

<b>Section A</b>		
<b>Institution:</b> Durham University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 21, Sociology		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes – Broadening understandings, influencing public policies, and changing practice		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> Between March 2009 and December 2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Nicole Westmarland	Professor of Criminology	2006 - date
Julia Downes	Research Associate	2011 - 2013
Richard Wistow	Research Associate	2001 - date
Julie Chalder-Mills	Research Associate	2009 - 2010
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> Between August 2014 and December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>Section B</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Project Mirabal is an award-winning programme of research that has changed how Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPPs) are researched, understood, commissioned, funded, regulated, designed and implemented across the world - particularly in the UK, USA and Australia. These changes have informed: i) UK policy, specifically contributing to perpetrator sections of the UK Government 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy' and being used by a range of political and third sector stakeholders to increase the focus on perpetrators in the Domestic Abuse Bill; ii) in the European Commission, through being the reference point for good practice in measuring the effectiveness of DVPPs under Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention; iii) effecting changes to DVPP programme delivery in the UK and internationally; and iv) changing domestic violence practitioner perceptions about measuring success and 'what works' for DVPPs.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated around 2.3 million adults in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2020. Over a third of all violence crimes are domestic abuse related. Historically, most interventions have been focused on victims and children, for example advocacy and refuges. Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPPs) are groupwork programmes, which aim to change the behaviour of perpetrators in order to increase the safety of victims and children. However, their funding, development and inclusion in government policy has been stilted due to contested academic evidence about whether they 'work'. Previous research has reported mixed findings, with some showing little or no change. The research team believed that these mixed findings could be explained through differences in research design. Project Mirabal was designed to find a way through this impasse. With funding from the Northern Rock Foundation, researchers from Durham and London Metropolitan University with support from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine ran a pilot study to understand what 'success' meant from different perspectives. The research was conducted with well established, accredited, 'high quality' community DVPPs running groupwork programmes for male perpetrators. R1 and R2 describe how we developed six 'measures of success' through 73 interviews conducted in 2009 with men attending DVPPs, women partners and ex-partners, DVPP staff, and funders and commissioners. The six measures covered: 1) improved relationships based on respect and effective communication; 2) an expanded 'space for action' for women; 3) safety and freedom from violence and abuse; 4) safe and positive shared parenting; 5) an enhanced awareness of self and others; and 6) safer healthier childhoods. These new measures represented a transformative shift in how the potential impact of DVPPs could be viewed and formed the basis for measuring change in our ESRC and Northern Rock Foundation funded study (2010-2015). A multi-method approach was used. Participants were perpetrators attending the DVPPs, their ex</p>		

or current partners, and children. Data collected included longitudinal (15 months over 5 time points) structured telephone interviews with 100 women, two in-depth interviews with 64 men and 48 women near the start and the end of the DVPP, interviews with 13 children, and 105 programme staff and other stakeholders.

R3 is the final project report and details a range of improved outcomes relating to the six measures. R3 represents the first multi-site, longitudinal DVPP outcome study in the UK. Physical and sexual violence was not just reduced but ended for the majority of the victims. Improvements were also seen across the other measures, although not to the same extent. Some forms of abuse, such as financial abuse, only improved marginally. Hence, the research did not show 'perpetrator programmes work' but instead, due to the expanded measures of success used, a more nuanced picture.

R4, R5 and R6 provide a deeper analysis of the qualitative data. They expand on the techniques used by DVPPs, in particular the use and abuse of 'Time Out' and how the technique could be adapted to be more relational. The ways in which the challenging of gendered assumptions about masculinity in relationships and parenting also emerged as important in enabling men to change. While the measures of success and the outcome study were able to show the extent to which behaviour changed, the in-depth qualitative analysis showed how this change happened – with important implications for DVPP delivery.

### **3. References to the research**

The research findings were published as a research report, as well as in six leading peer reviewed journals, three book chapters, and three briefing notes. The six publications listed below have received a total of 323 academic citations. Publication 2 won an award for making a significant contribution to the journal and to the work of safeguarding children (2015 Wiley Prize) and Publication 6 is the most read article in the journal as of December 2020.

