‘Publish and fund a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy to cut violent crime and protect victims’ backers of a new campaign tell Government

Today, together with over 70 organisations and experts, the Drive Partnership is calling on the Government to publish a strategy to crack down on the behaviour of domestic abuse perpetrators in England and Wales, as new research shows the potential of perpetrator programmes to cut violent crime and keep victims and families safe.

Speaking about the launch of the ‘Call to Action for a Perpetrator Strategy’, Drive Director, Kyla Kirkpatrick said:

“We welcome the Prime Minister’s ambition to cut violent crime by 20%. Given more than a third of violent crime is domestic abuse, investing in proven ways to disrupt and change the behaviour of perpetrators is common sense.

“Previous governments have been focussed on simply addressing the devastating impact of domestic abuse rather than stopping it. It’s crucial we ensure the care and support of those affected by domestic abuse remains a priority, but if we are to end domestic abuse for good, we must tackle it at the source.

“The re-introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill will be an important first step, but a huge piece of the puzzle is still missing – a strategic approach to perpetrators – the people who cause harm.”

Currently only a tiny percentage of known perpetrators – less than 1% – receive a specialist intervention to challenge and change their behaviour. Opportunities are being missed to stop a perpetrator abusing their current victim and prevent them from moving on to their next. This failure to prevent abuse costs the lives of two women a week and around £66bn a year in social and economic costs. It must change.

The campaign – which is co-signed by household names from Barnado’s to Shelter, Social Finance to SafeLives and Women’s Aid, along with Police and Crime Commissioners and a swathe of academics, calls on the Government to publish and invest in a strategy that holds perpetrators to account and protects victims. It has been formally endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Together with Drive, which addresses some of England and Wales’ most high-risk perpetrators of domestic abuse, the signatories will present the Call to Action at the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse, hosted by Thangam Debbonaire MP tonight.

A survivor, who will help launch of the Call to Action tonight, says of her former partner:

“‘He was only in prison for 9 weeks. He came out with the same assumptions about women, the same anger, as he went in with. With a dented ego. That’s putting a very dangerous man into the community. If he’d been approached in prison it might have helped. Or during probation. Because he’s never had any intervention, he doesn’t think he’s done anything wrong.”

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The signatories are calling for sustainable funding, regulation to ensure all perpetrator programmes are quality-assured and effective, and well-funded and trained public and voluntary services who are able to work together to hold perpetrators to account, backed by strong leadership – both at the national and local level. Speaking about the launch of the Call to Action, Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner said:

“I support the call on Government to publish a strategy on perpetrators of Domestic Abuse. Current prevention work is patchy and too often perpetrators go unchallenged and are not offered opportunities to change their abusive behaviour. Everyone, from public servants to the private sector, to the man or woman on the street, needs to know that they can call out abusive behaviour when they see it and that there are systems in place to hold the abuser accountable and to offer support to change.”

Baljit Ubhey, Director of Strategy and Policy, Crown Prosecution Service said:

“We support the call for a perpetrator strategy that sees public services working closely together to tackle offending and to ensure that victims are properly protected by the justice system.”

New data released today provides additional evidence that quality perpetrator interventions work. A three-year evaluation of the Drive project, which works with perpetrators who have been assessed as at risk of murdering or seriously harming their victims, shows the project has significantly reduced abusive behaviour and the number of incidents of domestic abuse – and indeed other offending behaviour – recorded by the police.

The study by the University of Bristol, found that after the intervention the number of Drive service users perpetrating high levels of physical abuse reduced by 82%; sexual abuse reduced by 88%; harassment and stalking behaviours reduced by 75% and jealous and controlling behaviours reduced by 73%. During the intervention IDVAs (Independent domestic violence advisors who work with and support victims of domestic abuse) reported reductions in risk to the victim in 82% of cases. Perpetrators on the programme had fewer domestic abuse and non-domestic abuse police incidents than the control group a year after the programme completed.

Jo Todd, CEO of Respect - the main UK membership organisation working with domestic violence perpetrators, said:

“It is clear that quality perpetrator programmes make a difference. It’s time for a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy to ensure they’re available everywhere and that we spot people who pose a risk and prevent them from starting or continuing to abuse people.”

<ENDS>

For more information about the Call to Action or Drive evaluation results contact Daniella Porano, Drive Comms Officer at: Daniella_Porano@safelives.org.uk or call 020 7922 7891

The Call to Action and evaluation results will be available from 9am on Tuesday 21st January at http://driveproject.org.uk/

Case study available on request

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Notes to Editors

1. About Drive

Drive is an intensive intervention that aims to make victims and survivors and children safer by working with high-harm and serial perpetrators to challenge behaviour and prevent abuse. The original Drive pilot has been delivered since 2016 in Essex, South Wales, and West Sussex, by the Change Project, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, and DVIP (division of the Richmond Fellowship) and Hampton Trust. In 2018, replication testing began in Croydon, Cardiff, Worcester, and Birmingham and Sandwell, delivered by Rise Mutual, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Cranstoun, and the Richmond Fellowship. For more information, please visit: http://driveproject.org.uk/

Drive has pioneered an innovative approach to ending domestic abuse, challenging the dominant narrative by asking ‘why doesn’t he stop?’ instead of ‘why doesn’t she leave?’

The pilot programmes are funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales, Comic Relief, Tudor Trust and the Police and Crime Commissioners in all three areas. The project has also benefited from Home Office funding and local authority support. The replication sites which launched in 2018, are funded by the Police Transformation Fund, local authorities and PCC support.

