



Research Paper for Ending the Cycle Project – Building Safer Communities for Women and their Children

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What is the project

In February 2016 the Sammy D Foundation was successful in securing funding through the Building Safe Communities for Women and Children Grants to increase community awareness and responses to young people at high risk of involvement in domestic violence in adulthood.

The focus of the project is to work with a network of like-minded organisations, focussed on supporting women and children in the inner southern suburbs of Adelaide, to develop an understanding and knowledge based around the early identification of young people that may be at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence, and appropriate referral pathways.

The project will include the development of a practical resource, as well as forums and information sessions aimed at community organisations (ie sporting clubs), educational facilities and other youth services, which are in a good position with ongoing contact with young people on a regular and often social basis but do not generally have access to the information or support to know what to do.

Who is the Sammy D Foundation

In 2008, Adelaide teenager Sam Davis was the victim of a violent and unprovoked one-punch assault that cost him his life. Sam's death is part of an alarming trend in our society around alcohol and drug fuelled violence. The Foundation was founded with the ultimate aim of preventing such a tragedy from ever happening again.

Through education and awareness programs on drug and alcohol related youth violence, the Sammy D Foundation offers advice and support to people of all ages, equipping them with knowledge needed to keep safe whilst still enjoying their life journey.

The organisation's mission is to:

- provide leadership for the South Australian community to empower our youth with the skills to make safe and informed life choices
- develop a youth culture in South Australia where young people have the skills, positive attitudes and role-models to support them to reach their maximum life potential.

We aim to achieve this by:

- measurably reducing youth crime in South Australia
- raising awareness of harm-causing behaviours
- bringing families closer together
- nurturing positive relationships, particularly mateship
- providing youth with opportunities to be successful and feel valued by their community.

What is domestic violence and how are young people impacted

Domestic violence is described as acts of violence that occur in a domestic setting, between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship¹. Different forms of abuse include physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, psychological and emotional abuse, and social and economic deprivation. The central element of domestic violence is an unequal distribution of power in the relationship, where one partner has control over the other and uses domestic violence to dominate and maintain control².

Another term sometime used is family violence. This term is much broader than domestic violence as it includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour, that coerces or controls a family member, or causes that family member to be fearful. This includes adolescent violence against parents³.

In 2001 a National Crime Prevention survey of Young People and Domestic Violence found in South Australia of the young people surveyed:

- 22% reported experiencing an act of physical violence against their mother or step-mother by their father/step father
- 58% had witnessed their father/step father yell loudly at their mother/step mother
- 28% had witnessed their father/step father humiliating their mother/step mother or putting her down
- 8% had witnessed their father/step father prevent their mother/step mother from seeing family or friends⁴.

The negative impacts, exposure to domestic and family violence has on young people, can be significant and far reaching. In fact they don't even need to witness the violence to be impacted⁵. Continued exposure may influence their own attitudes to relationships and violence, as well as impacting on their long term behavioural, cognitive and emotional functioning, social development and educational achievement⁶.

What age group is being targeted by this project

Victims of domestic violence are not limited to any age group. They may be babies, children, teenagers or young adults. There are higher rates of domestic violence in those households in which there are children present⁷.

A significant amount of research has been undertaken around brain development and the impact this can have on decision making and problem solving in adolescents. During this time young people are generally more reliant on the part of the brain associated with emotions, impulses, aggression and instinctive behaviour as this part of the brain develops faster. The part of the brain that controls reasoning and helps us think before we act continues to develop well into early adulthood⁸.

Adolescence is a crucial period in terms of both men and women's formation of respectful, non-violent relationships later in life. Exposure to domestic violence increases the risk of becoming perpetrators or victims themselves⁹. Interventions at this stage can change young people's personal and relationship trajectories, preventing problems in adulthood¹⁰.

Is domestic violence a gender specific issue

Not all violence is conducted by men. Not all victims of domestic and family violence are women. However, a personal Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2012 identified that around 95% of all victims of violence, whether women or men, experienced violence from a male perpetrator¹¹.

The survey also found that since the age of 15:

- 1 in 6 women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner compared to 1 in 19 men
- 1 in 4 women had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner compared to one in 7 men¹².
- women are far more likely than men to experience sexual violence and violence from an intimate partner
- women are more likely than men to be afraid of, hospitalised by, or killed by an intimate partner¹³.

