

Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research

Creating and Sharing Knowledge

Community of Practice Report Domestic and family violence specialists within Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support Services - Peer support session

19th March 2020

Attendance

All DFV specialists within FACC and IFSS were invited to express their interest in the Peer support group and at the time of the session, 17 practitioners had put their name forward. 9 Practitioners accepted the invitation and 6 participants were able to attend on the day. Due to decreases in staffing (as a result of the Covid 19 situation), there were 4 apologies on the morning of the COP from Practitioners who were unable to participate.

Facilitator: Liz Boardman, Communities of Practice Project Officer, (QCDFVR)

Background: Preparation for the Meeting

Following on from discussion in the previous Peer Support CoP session, it was decided to structure this next session focused around the primary concern for DFV specialists within IFS/FACC: engaging fathers who use violence.

CoP project officer Liz Boardman consulted with Dr Brian Sullivan and Mr Mark Walters from within QCDFVR who are both experienced practitioners and academics within the Men's behavior change sector. From this consultation, an agenda was developed offering a broad structure and some content to illicit participation for the peer support session including a case study in which to anchor discussion.

Case study – How to engage men who use violence

Jack and Jill have been living together for 4 years. Jill has three children; Mary (10yrs), Peter (6yrs) and Paul (11mths old). Jack is the biological parent to Paul but Mary and Peter are from a previous relationship. Jill is currently 6 months pregnant. Both Jill and Jack work part time but they have been referred to IFS due to Mary and Paul often coming to school without food. The school noted that Peter has very challenging behaviours and is often in trouble at school for fighting. Mary however is an exemplary student but has no friends at school. Paul attends daycare and his carers have noted he is significantly developmentally delayed and not reaching his age appropriate milestones.

Jack has a Police DVO against him from a previous incident with Jill last year but he has never spoken to anyone about it and neither has she.

Jack monitors Jill's movements very closely, he drives her everywhere as Jill's drivers licence has been suspended. He is very controlling with their finances and Jill is given very little money to cover all the children's and household expenses. He constantly calls or texts her whenever you speak to her and states that she has to answer the phone otherwise Jack will get 'angry'. Jill said that Jack has talked about killing her if she were to ever leave him or cheat on him.

Jill has managed to tell you in your brief encounters that Jack has a 'sort temper' and often 'explodes' whenever the kids are too 'noisy' or if Jill says 'the wrong thing'. Jill admits that she is scared of Jack and does not know what he might do. In your last session with Jill, she mentions that Jack has always talked about getting a gun to 'protect his property' and yesterday she saw what looked like a gun under their bed.

Jack has ignored all your calls and correspondence and refuses to allow you to talk alone to Jill at their house. All your communication with Jill has been while she was at work. Jack has refused to take any responsibility for the children's situation or the DVO or his anger. He refuses to talk about anything but Jill's inability to balance a budget and discipline the children.



Supporting documentation was sourced including [Perpetrator Accountability in Child Protection Practice Paper](#) (a resource from Western Australia Department of Child Protection). Appendix 1 of this document (Indicators of Engagement Tool) was distributed to interested parties with the Agenda with an invitation to add items to the agenda that participants may have felt would be relevant.

Meeting Overview

Presentation

After an Acknowledgement of Country and a mindfulness exercise, the group had a brief discussion about the current climate in which we all find ourselves.

Some of the participants spoke about plans to move to remote connections with their clients where possible. There was some discussion as well around increased time of risk for victims of DFV who may use school or work etc (their own or their partner's) as a safe space or a time of respite from the violence. It was also mentioned that financial stresses and job loss will also increase risk to families experiencing DFV. There was general consensus that DFV specialist's workload would increase from now on due to practitioner's illness and increase demand for support.

Discussion then turned to the topic of the session following the Framework set out by David Adams Model of Perpetrator Change: See it, Own it, Do Something about it.

Case study – How to engage men who use violence

- What are our points of access to perpetrator?
- David Adams model of perpetrator change:
 - See it, Own it, Do something about it.



- Where is Jack on this continuum?
- Indicators of Engagement tool (Perpetrator Accountability in Child Protection)



Case study – How to engage men who use violence

- Engagement is the key determinant to change!
Research has shown this time and time again that once we can reach and make a connection with someone, they are more likely to move to a space where they can see the violence, own the violence and then do something about it.
- Building rapport – remain invitational. Confrontational approach is counter productive – How do we do this?
- Looking for the 'buy in' – What's in it for them? How do they see themselves? A 'good dad' or a 'nice guy'? How does the behaviour fit with this view of their own emotional framework?



Case study – How to engage men who use violence

- When we see defensive posture from perp, their *shame* and *fear* are activating – and so their openness to change goes away.
- How do we approach this? – Motivational interviewing and naive enquiry.
- This demonstrates **compassion, not colluding**.
NB: If there is no engagement with abusive parent – return to IPV victim and safety plan.

 **Close the Loop!!**

- How do we share this approach/information with our non DFV specialist colleagues?

 QCDFVR



The group was then directed back to their Practice Principles to ensure work is grounded in the three key areas of focus.

Participants were very engaged in the process and shared their current approaches with each other. It was noted that time can be a factor when working with perpetrators and often the rapport building needed to engage can be delicate and time-consuming work, let alone any hope in beginning the shift of behaviours or attitudes.

Next Meeting date

The next session will be scheduled for Thursday April 23rd at 10am. In this session we will look at Risk Assessment tools and interpretations of Risk Assessments. A request was made to members of the CoP to collate their risk assessment tools for DFV and if possible, provide a copy through to the CoP Project officer to collate for the next session.