

## Home Office Domestic Violence Case Studies and Feedback

### *Blaenau Gwent*

#### The set up phase

Blaenau Gwent Domestic Abuse Service (BGDAS) was selected as a pilot as reported domestic abuse has increased by 38% in the last three years, but 55% of these crimes remained undetected. The Community Safety partnership had a good record of working effectively and the local domestic abuse agency team had ideas about the project that they wanted to try.



The initial focus was to deliver a participatory budgeting event. BGDAS attracted what proved to be a highly creative and enthusiastic group of people from across the community. Many were young, and most had been touched by domestic violence in some way.

*Fig 1 – Residents' working group members focus on the real issue using an exercise they designed.*

#### The issue

The focus of the BGDAS PD project, defined by community members, was “**people don't talk about domestic abuse.**” They checked their view of the problem by collecting data at the participatory budgeting event, and over 250 people participated in their survey. This confirmed their view that people found it difficult to address.

The community group then found Positive Deviants who were open to talking about domestic abuse and who were able to get others talking. The Positive Deviants' successful strategies were replicated through a “diary room” video process that has been taken round the community. Cath James, Project Manager of BGDAS says: “*The videos gave people 'permission' to speak. For some this broke a lifetime silence, unblocking the belief that abuse is a private issue and creating a change in their behaviour.*”

#### What has been achieved

Nearly 200 people have been engaged since the project began. Sgt Andy O'Keefe, Gwent Police, said: “*Getting people to talk about domestic abuse creates a belief that reporting incidents is permitted and allows those already in abusive relationships to receive help. The community and police are tracking the effect on referrals.*” Reporting of incidents increased over 15% during the course of the project.

Chief Constable Carmel Napier from Gwent Police, who has the ACPO lead for Domestic Abuse in England and Wales, commented: “*Breaking the taboo and talking about domestic abuse is powerful. It takes an insidious, frightening crime that goes on behind closed doors out into the open, building the confidence of people to talk about and address it together.*”

## Southwark

### The set-up phase

It took a while for a local community leader to emerge in Southwark. Eventually, a leader of a faith group volunteered to take on the project. He was keen to try the new approach and has the quiet authority and facilitative skills that are important in positive deviance. He also has access to a large social network in Peckham and the surrounding area.

### The Issue

The leader attracted a working group of eight people of different ages. They looked at the national crime statistics and compared data across London boroughs. They obtained data, current to the last rolling 12 months, from the Metropolitan Police MetMIS system. They also developed their own questionnaire which was used to obtain data from local people on their concerns and thoughts about crime in the local and surrounding areas. As a result, this group is now working on **how to prevent 9 – 17 year olds joining gangs**. They were interested to find that their own research on the ages that young people were most at risk coincided with Police data. Also, 21% of all youth crime takes place in Peckham and the neighbouring south east wards.

They have collected examples of positive deviance. Key themes that emerged are:

- Doing something a person really likes keeps them out of trouble
- It's important for young people to have real opportunities that they can believe in to develop their skills and talents
- Having a strong supporter/support mechanism that the young person can believe in makes a difference – it doesn't have to be a family member

### The outcomes so far

The team are now moving on to the observation and enquiry to find out how they did it and who did what. They are really taken with the idea of helping by finding coping strategies and have developed their own badge. See Figure 2 on the right.



Their work was presented to the Council, and has gained commitment to further support to implement the new behaviours. A letter from the Council supporting a funding bid comments on the way that a cohesive and active community group has developed which is not making demands on the Council and which was created with a modest investment. The group has reached out to about 15 reformed gang members and has brought about 30 people in from outside the original faith group to contribute to the project. They are becoming a charity which will roll out training based on PD behaviours to parents in Peckham.

## Cambridgeshire

In **Cambridgeshire**, two projects emerged, thanks to early preparatory work in the Domestic Abuse Partnership.

### Cambridge city

#### The set-up phase

A working group of survivors of domestic abuse, who were recruited through the local Women's Aid group, has identified a problem in reaching people who are looking to escape abusive situations. The group identified that both agencies and the public have negative image of people who have been touched by domestic abuse. This means that people in abusive relationships do not recognise that they are in this situation, and if they do, that they feel that the agencies will not take them seriously.

