

Young people's violence advisor case study

Local authority area 2

Job title: Young people's violence advisor

Role: Full-time caseholder

Location: Police – Integrated safeguarding and public protection

YPVA post started: November 2013

Previous role: Local authority early intervention and prevention worker



The YPVA role was introduced as a secondment opportunity within the integrated safeguarding and public protection team, in response to the change in definition of domestic abuse to include 16 and 17 year olds. With the support of his manager and the young people's programme's regional development officer, and following consultation with local schools, the objectives of the role were agreed. In November 2013, the YPVA began working with young people experiencing intimate partner abuse, young people harming a partner, and young people harming a parent.

The YPVA spent the first months in post establishing local links by visiting schools and local agencies. He advertises the service as suitable for young people who are either victims or perpetrators of abuse, and offers support around healthy relationships, safety planning and the criminal and civil justice system.

Early Intervention

In addition to providing direct support to young people at risk, the YPVA does early intervention work in schools with young people aged 12 years and older. To promote healthy relationships, the YPVA uses resources from the 'Is this Love?' and 'Cute, Funny, Smart' campaigns. The YPVA uses these resources to initiate conversations about what abuse is, and to raise awareness of how to get help if they need it. The YPVA has also used the young people's version of the SafeLives Dash risk checklist with young people as part of his early intervention work, to raise awareness of the range of behaviours that constitutes abuse.

Referral Pathway

The YPVA has developed a tool based on the community response model which contains all the information and resources that a professional requires when there has been a disclosure of domestic abuse. The tool contains a referral form, information about risk, and explains what actions should be taken when a disclosure of domestic abuse is made. The professional who receives the disclosure is responsible for completing a referral form and sending it to the YPVA. The YPVA typically completes the young people's Dash risk checklist.

High risk cases are referred to the YPVA through the Marac, which meets daily to discuss police incidents involving high-risk domestic abuse cases. More than half (56%) of the young people supported by the YPVA were referred to Marac. Medium and low risk cases are referred directly to the YPVA from a range of agencies, including schools, children's social care and the early intervention team.

Just under two-thirds (62%) of young people were referred primarily because they were experiencing intimate partner violence, 21% were referred because of domestic abuse in the family home, and 17% were referred because they were harming others.

Following a referral, the YPVA makes first contact with the young person via telephone, to arrange an initial face-to-face visit within a couple of days of receiving the referral. The YPVA explains the role and

service offer, along with tackling any concerns the young person has. If a young person is already engaging with another professional, the YPVA will do a joint initial visit to ensure that information about relevant incidents can be discussed and to reduce the risk of the young person minimising the referrers concerns.

Working with young people at risk

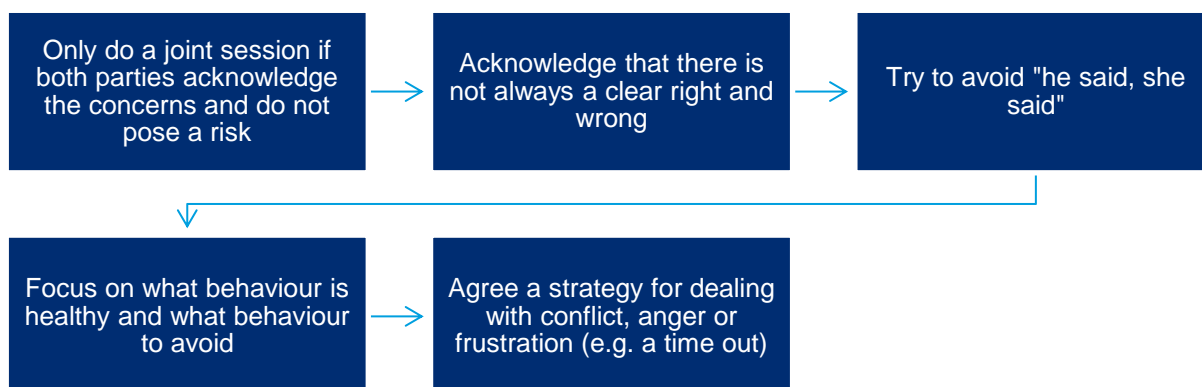
The YPVA submitted data relating to 66 young people he supported. The majority were white British or Irish teenagers aged between 13 and 20 years old. Almost half (45%) were male. More than half (62%) were referred primarily because of intimate partner violence and 21% were referred because of domestic abuse in the family home. Eleven young people (17%) were referred primarily because they were harming others.