There is no single cause of domestic violence, however research has identified some factors that drive higher levels of violence against women including beliefs and behaviours reflecting disrespect for women, low support for gender equality and adherence to rigid or stereotypical gender roles, relations and identities¹⁴.

What is a risk assessment and how does it work

Most people associate risk assessments with activities, projects or workplace health and safety. The idea being to identify the risks associated with undertaking an activity, determining how likely they are to happen, what the impact will be and how significant the impact will be¹⁵. The final part is to then put in place preventative strategies to reduce or remove the risk.

For the purpose of this project we are looking at identifying the risk of a young person becoming a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence. To do this we need to look at what factors may contribute to the likelihood of this occurring, compared to those factors that may decrease the likelihood. These are called risk and protective factors¹⁶. We can then look at what can practically be done to reduce the likelihood and/or offer support.

Are there any existing risk assessments relating to the early identification of young people at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence

In 2013, the South Australian Government, through the Office for Women, implemented a Family Safety Framework to improve integrated service responses to families experiencing domestic violence who are at high risk of serious injury or death¹⁷. This framework included a Domestic Violence Risk Assessment tool to assess the risk to victims of domestic violence.

In 2007, the Victorian Government, through the Department of Human Services, launched a Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework which aims to support a consistent approach for assessing and managing family violence¹⁸.

Both risk assessment tools include some useful information regarding behaviours of offenders and victims but are not targeted at early identification of young people.

A considerable amount of research has been undertaken internationally regarding early identification of violent perpetrators, particularly male perpetrators, including child and adolescent predictors of male intimate partner violence¹⁹, predictors and protectors of youth violence perpetration²⁰ and youth violence risk and protective factors²¹.

There is no clear cut list of factors that pinpoint which young people are likely to become victims or perpetrators of domestic violence. Risk factors increase the likelihood a young person will become violent, especially when they are compounded; however, they are not the direct cause of the violence only a contributing factor²². As such you can't look at risk factors in isolation but must also consider how protective factors contribute to a reduction of risk and reduce the likelihood²³.

What are the risk and protective factors for potential perpetrators

There is no single cause or factor that leads to domestic violence. A number of risk factors have been identified as being associated with perpetrators including age, low academic achievement, low income or exclusion from labour market, social disadvantage and isolation, exposure to, or involvement in, aggressive or delinquent behaviour in adolescence²⁴.

One of the biggest risks is boys who witness domestic violence in their own home or are subject to violence themselves as a child, are more likely as adults to have violence-supportive attitudes and to perpetrate violence²⁵.

In 2012, research undertaken by the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge looked at what extent child and adolescent behaviours predicted intimate partner violence in adulthood. It showed the following factors, at age 8-18, were an indication of intimate partner violence at later ages:

- family factors – a criminal father, a disrupted family, a low income family, large family size, experiencing poor supervision and at age 18 not getting on well with parents
- individual factors – high impulsivity, daring, low verbal IQ and unpopularity at age 8-10, aggressive temperament at age 14 and drug use at age 18²⁶.

These factors were shown to impact on a man's development trajectory and his ability to deal with life transitions. As there is no way to accurately predict whether current behaviour will lead to future behaviour, it is important to remember we are only talking about increased probability.

In a community setting what would individual risk factors look like in a young person:

- demonstration of aggressive behaviour and/or a history of violence against others
- early involvement with drugs, alcohol or tobacco
- poor behavioural control
- antisocial beliefs and attitudes, particularly towards women
- low emotional attachment to parents or caregivers
- low commitment to school and school failure²⁷.

What would family, peer, social and environmental risk factors look like:

- poor family functioning including poor monitoring and supervision of children
- public displays of parental violence towards child and others (eg outbursts, aggressive behaviour, yelling, threatening behaviour)
- harsh, lax or inconsistent disciplinary practices by parents/caregivers
- association with delinquent peers
- high level of transiency (family moves a lot)
- parental incarceration²⁸.

What protective factors could help mitigate or minimise the risk of young people becoming perpetrators of domestic violence:

- positive social orientation
- highly developed social skills
- connectedness to family or adults outside the family (positive adult role models)
- close relationships with non-deviant peers (those that don't condone antisocial behaviour)
- exposure to environments that have intensive supervision, clear behaviour rules, consistent negative reinforcement of aggression, engagement of parents²⁹.

What are the risk and protective factors for potential victims

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of domestic violence, especially as younger children are entirely dependent on their parents/caregivers. Young people's vulnerability to violence in relationships is heightened by strong peer norms, inexperience, age differences in relationships, and lack of access to services³⁰.

