the ongoing development of interventions is critical
- Approaches that involve multiple agencies, a combination of interventions, and that are tailored to the specific needs of the case, are likely to have the most promising outcomes
Take away messages

- Be interested in the evidence!

- Think about how you can contribute to building the evidence about ‘what works’ in the field of domestic violence and abuse
Questions