#### The issue

Their work has been to find how positive deviants, the survivors of abuse, project a positive image. This has then been used to improve communications with agencies and to draft publicity to raise awareness in the public.

#### The outcomes

The outcomes have already been to completely change the perspectives of both the County Council and the Police. The group of 8 women have been successful in getting both agencies to "devictimise" their perception of people in abusive relationships. Their poster to raise awareness shows an attractive mother and daughter, not someone with bruises, and the words speak about how someone in an abusive relationship really feels and describes how surviving and moving on feels.

The team has been enthusiastic and committed and it has helped those who have been through abuse start to gain confidence, especially when working with men. The project leader and one of the women came to give a presentation about the project to representatives of the Council

### Last year we just existed ... .... this year we are living



My partner was a difficult man. It was hard to know where I was with him. One minute he was lovely, the next furious about something. My actions seemed to upset him so much. The way I dressed, the way I kept the house. Some days everything I did was wrong. He made me feel it was me. I felt entirely responsible for him and I tried to change. I relied on the good days to keep us together but the bad days became more frequent, especially after our daughter was born. The constant worry about the consequences if he got angry took over and dominated our lives.

I felt dependent on him for everything but my life was becoming unmanageable. My daughter was obviously affected by his angry outbursts. I couldn't make excuses for his abusive behaviour anymore. I couldn't think how to make my life different. I didn't know what to do. But I spoke to people who understood. They helped me make a plan to keep safe and take control of my situation.

Now I decide how I spend my money, when I go to bed, how long I take shopping, who I talk to and when. I open my own post and answer the phone. Looking back I can't believe what I mistook for love. It's not been easy but I have rediscovered life.

### Beat domestic abuse

Contact people who understand and can help you.

and local agencies and demonstrated what they had achieved in building confidence and a new role for survivors. The group is bidding for funding to continue and will also have a small amount of funding from the Council in the next few months.

## Fenland project

### The set-up phase

The first activity, driven by a small group of former service users, was to place a small advertisement in a local paper about rural isolation. From this, a diverse group of local people came to a meeting and the conversation turned to the impact of being isolated.



### The issue

The topic of **how to escape from domestic abuse in a rural location**, where it is physically very difficult to get away from home, arose from the general conversation. This caused one local councillor quite a lot of difficulty, as he did not believe that it happened in his area.

### The outcome

The initial group grew to 23 but has now settled to become a working group of 12. It had a relatively slow start because the project leader was ill and there have been several emergencies that have taken priority.

However, the group has kept together and is delivering. This commitment, and the fact that action is happening, is seen to be unusual by the professionals involved.

Based on the positive deviant behaviours of those who did manage to get help, the group has put together a communications campaign. They have reached out to over 92 people (59 women and 33 men) to raise awareness of domestic abuse and of how people caught in an abusive relationship can get help.

More than half of the people contacted knew someone who had experienced an abusive relationship. The campaign has focused on the different kinds of abuse that can happen, which people are not so aware of, such as financial and pet abuse, and where and how to get specialist help.

The group wants to continue and the leader, who is part of a national charity, wants to expand the work into Lincolnshire and Norfolk.

## Participant feedback

### From action learning workshops

- It was good to be here and I have noted various ideas which I will take back to my group in Southwark
- Very morale boosting
- Asking people questions opens up new ideas
- I want to ensure that our project continues after the September deadline

### Key messages exercise:

- PD tackles a range of subjects
- It can be quick
- It includes everyone
- It builds support and friendship
- People do not have to be experts to raise awareness of DA
- Saves lives!
- Cost effective
- Want the message to be shared with our local commissioners
- Valuing the journey as much (or more) than the end results
- Everyone should get the message
- It celebrates our communities making a difference rather than where we have gone wrong
- The community itself as a lot of answers and opinions on the subject but need to be given a safe space to air their views.
- Public national support from the Home Office of House of Commons would get us good local support

### From the survey

What I enjoyed the most

- All - I love how we were able to make our views and identify where we thought the public would benefit and to approach the topic.
- Meeting participants from a cross section of society and hearing about their background, contribution which led to improved well being since joining the project.
- Seeing the effect it had on those who have taken part in the project - it clearly had an impact on the way that they thought of the subject of domestic abuse
- Working as a team and meeting new friends