Just under two-thirds of the young people supported were experiencing current abuse. Of those not experiencing current abuse, 38% had experienced abuse in the past and 62% were harming others. The most common forms of current abuse experienced were emotional abuse, jealous and controlling behaviour, and physical abuse. The most frequently recorded perpetrator of the abuse was the young people's current or ex-boyfriend. Neglect was the most common type of historic abuse.

Many had additional vulnerabilities. Half of the young people reported depression or anxiety, and one in three had self-harmed. More than a quarter of young people disclosed drug misuse. In almost half (48%) of cases the YPVA had concerns for the young person's emotional wellbeing.

Once the young person has engaged with the YPVA, contact is mainly via telephone or text to check in with the young person and give them the opportunity to discuss any concerns. The YPVA offers short-term, crisis intervention support. The YPVA completes a risk assessment and safety planning, and makes referrals to relevant agencies based on the vulnerabilities that have been identified.

Working jointly with young victims and perpetrators



Child on parent abuse

The YPVA supported 30 young people who were harming others, which is just under half of the caseload. Around half of these young people were harming their parent or parents, and half were harming a current or ex-partner.

The behaviours and challenges involved in cases of child on parent abuse are similar to those involved when a young person is harming their partner, and the YPVA believes that intervening can help to reduce the risk of these behaviours being transferred to a violent relationship.

At case closure, 80% of the young people who harmed others had been supported to address their abusive behaviour. The YPVA has adapted the Step Up programme, which was established in America as a framework for working with young people who are abusing a parent. The programme encourages the young person to identify and understand their feelings and emotions, and to consider how to respond to situations without resorting to anger and aggression. The YPVA has also supported other professionals to use the Step Up programme with young people they support, following disclosures of child on parent abuse.

Support for the parents can be limited. The YPVA talks to the parent about safety planning and to assess what outcomes they would like their child to achieve. It can be difficult to safety plan in cases of child on parent abuse, where the victim and perpetrator often remain living together.

Tools and intervention

The young people's version of the SafeLives Dash risk checklist is used by the YPVA and by other professionals, if they are confident in using it. The young people's Dash risk checklist was completed for 41% of the young people supported, and the adult version of the Dash risk checklist for 9%. More than half of the young people supported reached the threshold to be heard at Marac.

The YPVA makes referrals to other agencies that can support the young person. Almost half of the young people supported were not in education, employment or training. At case closure, 30% of young people had been supported with education and 30% had been supported with education or training. Other common referrals include into Camhs, housing and substance misuse services.

At case engagement, the YPVA recorded that half of the young people had been exposed to domestic abuse in the family home. The YPVA supported the vast majority of these young people to improve their understanding of abusive behaviour (87%) and healthy relationships (78%). One in four young people accessed support with their health. This most frequently involved accessing counselling, mental health services or Camhs. One young person (2%) engaged with drug services.

Of the young people whose cases had closed, the vast majority (83%) reported that they had not experienced any further abuse in the past month. There was a substantial improvement in the proportion of young people who were safe from harm outside the home, and improvements were made in the young people's emotional wellbeing and behavioural problems. Young people themselves reported positive outcomes following their engagement with the YPVA. Every young person knew how to get help in the future, should they need it. The majority (70%) felt safer and reported an improvement in their quality of life.

Plans and hopes for the future

The YPVA is hopeful that the role will continue beyond the planned end of the secondment in November 2015. The high number of referrals has demonstrated the need for a specialist young people's worker in the local area. The YPVA submitted case engagement forms for 66 young people, the majority (62%) of whom were referred primarily as a result of intimate partner violence. Almost half (45%) of the young people who engaged with the YPVA had harmed others, even if this was not the primary reason for the referral.

Recruiting an additional caseworker would help to ensure that caseloads remain manageable. The YPVA sees the future of the role as becoming more advisory, supporting other agencies to work with young people around intimate partner violence and child on parent abuse.