Victims of domestic abuse might:

- appear nervous, ashamed, evasive, wary or distrustful of adults
- seem uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of one or more of their parents/caregivers
- have physical signs of violence such as bruising, multiple injuries, minor cuts and give unconvincing explanation of how they were sustained
- wear long sleeved clothes on hot days
- have a drug or alcohol abuse problem
- have attempted suicide and/or have a psychiatric illness
- become fearful when other children cry or shout
- display inappropriate sexualised behaviour (particularly at a young age)
- have difficulty relating to adults and peers
- appear withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
- display aggressive or demanding behaviour
- appear highly anxious
- be unsupervised for extended periods of time
- have poor hygiene
- be frequently hungry, undernourished and steal food³¹.

A number of these risk factors cross over with those for potential perpetrators making it extremely difficult to assess risk without undertaking a thorough examination of each individual situation and considering a wide range of other factors. We do not support community organisations doing this.

What protective factors could help mitigate or minimise the risk of young people becoming victims of domestic violence:

- supportive relationships with adults outside of the family unit (positive adult role models)
- pro-social peer groups
- attachment to community and participation in pro-social activities
- access to support services
- positive environments (school, community clubs)
- promotion of community/cultural norms that speak out against violence³².

The best way to support young children to grow into non-violent adults is to start young, protect them from violence and provide them with positive, respectful and equal relationship models³³.

Why target community clubs, in particular sporting clubs

One of the most effective ways of engaging non-violent men in challenging violence against women is through bystander action³⁴. A bystander is regarded as an onlooker or spectator who observes an act of violence, discrimination or other problematic behaviour, but who is not its direct perpetrator or victim³⁵. Bystander action could take the form of:

- intervening to stop an incident (intervention)
- supporting a victim or comforting a perpetrator (tertiary prevention)
- recognising and addressing a situation where there is a heightened risk of violence occurring (secondary prevention)
- strengthening the conditions that work against violence occurring (primary prevention)³⁶.

Our Watch identified a number of key settings and sectors that could be involved in the primary prevention of violence against women. Sports, recreation, social and leisure spaces were identified as were arts spaces, because:

- they present an opportunity to reach large groups and communities, including young men
- they can exert a powerful influence on gender relations as they impact on attitudes, behaviours and social norms
- sport's leaders can also be influential as community champions and ambassadors
- the arts are a valuable medium for exploring and challenging social norms and also encouraging community participation³⁷.

Further to this a project in Victoria, titled You&I, specifically targeted their resources at football clubs because they see coaches as models and mentors for younger players, able to influence their attitudes and behaviours as well as the broader culture within the team or club. Furthermore they believe clubs are in a unique and significant position to stand up for community issues because they:

- have strong community leaders
- can positively influence social environments for young people
- have an engaged group of young people, particularly young boys/men
- have opportunity to model respectful behaviour between men and women³⁸.

They also outlined the following benefits to clubs in promoting positive relationships:

- being able to position themselves as family friendly
- opportunity to network and partner with other local community organisations
- opportunities to engage more volunteers
- opportunities to engage more women and girls in the club³⁹.

What can be done to respond to perpetrator risky behaviour in young people

As mentioned earlier we do not recommend community organisations make assessments of a young person's behaviour in isolation, with the purpose of determining whether a young person may be a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence.

This project is focussed on providing advice to community clubs who have identified some of the risk behaviours amongst their young participants, and are unclear on what they can do to change these attitudes and behaviours, and/or provide support if required.

If young people within the organisation are displaying concerning behaviours putting them at risk of becoming a perpetrator of domestic violence, White Ribbon Australia have identified a number of practical things that can be done to help prevent violence against women:

- learn about the problem, what is domestic violence, why are some men are violent towards women, organise guest speaker presentations
- develop respectful relationships with women – be an example to other men and boys, a positive role model
- show your commitment to ending violence against women (be proud, speak up and act support a local community organisation by collecting funds, wear a white ribbon or wrist band, put up posters)
- challenge sexist behaviour – particularly sexist language and jokes that degrade women
- identify and oppose sexual harassment and violence – develop a code of conduct that highlights and condones negative behaviours and encourages positive behaviours
- be clear that violence is not on and respond to violent behaviour appropriately – also links to code of conduct
- examine how your own behaviour might contribute to the problem – be a role model, share your own learnings with others⁴⁰.

