



Cherwell Outreach Service end of year report 2016/17

Outreach service

Reducing the Risk's outreach service to Cherwell is an early intervention service designed to provide support to prevent the risk to a victim of domestic abuse escalating to high. The outreach worker works to reduce and, if possible, prevent future physical and emotional harm and risk of homelessness.

Victims of domestic abuse experience cycles of emotional responses which mean that they are not always open to or able to instigate change. The impact of outreach intervention and advice depends on where they are in this 'cycle', their circumstances and their readiness to be open to change.

The Outreach Service aims to be responsive to the wishes and needs of the victims at the point of referral. For those able to accept support the service provides intensive, flexible support to overcome the trauma they have experienced, build confidence, make positive choices and changes for the future, and build safer and more stable lives.

Some service users have additional vulnerabilities – eg mental health, substance misuse - which make establishing a safer more stable life for the longer term more complex. The outreach worker liaises with or refers onto other services to provide the best combination of expert support possible.

Where a victim is not ready to accept support, the role of the outreach worker is to listen, to be understanding and to provide helpful advice and safety planning even if more substantial change is not possible at the time. This has the additional benefit of helping to build trust in the service so that they are more likely to return when they are ready. Pressurising a victim to take on more than they are ready for risks increasing their trauma and reduces the likelihood of them returning for help. Please see our case study of a service user returning to the service which reflects this model of support.

The service therefore takes a 'needs led' approach. The support offered by the outreach worker varies depending on the needs and readiness of each victim. Support can take two forms: face to face or over the phone depending on whichever works best for each victim. Whether support is short or long term, all victims are made aware that they are always welcome to make contact again in the future.

In summary outreach support is a combination of:

- Listening to and reassuring those who may be deeply traumatized
- Giving advice on immediate safety measures e g: safety planning and target hardening
- Building trust
- Providing emotional support
- Where ever possible alleviating distress sufficiently for service users to gain a new perspective and make choices for effective change
- Support with problem solving
- Support for multi-agency work to help reduce risk and support recovery
- Offering support at appointments and through court if required

With view to:

- Ensuring that victims are better able to keep themselves safe and their children safe in the short – and, where possible, longer - term
- Reducing the possibility of impulsive actions which might lead to homelessness
- Increasing emotional wellbeing
- Supporting each service user to make their own choices and have their voice heard
- Supporting service users to instigate positive change for the future
- Enabling service users to access other services which will help reduce the risk to them and support them to build safer more stable lives in future
- Providing support through court if needed.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is a priority. Safeguarding is core to the outreach service because of the potential impact of domestic abuse on children. The outreach worker supports and advises parents in accordance with OSCB guidelines that, where possible, children are kept safe through support for the non-abusive parent. Where this is not possible the outreach worker works closely with children's social care.

The outreach worker has also forged strong personal relationships with local services, especially with the officers in the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit and social workers in Children's Services. Keeping people safe and subsequently helping them to recover depends on good interagency communication and agencies working well together. This has been made much easier through the Champion's Network.

Quality Assurance.

The Cherwell outreach worker is a Safelives qualified IDVA. Her work is quality assured through weekly full team meetings, fortnightly supervision, and external quality assurance audits. She works closely with the IDVA for North Oxfordshire and they share a local base in the Banbury Fire Station. The Reducing the Risk service manager also provides day to day support in case of any immediate issues and she and the IDVA team provide cover for holidays and any other absences.

Key statistics

Over the year 2015/16 the outreach worker has worked with 144 victims of domestic abuse. The table below shows where the 144 referrals came from:

Outreach and Sanctuary Referrals: source

Referrer	no cases	%	% rounded
IDVA	3	2.63%	3
ODAS	19	16.67%	17
Children's centre	1	0.88%	1
DAIU	71	62.28%	62
Health	1	0.88%	1
Child Social Care	3	2.62%	3
Self	1	1.75%	2
Victim Support	13	11.40%	11
Housing	1	0.88%	1
Total	114		

Profile of Outreach and Sanctuary Referrals:

- Of the 114 referrals; 2 were male and 112 were female
- They included 84 parents with a total of 173 children
- Their ages ranged between 18 and 76
- 17 came from a BME background

Location:

- 47 victims were living in Banbury
- 17 victims were living in Kidlington
- 31 victims were living in Bicester
- 19 victims were living in other rural areas of Cherwell

Tenancies:

- 29 had registered social landlords
- 29 had private landlords
- 33 were home owners
- 7 were living with friends/family
- 1 lived in supported housing
- 1 lived in army accommodation
- 1 lived in work accommodation
- 2 lived within travelling communities

Additional Needs:

- 8 (7%) victims had challenges with alcohol
- 5 (4%) victims had challenges with drugs
- 37 (32%) victims had challenges with mental health issues
- 4 victims had a physical disability and 3 a learning disability

Outcomes

Of 114 victims referred:

- 11 (10%) could not be contacted and the referrer was advised
- 103 (90%) were made immediately safer
- 4 (3%) when contacted did not want further support. As outlined previously during these calls safety was discussed and advice offered.
- 99 (87%) service users received both telephone and, where possible, face to face ongoing support.

