

Young people's violence advisor case study

Local authority area 4

Job title: Young people's violence advisor and service co-ordinator

Role: Full-time caseholder

Location: Youth justice service

YPVA post started: March 2014

Previous role: Caseworker in youth justice



The South Tyneside YPVA is based in a Youth Justice Service, and has supported a small caseload of high risk cases in addition to champion and strategic activity to raise awareness of the service and embed a care pathway. The YPVA submitted data for 14 young people, the majority of whom were white British girls aged 17 years old. Most were experiencing current abuse and had also experienced abuse in their past. The majority of the young people supported were experiencing physical abuse, emotional abuse, harassment and stalking. Many had additional vulnerabilities, with 79% reporting depression or anxiety, and more than a third reporting drug misuse or self-harm.

Awareness raising and training

The YPVA has trained other professionals on the use of the young people's version of the SafeLives Dash risk checklist, and has used the 'Train the Trainer' course to train other professionals on how to support young people experiencing domestic abuse. The YPVA will also be supporting the local DV coordinator to deliver training. The YPVA has been able to visit some schools, hospitals and locality teams to talk about the YPVA role and the young people's Dash risk checklist, and has contacted local young people's champions to work on a care pathway.

The YPVA has been involved in events for young people to raise awareness of domestic abuse and to support their career development, as well as working with the health school lead in a local young people's White Ribbon Campaign.

The YPVA is working with young people to develop a leaflet explaining the YPVA role. Designing the leaflet with young people will ensure the materials reflect their views about what should be included and how it should look.

Risk assessment

All of the young people supported by the YPVA had some form of risk assessment completed. The young people's Dash risk checklist is used by the YPVA and other agencies, and the YPVA has provided training and telephone support to professionals completing the assessment. In particular, the YPVA has provided guidance around risk thresholds. As a guide, the YPVA uses a threshold of 7 ticks on the young people's Dash risk checklist for high risk, as well as encouraging the use of professional judgement. For example, a lower threshold would be appropriate if there is a learning disability or language barrier.

For non-high risk cases, the YPVA and the practitioner will discuss what can be offered to the young people, such as advice, safety planning and healthy relationship work. The YPVA does not have capacity to support non-high risk cases, but there are some local services available.

Working with high risk young people

All of the young people scored 7 or more ticks on either the young people's Dash risk checklist or the SafeLives Dash risk checklist. High risk referrals are sent to the YPVA mailbox, and the YPVA immediately tries to make contact and do a home visit, if possible and safe to do so. Referrals are also identified to the local children and families social care team as a safeguarding concern.

An emergency safety plan is completed in the first session alongside the initial risk assessment. The more detailed SafeLives young people's safety plan is completed when the young person is engaged and able to invest in it, and give context to the actions.

Care pathway

The YPVA has drafted a care pathway plan, which has been signed off by local authority senior managers. The process is already being followed by a range of voluntary and statutory agencies including schools, youth justice, health, housing and substance misuse. The suggested care pathway for 13 to 17 year olds is as follows:



Working with children and families' social care

The YPVA believes joint working with statutory children's and young people's services is key to reducing risk for young people. As their involvement the YPVA is voluntary, joint working with a social worker provides the benefit and support of the statutory safeguarding framework, and ability for cases to be escalated quickly if needed.

Three young people (21%) were referred to the YPVA by children and young people's services, one of whom was a looked after child. Three young people (75%) had some involvement with children's social care – in two cases, this was in place during their time with the YPVA. In one case, social care involvement was in place prior to referral but did not continue during the case. The challenge is ensuring that colleagues in statutory children and families social care do not see the YPVA as an alternative to support from a social worker, but rather as a specialist who can work alongside them to protect young people, prevent harm and respond to risk.

Part of the proposed care pathway is that every young person identified will be assessed by a social worker and that the case will not be closed even if the YPVA is involved to address the domestic abuse. The support from the social worker should include meeting with the young person, chairing their review meetings and ensuring that the young person understands that there is a framework around them because they are a child at risk.