What can be done to respond to victim risky behaviour in young people

As mentioned earlier we do not recommend community organisations make assessments of a young person's behaviour in isolation, with the purpose of determining whether a young person may be a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence.

The South Australian Children's Protection Act says that certain people must make a report if they suspect child abuse. This includes:

- any person who is an employee, or a volunteer, in an organisation (government or non-government) that provides services to young people, this includes sports
- any person that holds a management position in a relevant organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of services to young people⁴¹.

These people are called Mandatory Notifiers. Mandated notifiers are legally required to notify Families SA if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is being, or has been, abused or neglected⁴². All organisations that provide direct services to young people must have a Child Safe Environment policy and procedures advising staff on what to do in cases of suspected child abuse⁴³.

In summary if you suspect a child is being abused, you need to call the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78. They will keep your details confidential. Abuse does not need to be proven, only suspected. This may be identified by:

- the young person telling you they have been abused
- observing a particular young person's behaviour, and/or knowledge of the young person leads you to suspect abuse is occurring
- a young person tells you that he/she knows someone who has been abused
- someone reliable such as a relative friend, neighbour, sibling, tells you of the abuse of a young person⁴⁴.

If you believe a young person is in immediate danger please call Police on 000.

How to respond if a young person discloses that they have been/are a victim of domestic violence

Families SA has produced a booklet called “Guidance in responding to children and young people” offers the following very practical advice in what to do if a young person discloses abuse:

Do

- listen with care, show care and use open questions
- find a private place if possible
- be patient, don't rush them or yourself
- stop asking questions if the child/young person does not want to talk further and/or becomes distressed
- record what you have been told
- speak with a senior member of staff ASAP to help you determine your next actions (for example referral to support services, report to the Child Abuse Report Line, police contact)
- respect their privacy by sharing only relevant information with the people who need to know
- look after yourself.

Don't

- stop the child from talking or saying what they wish to say
- act scared or shocked
- doubt the child (question the validity of their story)
- threaten to harm or punish the perpetrator
- promise that everything will be fine, that they will be safe, happy, better
- insist that they answer questions, provide more information when unwilling/unable to do so
- ask leading questions or interview others (investigate matters)⁴⁵.

Research clearly indicates that a supportive response to children/young people's disclosure of abuse or neglect contributes in a positive way to their potential long term recovery⁴⁶.

Once you make a report to the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78 or SA Police 000 (only if the child is in immediate danger) they will provide advice on what to do next.

How are schools different

The Department of Education and Child Development has developed the “Child Protection in Schools, Early Childhood Education and Care Policy” which describes the obligations schools need to meet to maintain a child safe environment⁴⁷.

Staff in education and care settings are mandated notifiers, and are required under the Children's Protection Act 1993 to report suspected child abuse to the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78. The report must be made in consultation with the site leader who signs the site's mandatory notification record and stores it securely. Working with the site leader ensures that appropriate procedures can be followed within the site and sector office⁴⁸.

What local support services are available within the inner southern metro area

There are a wide range of supports available within the region targeting the following different needs:

- victims of domestic violence
- perpetrators of domestic violence
- parents and caregivers dealing with violent and abusive children
- young people with violent behaviours
- young people with mental health issues
- families experiencing domestic violence
- accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic violence
- Aboriginal women and children experiencing domestic violence
- counselling for young people .

Some services are physically based in the region while others are available through an outreach or phone service. There are also a number of websites established to help prevent domestic violence and to assist young people to learn about respectful relationships.

A list of identified services, programs and websites available to service the inner southern metro area is provided in Appendix One.

What specific resources will be developed through this project

The aim of the project is to better educate community organisations, particularly sporting clubs, to better understand what domestic violence is, how to recognise the signs a young person may be a risk of being a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence, and what they can do about it.

A power point presentation will be developed and piloted in a number of presentations in community clubs and schools during 2017.

In addition a booklet will be developed, that will be available to be downloaded from the Sammy D website, for community organisations, particularly sporting clubs, to assist staff to better understand how to respond to concerning behaviour in young people that may be at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence.

Depending on feedback from the clubs a poster or postcard may also be developed for organisations to put on public display.

What additional supports/resources are still required, outside the scope of this project

Our research has identified that there are very few programs targeted specifically at young people experiencing domestic violence, and even less support for perpetrators of domestic violence.