- No one made themselves homeless despite high levels of distress and fear
- 95 were supported to stay in their own homes with measures to keep themselves and their children safe. Of these:
 - 36 were supported to access additional emotional support and 6, with complex needs, to access support for independent living (see section overleaf for services accessed)
 - 19 were referred for legal advice, and 11 supported through criminal or civil courts (see section overleaf on Housing, Courts and Sanctuary Provision)
 - 13 had a civil or criminal court order to restrain the perpetrator
- 3 made a planned move to refuge
- 1 was supported through a management move with the housing provider in order to prevent homelessness (Please see case study)

Accessing further Services:

- 20 victims were referred to the Freedom program
- 8 victims were referred to Recovery Toolkit/Springboard Programme
- 8 victims were referred to the Clean Slate project
- 6 victims were referred to Connection Floating Support

Other resources service users are supported to access included:

Police, Probation, Criminal and Civil Courts, solicitors

Children's centres, midwifery, child social care and support through child protection processes, help with obtaining Family Arrangement Orders

Turning Point, OSAARC, Residential Social Landlords (RSAs), CAB, DWP, Karma Nirvana, Freedom Programme, the Recovery Toolkit, Day Programme; Complex Needs Service, Adult Mental Health Team, Talking Space Counselling Service, ELMORE, CAHMs and PCAHMs, Bounce Back for Kids.

Housing, Courts and Sanctuary Provision

Key to keeping a victim safe and preventing homelessness is the provision of secure accommodation – usually by ensuring the victim feels safe in their own home which may involve using legal measures to keep the perpetrator away through criminal and/or civil procedures. This section of the report covers:

- Data on criminal and civil courts
- Coercive Control New Legislation
- Data on the sanctuary scheme and current issues related to courts and housing

Criminal and Civil Court Proceedings

Criminal:

- 18 alleged perpetrators were charged with criminal offences
- Of their victims, 6 were supported through criminal court process and supported at court by the outreach worker; the other 12 victims were kept informed and up to date of the outcome of court as their cases never went to trial.

Criminal prosecutions can extend over several months and involve providing intermittent advice, reassurance and encouragement; intense support through the court process itself; advice on special measures; and encouraging applications for restraining orders.

- 5 perpetrators pleaded guilty and 1 changed their not-guilty plea to guilty after the outreach worker accompanied the victim to court and the perpetrator could see that she was ready and willing to give evidence.
- 2 case was dismissed as no evidence was offered.
- 4 Restraining Orders were granted on conclusion of a criminal trial.

A restraining order may be made on conviction or acquittal for any criminal offence and the orders are meant to be preventative and protective.

Civil:

- 19 victims were referred to solicitors to obtain legal advice regarding divorce and child contact issues.
- 5 victims were supported through the civil courts.
- 5 Non-Molestation Orders were granted on application and 5 Occupation Orders.

The majority of victims were accompanied by the outreach worker to the solicitor's office and again when they attended court.

In cases where the perpetrator isn't charged with an offence due to insufficient evidence or where the abuse is emotional, psychological or financial, non-molestation and occupation orders provide some protection

Cherwell Sanctuary Scheme

The Sanctuary scheme is designed to enable victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes after the abuser has left and should work in conjunction with a co-ordinated response locally.

The cost of re-housing the victim, the trauma of a move to somewhere away from their family, friends and support networks, schools, work, GPs etc. has a huge detrimental impact on the victim and their families.

The scheme provides extra security measures, for example additional security to the main door, locks on any vulnerable windows, external letterboxes, security lighting and erecting fences.

Provision is adapted to suit the particular needs and circumstances of the victims.

- 6 service users have accessed sanctuary provision over the course of the year.

The process is easy and effective and referrals into the scheme are accepted from any partner agency.

The outreach worker has built and continues to maintain an extremely good working relationship with RSL's.

Please note the fall in the use of the sanctuary scheme

(7 in 2015/16; 9 in 2014/5; and 30 in 2013/14)

Key housing and legal issues

- If the outreach worker is not able to be present at court, applications for restraining orders may sometimes be overlooked.
- Restraining orders can also be worded inappropriately so that they are ineffective in keeping the victim and their children safe. This applied to one restraining order in 2016-17 and the outreach worker supported her to obtain a civil court non-molestation order
- Family and civil courts can be used by the perpetrator to further abuse and control a victim

Summary

The need for the Cherwell outreach service is still pressing. Referral numbers are lower than last year, when they saw an exceptional peak, but are in line with demand in earlier years. In addition, the needs of service users are often complex. By providing a flexible early intervention service and working closely with key partners, the service plays a vital role in reducing risk to the victims and in preventing homelessness. It therefore contributes to Cherwell District Council's homelessness strategy and broader aim of building safe and thriving communities.

For examples of the impact of outreach support and details of court cases and outcomes please email info@reducingtherisk.org.uk