

Written evidence submitted by Drive (DAB34)

Domestic Abuse Bill Committee

1. About Drive

1.1 Drive is a perpetrator intervention that challenges and holds high-harm perpetrators – those who have been assessed as at risk of murdering or seriously harming their partners – to account. It has been developed by the Drive Partnership which brings together domestic abuse specialist organisations, SafeLives and Respect, with not-for-profit innovation organisation, Social Finance. The BBC covered our work [here](#). Drive has been shown by the University of Bristol to improve victim safety and reduce abuse, including police recorded domestic abuse.

1.2 Drive is continuing to work during the coronavirus epidemic, indeed our work to manage the risks that perpetrators pose to those around them is more important than ever. There is more information about the costs and benefits of Drive in the annex of this paper.

2. Summary

2.1 Government should publish a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy to go alongside the Bill. This is being widely called for across those involved in the domestic abuse response. In January, around 80 organisations and experts got together to call for a perpetrator strategy. The key components of such a strategy are detailed in their call [here](#). We are seeking a commitment from government during the course of debate on the publication of a strategy.

2.2 Drive supports the following amendments:

- A. **Quality assurance to ensure judge-mandated programmes do no harm:** We are proposing an amendment to Clause 33 to ensure that interventions required as a result of the new DAPO, such as behaviour change programmes ordered by judges, meet a minimum quality standard. [This amendment](#) will require the Home Secretary to publish standards (separately from the Bill) which providers of perpetrator programmes must meet. Such standards already exist and could form the backbone of the guidance.
- B. **An amendment to ensure a transparent and thorough review of DAPOs** – with input from design stage onwards from the DA and Victims Commissioners, specialist DA sector and DA survivors, before any national roll out.
- C. **Statutory duty to provide domestic abuse services:** [We support Barnardo's amendment](#) to clause 53 calling for a widened statutory duty on public bodies, with the requisite funding, to provide services to victims of domestic abuse, including children and suitable specialist perpetrator responses.

2.3. These are our priority amendments. We support a number of others listed in a cross sector briefing to which we have signed up.

3. Introduction

3.1 We welcome many of the changes in the Bill, including the new definition of Domestic Abuse and improvements to court arrangements for victims.

3.2 Whilst the bill makes some progress towards a strategic approach to perpetrators - for example through provisions that could extend the use of DA behaviour change programmes– these provisions are limited. *A much more comprehensive strategy on perpetrators is needed. It is simply impossible to prevent or end domestic abuse without responding to the people causing the harm.*

4. Proposed amendments

4.1 DA perpetrator behaviour change programmes must be available, effective, and safe to ensure the proposed Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) have impact.

4.2 Recent data – including the independent evaluation of Drive – has shown that perpetrator interventions can be effective at changing behaviour and making victims safer.

4.3 There is a welcome provision in the Bill enabling judges to mandate participation on behaviour change programmes as part of the new DAPOs (DA Protection Orders). However, this is likely to have little, no or even negative effect until such programmes are widely available and quality assured.

4.4 Due to limited funding, some areas have no such programmes and no single area in England or Wales has an adequate range or volume of programmes. Less than 1% of perpetrators receive a specialist intervention to address their behaviour. For this reason we are supporting the amendment detailed in paragraph 4.13

4.5 We are also concerned that the Bill is silent on quality control of perpetrator work. This work can be risky both for the professionals involved and if done badly, for the associated victims. At the moment, anyone can set up a perpetrator programme and sell places on it. If DAPOs do mark the beginning of an area where perpetrators are challenged to change, then the government has a responsibility to ensure this work is a safe and effective.

4.6 Strong quality assurance systems for perpetrator work already exist, there is just no requirement in the Bill that they are used. In other words, when a judge orders a perpetrator onto a programme, without an amendment to the Bill, there is no guarantee of the safety or effectiveness of that programme.

4.7 We are therefore proposing an amendment to Clause 33 to ensure that interventions required as a result of the new DAPO, such as behaviour change programmes ordered by judges, meet a minimum quality standard. [This amendment](#) will require the Home Secretary to publish standards (separately from the Bill) which providers of perpetrator programmes must meet. Such standards already exist and could form the backbone of the guidance.

4.8 The behaviour change element of DAPOs fit within wider proposals about how DAPOs will work, who can apply for them (not just police), victim consent (not required), how notice is served on a perpetrator etc. There are concerns about the detail of how this will work, and potential unintended consequences that could be harmful for the victim. This is one of the reasons that they are being piloted. A thorough review of DAPOs is needed – involving the DA commissioner and input from survivors –before any national roll-out. It may be sensible to fix the requirement for such a review in the legislation.

4.9 We are therefore proposing an amendment to ensure a transparent and thorough review of DAPOs and DAPNs – with input from design stage onwards from the DA and Victims Commissioners, specialist DA sector and DA survivors, before any national roll out.