[R1] Westmarland, N. and Kelly, L. (2012) Why extending measurements of 'success' in domestic violence perpetrator programmes matters for Social Work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 43 (6), 1092-1110. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcs049

[R2] Alderson, S., Westmarland, N. and Kelly, L. (2012) The Need for Accountability to, and Support for, Children of Men on Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes. *Child Abuse Review*, 22 (3), 182-193. DOI: 10.1002/car.2223

[R3] Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2015) *Domestic violence perpetrator programmes: steps towards change. Project Mirabal Final Report*. London and Durham: London Metropolitan University and Durham University.

[R4] Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2016) Naming and defining 'Domestic Violence': lessons from research with violent men. *Feminist Review*, 112(1): 113-127. DOI 10.1057/fr.2015.52

[R5] Wistow, R., Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2017) 'Time Out': A strategy for Reducing Men's Violence against Women in Relationships? *Violence Against Women*, 23 (6), 730-748. DOI: 10.1177/1077801216647944

[R6] Downes, J. Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2019) 'It's a work in progress': men's accounts of gender and change in their use of coercive control, *Journal of Gender Based Violence*, 3 (3), 267-282. DOI: 10.1332/239868019X15627570242850

### **4. Details of the impact**

In 2010, before Project Mirabal, domestic violence perpetrators were rarely mentioned in policy documents, organisations working with perpetrators struggled to gain funding, and the efficacy of interventions were frequently questioned. Without a UK evidence base on the outcomes for victims and children related to perpetrator attendance at a DVPP, it was difficult to make a convincing argument for policy or funding commitments. 10 years on, in 2020, perpetrators have been included in the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020, nearly 100 organisations have signed a Call to Action for a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy for England and Wales, DVPPs are included in the End Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-20, and there is greater confidence and clarity that can be given to policy makers, funders, and multi-agency partners about the ability of DVPPs to change the behaviour of violent men and improve safety and freedom for

women and children. A series of engagement activities including briefing notes, open access journal papers, a website with videos and tools for practitioners ([www.projectmirabal.co.uk](http://www.projectmirabal.co.uk)), meetings with policy makers, and collaborations with voluntary and statutory sector organisations over a 10-year period has meant that Project Mirabal has provided a central contribution to these achievements.

Recognition that there was, for the first time, evidence that DVPPs could create behaviour change for some perpetrators was publicly acknowledged the day the final report [R3] was launched in 2015 by Theresa May, then Home Secretary, who stated that the findings provided '*valuable insights into the effectiveness of domestic violence perpetrator programmes*' and announced that the research would support a shift towards addressing the 'root causes' of domestic violence [E1]. Project Mirabal findings were then used to guide the perpetrators section of the UK Government's 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-20' [E2], which outlined the priorities, actions and investment into initiatives aimed at preventing violence and abuse. The strategy draws directly on R3 in the section 'Perpetrators: Changing behaviours to prevent abuse and reduce offending' stating '*Within domestic abuse, there are high levels of repeat victimisation and less than 1% of perpetrators receive a specialist intervention. Previously, the evidence base for perpetrator interventions has been mixed, contributing to a shortage of such programmes. However, local areas are increasingly recognising the importance of tackling perpetrators as the root cause of abuse, drawing on a growing evidence base for their value as illustrated by the recent Mirabal project findings.*'

Respect, the national charity leading the development of safe, effective work with perpetrators, used the Mirabal findings as the primary evidence that DVPPs work for men who are ready, willing, and able to change, and to lobby government and other agencies and make the case for DVPPs. Respect CEO, Jo Todd, said that she has '*been able to cite Project Mirabal findings with policy makers within the Home Office, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and with funders and commissioners to advocate for DVPPs*', saying that since Mirabal '*it's clear that this has gone up the priority list*' [E3]. Additionally, Respect, working with the Drive Project, (a partnership between Respect, SafeLives and Social Finance established to address a gap in work with high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse) were able to cite the Mirabal findings as an example of the '*growing body of research to demonstrate the effectiveness of quality-assured interventions*' in the 'Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy for England and Wales – Call to Action'[E4]. This publication, signed by a broad coalition including 65 third sector organisations, police forces/crime commissioners and businesses calls on the UK Government to include a perpetrator strategy as part of the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21.