Appendix One – List of Services and Programs

Emergency Numbers

Police - 000

Only if someone is in immediate danger

Crisis Care – 13 16 11

Counselling and practical help for individuals and families in any type of crisis. Available after hours 4pm – 9am, also 24 hours on weekends and public holidays

Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family Violence Gateway Service - 1800 800 098

24 hour crisis counselling, information and advice service, number diverts to Crisis Care after hours

Homelessness Gateway - 1800 003 308

24 hour service to help with support and access to emergency accommodation.

Lifeline – 13 11 14 and <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/get-help-home>

24 hour crisis support and nightly online chat service

Yarrow Place - 8226 8787

24 hour Rape and Sexual Assault Services for people over 16 years of age

Youth Gateway to Crisis Accommodation – Trace a Place – 1800 807 364 (freecall)

For young people aged 15-25 experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness including young parents with children. Operates weekdays 9-5pm, outside of hours diverts to Homelessness Gateway. Also walk in service at 135-139 Currie Street, Adelaide 9-5pm Monday to Friday.

Domestic Violence Support Services

Ninko Kurtangga Patpangga – 8297 9644 and <http://sdvs.org.au/>

Accommodation and outreach services for Aboriginal women and children, and non-Aboriginal women with Aboriginal children, experiencing the effects of domestic and family violence.

Southern Domestic Violence Service – 8382 0066 and <http://sdvs.org.au/>

Accommodation and outreach services for women and children experiencing the effects of domestic and family violence.

Phone Counselling Services

Kids Helpline - 1800 551 800 or www.kidshelp.com.au

Free, private and confidential telephone and online counselling specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25.

Mensline Australia – 1300 78 99 78 and <http://www.mensline.org.au/>

24 hour counselling service for men concerned about their own violent behaviour. Also offers nline and video counselling.

Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service - 1800 737 732 and <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

Also known as 1800 RESPECT a national 24 hour free counselling helpline, information and support also online counselling available.

Programs and Services for Young People

Hackham West Community Centre –

<http://hwcc.net/>

Offers a range of services and facilities for the community including the Live, Laugh and Lean program, a safe environment for youth (13 - 18 years) to meet, hang out and be supported by youth workers.

Programs and Services for Families

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)-

<http://www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/az/divisions/mentalhealth/index.html>

Family and individual therapy, group programs for children and for parents/carers, and information for parents/carers about child and youth emotional issues, behavioural issues, social issues and mental health.

Family Counselling Service -

<http://www.unitingcommunities.org/find-a-service/services/family-counselling/>

Family counselling to young people aged 12 to 17 and their family, to help resolve conflicts and improve their relationships.

Walking on Eggshells –

<http://www.rasa.org.au/walking-on-eggshells/>

A booklet for parents and carers who are dealing with violent and abusive behaviour from their children and adolescents.

Who's in Charge? -

www.centacare.org.au

A seven week course for parents whose children are abusive towards them. The course is for parents of children aged

between 8 and 18 who feel constantly challenged by their children's behavior.

Programs and Services for Men

Uniting Communities –

<http://www.unitingcommunities.org/find-a-service/services/counselling-men-want-stop-use-anger-violence-relationships/>

Individual and group counselling for men which aim to help them stop using anger and violence, and develop safe and respectful relationships.

Services and Programs requiring a formal referral

Centacare Targeted Intervention Service (Stronger Families) –

<http://centacare.org.au/service/targetted-intervention-service/>

Services to provide intervention to families with children, from birth to 18 years, who are experiencing abuse or neglect.

Referrals made directly by Families SA

Together 4 Kids –

<http://www.rasa.org.au/services/couples-families/together-4-kids/>

For children aged 0-12 experiencing developmental problems as a result of exposure to abuse/violence. Homelessness or domestic violence services can refer a child after completing an initial client assessment.

Websites

The Line - www.theline.org.au

Primary prevention behaviour change campaign for young people aged 12 to 20 years, encouraging healthy and respectful relationships by challenging, and changing

attitudes and behaviours that support violence.

Love: the good, bad and the ugly -

www.lovegoodbadugly.com

Provides advice, stories and information on relationships

Our Watch -

<http://www.ourwatch.org.au/>

Campaign to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children.

ReachOut – www.reachout.com

Provides practical information, tools and support to young people for everyday troubles to really tough times.

White Ribbon Australia –

<http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/>

National primary prevention social change organisation working to engage men to stand up, speak out and act to influence the attitudes and behaviours of some men who commit violence against women.

End Notes

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