The impact of the Drive pilots around the country is being assessed through an independent evaluation conducted by the University of Bristol. Initial findings reported from three-years of Drive have shown promising results, including:

**Key findings include:**

- **Reduction in abuse.** The number of Drive service users perpetrating abuse types reduced as follows:
  - physical abuse reduced by 82%;
  - sexual abuse reduced by 88%;
  - harassment and stalking behaviours reduced by 75%;
  - and jealous and controlling behaviours reduced by 73%.

- **Reduction of risk:** Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), who are trained to work with victims/survivors and assess the level of domestic abuse risk they face, recorded a significant or moderate reduction in risk to victims in 82% of cases.

- **Sustained reduction in perpetrators assessed by multi-agencies as posing a risk of murder or serious harm.** Perpetrators who are assessed as posing a risk of murder or serious harm are discussed at specialist meetings called MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences). MARAC data shows that Drive helped to reduce high risk perpetration including in serial and repeat perpetrators, especially post-intervention, and this was sustained for a year after the case was closed. Drive service users appeared at MARAC less often (mean = 2.7 times) than perpetrators in the control group (mean = 3.3 times). This difference was statistically significant.

- **Impact on police recorded domestic abuse**
  a) Police data for Year 2 of the pilot showed perpetration of DVA (domestic violence and abuse) offending had reduced by 30% for Drive service users recorded in the 6 months after the intervention compared to 6 months before. In contrast a matched sample of control group perpetrators showed no change when comparing these periods.
  b) Further analysis in Year 3 showed the number of DVA police incidents recorded 6 months before, during and up to at least one year after the intervention. There was a 13% greater reduction in the number of perpetrators with DVA related police incidents in the Drive group than the control group. The proportion of Drive service users with recorded police DVA incidents continued to fall more than a year after the intervention, whereas in the control group it began to rise a year after the intervention.

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• **Impact on wider offending behaviour.** High harm perpetrators of domestic abuse were shown to be prolific offenders more generally and Drive was found to have a positive impact on both their domestic abuse and their other offending behaviour. Perpetrators had an average of 30 police incidents recorded over the period of the last four years—around two thirds of which were not domestic violence incidents.
  
a. Available police data indicates that more than a year after the intervention there was a 62% drop in the number of Drive service users with contact with the police for non-DVA offences compared to a 32% drop for the control group.

Drive is a partnership between Respect, SafeLives and Social Finance.

• **About Respect.** The main UK membership organisation working with domestic violence perpetrators, male victims and young people. It has developed standards and accreditation and provides training and support to improve responses to adults using violence and abuse in intimate relationships. Respect accreditation is the benchmark for the provision of quality interventions with men who use violence against their female partners.

  **Jo Todd, CEO of Respect said:**
  “It is clear that quality perpetrator programmes make a difference. It’s time for a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy to ensure they’re available everywhere and that we spot people who pose a risk and prevent them from starting or continuing to abuse people.”

• **About SafeLives.** The UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone and for good. We work with organisations across the UK to transform the response to domestic abuse. We want what you would want for your best friend. We listen to survivors, putting their voices at the heart of our thinking. We look at the whole picture for each individual and family to get the right help at the right time to make families everywhere safe and well. And we challenge perpetrators to change, asking ‘why doesn’t he stop?’ rather than ‘why doesn’t she leave?’ This applies whatever the gender of the victim or perpetrator and whatever the nature of their relationship. Last year alone, nearly 11,000 professionals working on the frontline received our training. Over 65,000 adults at risk of serious harm or murder and more than 85,000 children received support through dedicated multi-agency support designed by us and delivered with partners. In the last three years, over 1,000 perpetrators have been challenged and supported to change by interventions we created with partners, and that’s just the start. Together we can end domestic abuse. Forever. For everyone.

  **Suzanne Jacob, OBE, Chief Executive of SafeLives said:**
  “We’re delighted to join the Drive Partnership and over 70 other signatories in calling on the Government to invest in a fully funded strategy to challenge perpetrators of domestic abuse.
  “There is only ever one person responsible for domestic abuse: the perpetrator. And yet, only a tiny percentage—less than 1% receive any intervention to change or challenge their behaviour. It’s time we shift the narrative. Rather than asking why the victim doesn’t leave—leaving behind friends, family, work, possessions—let’s ask perpetrators to change their behaviour. Only by tackling the root cause of domestic abuse will we end it for good.
  “The findings of the Drive pilot, released today, show that perpetrator interventions do work, but the vast majority of areas do not have access to them. It’s time to ensure that every perpetrator is faced with a robust response. Without it, we will just keep dealing with the aftermath of domestic abuse—and never the cause.”

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• **About Social Finance:** A not-for-profit organisation that partners with the government, social sector and the financial community to find better ways of tackling social problems in the UK and beyond. It has mobilised £180 million of funding and designed a series of programmes, including the Social Impact Bond model, to tackle social challenges including rehabilitating short sentenced offenders, supporting vulnerable adolescents to avoid being taken into care and helping vulnerable youth access employment. Drive is an initiative of Social Finance’s Impact Incubator. The Impact Incubator is a collaboration between charitable foundations and Social Finance to develop new models in areas of acute social need with the potential for sustainable change at a national level.

Emily Bolton, Executive Director at Social Finance and a Drive board member, said:

“Social Finance is pleased to be part of this collaboration working across England and Wales to get perpetrators to stop their abuse, rather than placing responsibility on the victim to leave. Now is the time for national focus and investment on stopping perpetrators from harming those in their families and in the wider community. The evidence from Drive shows this is possible and the Call to Action published today with signatories from over 70 statutory and voluntary sector partners show there is a groundswell of support for a national perpetrator strategy.”

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ii Just over a third – 35% – of the 1,671,039 offences of violence against a person during the year to end March 2019 were domestic abuse-related. [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendmarch2019](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendmarch2019)