The impact that the Mirabal findings had on providing an evidence base for intervening with perpetrators has been described by Thangam Debbonaire MP as a core reason for the greater inclusion of perpetrators in the Domestic Abuse Bill. Debbonaire used the findings in a meeting with Victoria Atkins MP in her role as Minister for Women, distributing hard copies of the final report [R3] to give the academic weight when lobbying for this. In her Commons speech for the second reading of the 'Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence' (Ratification of Convention) Bill, Debbonaire quoted Mirabal extensively stating '*they [Westmarland et al.] found that most men who completed a Respect-accredited domestic violence perpetrator programme...stop using violence and reduce the instance of most other forms of abuse against their partner. At the start, almost all the women said that their partners had used some form of physical or sexual violence in the past three months. Twelve months later, the research team found that after their partner or ex-partner had completed the programme, most women said that the physical and sexual violence had stopped—most, but not all.*' [E5a]

In a separate testimonial interview, Debbonaire argued that Project Mirabal has been an important factor in formal and informal lobbying for more perpetrator interventions, using it in the All-Party Parliamentary Group on domestic violence perpetrators, briefing various MPs including front benchers about evidence on DVPPs, and raising DVPPs and Mirabal in Oral questions

including in Justice and Home Office. She states: *'Having such rigorous academic research, it's not the only reason why we've got perpetrators in the Bill – but it wasn't in at all before and if it wasn't for Mirabal findings making their way to ministerial eyes and for MPs to use that in internal and external lobbyists then it still might not be.'* [E5b]

At an international level, Project Mirabal has been hailed as ground-breaking because it represents a radically different, wider way of understanding and measuring behaviour change. This broader approach (R1 and R3) has been cited in international plans, frameworks and policies. The Council of Europe 'Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence', which came into force in August 2014, places obligations on member states to take action to prevent violence against women. Article 16 requires state parties to set up or support programmes for domestic violence perpetrators (Article 16, paragraph 1). The Council of Europe produced a supporting publication 'Domestic and Sexual Violence Perpetrator Programmes: Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention', which provides practical, evidence-based advice to policymakers and practitioners across all 47 Council of Europe member states on the design of the required intervention programmes. This document highlights the need for defining success in DVPPs and identifies the six Mirabal measures as a means to achieve this, describing them as *'a nuanced and subtle understanding of success'* which is *'more realistic and grounded'* and which focus on *'much more than just ending the violent behaviour of the perpetrator'*. [E6]

The six measures of success influenced the Australian Royal Commission into Family Violence which was established in 2015 in response to a number of family violence related deaths in the state of Victoria. In its summary and recommendations report (2016), Project Mirabal is referenced on ten occasions [E7a]. The report lists key findings from the six Project Mirabal measures of success and these are acknowledged as having 'shifted the focus' of DVPPs (or MBCPs – Men's Behaviour Change Programmes in Australia). The Mirabal finding that the length and depth of programmes was important to creating change was also used to provide empirical evidence to claims made by witnesses to the Commission that programme duration was important. Recommendation 86 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence was that the Victorian Government convene a committee of experts on perpetrator interventions and behaviour change programmes to advise the government on what should be available in Victoria [E7a]. Westmarland was one of two international experts invited to join the Commission's Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions. Westmarland provided advice based on Project Mirabal findings in Commission meetings and presented the findings in person to the Special Minister of State, Gavin Jennings. The Mirabal measures were identified by the Advisory Committee report as an innovative way of providing a consistent way of measuring success of DVPPs concluding that *'A common evaluation framework for perpetrator interventions could address some of the challenges [with inconsistency of evaluating outcomes outlined earlier in the report] ... and set out some general principles to ensure rigour and consistency in evaluations and better comparison of outcomes'* [E7b]. Committee members were noted as making a vital contribution to the Victorian Government's family reform agenda, and Westmarland was personally thanked for her expertise and experience which Jennings described as *'invaluable.'* [E7c].