### What I will take away from this:

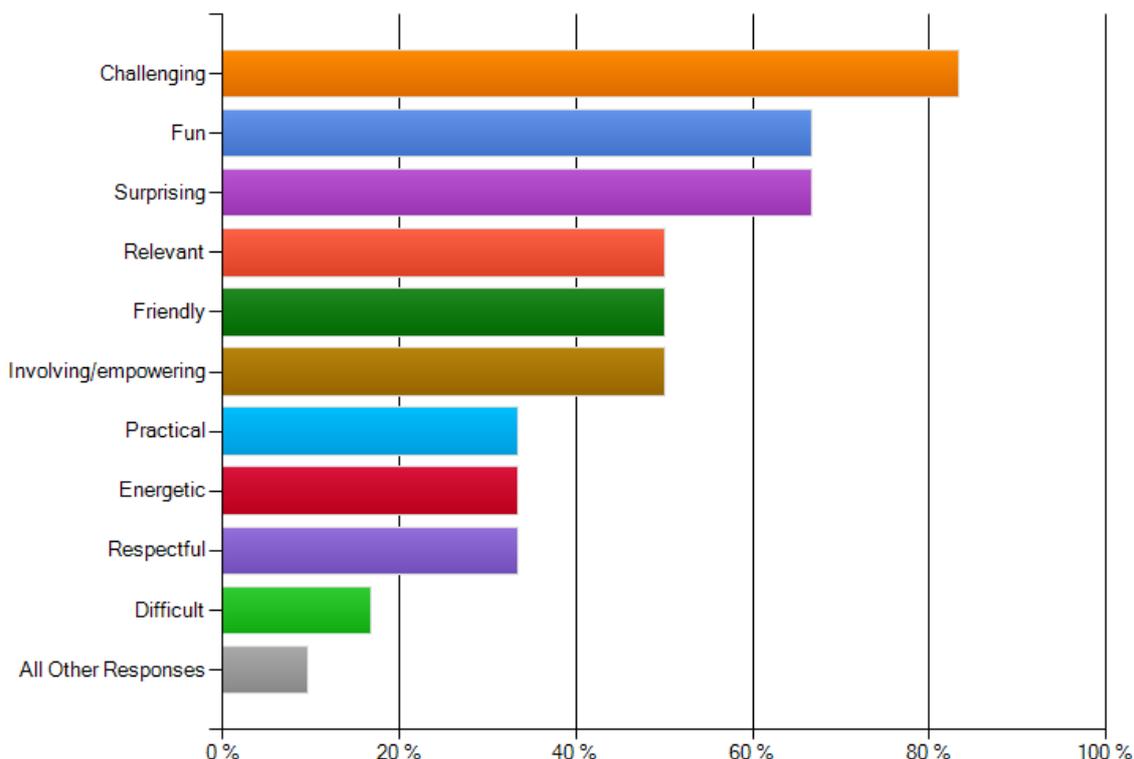
- The knowledge that folks do care and are genuinely concerned about what is happening in the community.
- How I look at views and approaches around issues instead of think it has to be funded
- Knowing that the groups will survive and PD is being promoted to others.
- Memories and my new friends
- Yes - that you don't have to be overt in order to get a point across. You're more likely to get honest, reliable answers from a more subtle, gentle approach

- The process of community development can be applied to community safety in a useful way. I feel that through using partnerships between CD experts working with community safety agencies good community results can be achieved.

### What was challenging

- To decide on our mission and vision statements.
- Most challenging was trying to explain it and once we found the technique it pretty much all combined the approach to the general public
- Not giving advice and asking questions to help participants move forward when they face challenges.
- Arranging our event, but it was enjoyable
- At times I felt the project was restricted by Woodward Lewis intervention as I gained the impression that they did not believe we had grasped the concept correctly

How would you say that this compared with other courses or programmes? Please select words to complete this sentence - "this was more ..... than other courses or programmes I have been on"! You can choose as many or as few as you like.



How far did the project achieve the following results for you? (1 is not at all, 8 is a lot)