4.10 We welcome the government’s willingness to fund an additional response to cope with a corona-related surge in demand for domestic abuse services. Whilst the majority of this money has not yet reached the sector (and sadly most services cannot surge provision until the money lands), the corona impact may last months rather than weeks, so it is still useful. As lockdown eases, domestic abuse services expect additional people to come forward for help who felt unable to do so whilst ‘trapped’ at home. Drive is also preparing for a potential increase in risk to victims as lock-down eases, affecting some perpetrators’ sense of control.

4.11 The Chancellor announced £10million for perpetrator work in his budget in March. This was very welcome and we hope will stimulate some important work beyond corona specific interventions. However, this money has to be spent by spring 2021, and therefore does not provide the long-term response needed to go hand-in-hand with the provisions in the Bill.

4.12 The government’s impact assessment for the Bill estimates that the new DAPOs will generate a need for 15,200 *extra* places on behaviour change and drug and alcohol programmes. The average quality assured perpetrator programme costs between £1500-£2200 to deliver. If just a third of these programmes were DA behaviour change programmes and taking the low end of the unit cost scale, the legislation will call for at least an extra £7.5m annual spend on DA behaviour change programmes. There is a strong financial case for this spend, thanks to evidence – from programmes like Drive – pointing to reductions in re-offending.¹

4.13 We therefore support Barnardo’s amendment to clause 53 calling for a widened statutory duty on public bodies, backed with the requisite funding, to provide services to victims of domestic abuse, including children and suitable specialist perpetrator responses.

5. The need for a perpetrator strategy

5.1 Domestic abuse is form of violent crime. Over a third of all ‘violence against the person’ crimes recorded by police are domestic abuse.² If we want to make progress on reducing violent crime (as per the Prime Minister’s 20% reduction target) we need to think about reducing domestic abuse, not just responding to it once it has already happened. There are proven ways of doing this.

5.2 Perpetrator interventions: The Drive Project has been shown to reduce the number of perpetrators using physical abuse by 82% and jealous and controlling behaviour by 73%. It is similarly effective at reducing other types of abuse.³

¹ Marianne Hester et al., “Evaluation of the Drive Project – A Three-year Pilot to Address High-risk, High-harm Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse”, University of Bristol, Dec 2019 http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DriveYear3_UoBEvaluationReport_Final.pdf

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsendlandandwales/yearendingmarch2019>

³ Marianne Hester et al., “Evaluation of the Drive Project – A Three-year Pilot to Address High-risk, High-harm Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse”, University of Bristol, Dec 2019 http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DriveYear3_UoBEvaluationReport_Final.pdf

5.3 Drive is for perpetrators who have been assessed as posing a very high risk. There are other evaluated programmes responding effectively to perpetrators at both high and lower risk levels. Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPP) use group work to change attitudes and challenge behaviour. Early intervention programmes build communities' ability to recognise abusive behaviour and get help. Yet there are no government proposals on the table for any national strategy to make this range of crucial interventions available everywhere.

5.4 Changing the public narrative and upskilling professionals: There has been important work funded by government on identifying victims of domestic abuse early, but less on perpetrators. We need to kick off a national conversation that gives people the confidence to say to their friends “actually, that’s not ok” when they come across abusive behaviour. We also need to upskill a range of professionals – whether GPs or housing officers – to recognise signs of abusive and controlling behaviour and know what next steps to take. The Welsh government is ahead of England in this respect with published guidance for public servants.

5.5 All government departments need to be involved in building a society that puts pressure on perpetrators, rather than victims, to change. A perpetrator strategy would help stimulate them to do so. For example, we are keen to see the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government extend its important work on domestic abuse to include accommodation solutions for perpetrators that enable their removal from the home, helping victims to stay safe at home, if they wish to do so. This would help effect the Home Secretary’s stated policy that “perpetrators should be the ones who have to leave the family home, not the supposed loved ones whom they torment and abuse.” (Downing St briefing, April 11th).

5.6 We are therefore calling on the government to publish a Perpetrator Strategy for England and Wales to go alongside the Bill. Over 80 organisations have signed up to a ‘call to action’, asking the government to publish such a strategy. This call has also been supported by the DA commissioner, the CPS, the Victims Commissioner for London, the Association of PCCs and the Royal College of GPs.

Annex

6. More information about costs of Drive

6.1 Research by Bristol University has found that under the status quo, a perpetrator who has been assessed as high risk and whose case is heard at MARAC (a multi-agency risk assessment conference for victims), generates costs of £63,000 as a result of his/her DA behaviour. This cost is made up of costs to police, the justice system, health and other public services.⁴

6.2 The average perpetrator studied was heard at MARAC over three times in a period of around two years. Responding to perpetrators time and time again is very expensive. Drive – which has an operational cost of £1800-£2000 per perpetrator – reduces abuse and the number of times perpetrators are heard at MARAC. The study also found that Drive reduced the other (non-domestic abuse) offending behaviour of perpetrators.⁵

June 2020

⁴ Marianne Hester et al., “Evaluation of the Drive Project – A Three-year Pilot to Address High-risk, High-harm Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse”, University of Bristol, Dec 2019 http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DriveYear3_UoBEvaluationReport_Final.pdf

⁵ ibid