Alongside the high-level contributions of Project Mirabal to changes in policy there have been a series of direct service level improvements in the way DVPPs actually carry out their behaviour change interventions. The changes stem from the nuance in the findings (not just 'they don't work, or 'they do work') [R3], and the new knowledge about how change happens [R1-6]. For example, many DVPPs were concerned about the Mirabal finding that financial abuse only reduced very slightly after attendance on a DVPP. The Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP) in London (the largest DVPP in England and Wales) arranged a workshop for their staff to discuss how best to respond to this finding, which they described as *'a wake up call'*, particularly given that they report most of their work is not about physical violence but coercive control. The evidence pointed to a need to increase the focus on non-physical abuse, resulting in the financial abuse part of the manual that the DVPP is based on and, which provides the materials their facilitators all follow, being re-written [E8a].

In Scotland, a national set of programmes called the Caledonian Model work with criminal justice as well as community referrals. Specifically, the Caledonian Model 'programme theory manual', the guide which summarises the evidence base and that programme managers and facilitators use to underpin their practice, references Mirabal and lists the six measures in relation the fact that it '*considers men's programmes as part of an integrated system and a co-ordinated community response*' rather than as isolated interventions. [E8b].

The 'Time Out Technique' is a temporary interruption technique which requires the perpetrator to remove themselves from a situation. There are rules about what the perpetrator should do and not do during the Time Out. Project Mirabal research [R5] found that Time Outs were used in different ways, and sometimes misappropriated by perpetrators to extend their controlling behaviour. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Ministry of Justice, changed their digital media content on the Time Out Technique to take into account Mirabal research including how to reduce the potential for misappropriation [R5]. According to Jason Morris, Senior Interventions Design Manager for DVPPs at NOMS, Westmarland '*used her expertise to supervise this piece to ensure that it was as consistent as possible with the evidence-base.*' This new digital media clip was then rolled out across the National Probation Service and also broadcast on the WayOut TV channel in 50 prisons.

Mirabal has brought a greater level of sophistication to understandings of what compromises success and in as such has become the 'go to research' that is cited by practitioners, particularly in the UK, Australia, and the US, when the question of whether DVPPs 'work' is raised. This is important in ensuring that DVPPs continue to develop to be as effective as possible. Stephen Madill, Senior Social Worker at Safer Families Edinburgh states '*I've noticed a difference when you're able to talk about the Mirabal data and specific items that have led to less cynicism, not so many sceptical looks on people's faces, and this been a journey for workers over the last 30 years.*' [E9a]. In the USA, New York City Administration for Children's Services conducted a three-year demonstration project, providing prevention and clinical services to families who are involved in child welfare and impacted by domestic violence, using '*tools provided by Project Mirabal as the framework for measuring program impact on participants*' [E9b]. Similarly in Australia, Rodney Vlasis, policy analyst, writer, researcher and trainer in family and domestic violence perpetrator interventions and intervention systems nationally states that in Australia, '*It would be uncommon for anyone providing a presentation or responding to queries about the effectiveness of men's behaviour change programs without at least mentioning this research and its findings.*' [E9c].

In November 2019 Westmarland was awarded the 'Ed Gondolf COMPASS Award' in the USA, which '*recognizes and honors those who have significantly guided and expanded efforts to protect survivors through advancing and evaluating accountable perpetrator intervention research and programming*' for the '*importance, significance and tangible contribution it [Mirabal] has made*' toward intervention programmes around the world. [E10]

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

E1 Home Secretary quote in the press release.

E2 HM Government Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy

E3 Jo Todd testimonial

E4 Drive project Call to Action

E5 Thangam Debbonaire MP evidence 5a) Hansard and 5b) testimonial (combined into one)

E6 Council of Europe

E7 Australian commission evidence 7a) Australian commission report, 7b) advisory committee report and 7c) thank you letter

E8 DVPPs evidence 8a) DVIP testimonial, 8b) Caledonian manual 8c) NOMS testimonial

E9 Practitioner quotes E9a) Stephen Madill testimonial E9b) NYC email E9c) Rodney Vlasis email

E10 COMPASS Award letter