Multi-agency risk assessment conference (Marac)

The local Marac accepts referrals for young people aged 16 years or older who are at high risk of serious harm, although for the case to be heard, both victim and perpetrator have to be aged 16 or older. Two-thirds (64%) of the young people supported by the YPVA were referred to Marac. The YPVA attends and represents the voice of the young person. Other agencies regularly in attendance include children and families social care, services for young people, police, health, and housing. The YPVA feels that there are other specialist children and young people's services that should also be attending

Maracs to contribute to action planning for high risk young people, for example, substance misuse when relevant.

Tool and interventions

The YPVA uses a range of tools, depending on the young person's age, sex, learning style, and the risks they face. Six young people were identified as experiencing online intimate partner abuse, two had experienced "honour"-based violence, and two were at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE).

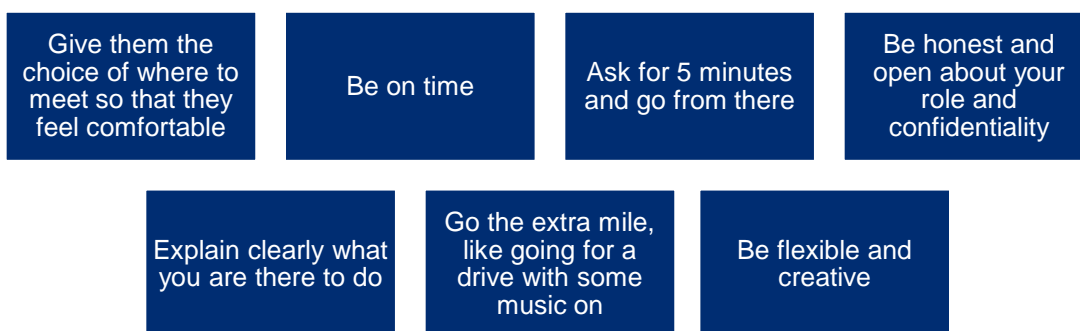
The YPVA uses elements of the freedom programme to look at protective factors to boost young people's self-esteem, understanding their identity, and action planning to address friendships, social life, housing, parenthood and conflict. The YPVA has started to adapt the programme for young people, as feedback from young people who have attended the freedom programme was that it wasn't suitable for them. Some of the other tools used include the interactive tool 'Red Flag and Blue Flag', which helps the young person to understand safe and healthy relationships, and how to identify warning signs. The YPVA is working with young people and the local healthy schools lead on developing this tool for use in schools.

Other interventions include making referrals to other agencies, in particular housing, substance misuse, social care and sexual health services. More than a third of the young people supported were not in education, employment or training at case engagement. The YPVA supported three young people were with training and employment, and one with their education.

If the young person agrees, the YPVA may work with parents and carers to help ensure the young person is kept safe. Parents can attend or help with safety planning. By acting as a mediator between the young person and their parents, the YPVA helps the young person to see that their parents are there to support them and care about them.

Two of the four young people whose cases had closed reported that they had not experienced any further abuse in the past month. Caseworkers recorded improvements in the level of concern for young people's health and wellbeing at case closure – particularly with regards to their social development and emotional wellbeing. Every young person knew how to get help in the future.

Making a good first impression, gaining trust and keeping young people engaged



Plans and hopes for the future

Having gained an understanding of what works as a caseholder and by securing additional resource, the YPVA is now able to step back from the frontline work and become more of a service co-ordinator role. The YPVA may still hold a small high risk caseload, but will focus on developing a local model where social workers, police, therapists, counsellors, programme workers and sanctuary work together to look at young people's domestic abuse cases, as well as developing quality service provision such as:

Group work programme: group work would enable young people to have peer support once they have started to recognise their situation, and may not be suitable at first engagement.

Champions network: identifying someone in each school, service and partner agency to be trained and act as a champion for young people. This will complement work being done by the Police and

Crime Commissioner, who has part funded this work, to identify a person within each service who will be the lead for domestic abuse.

Police: allocated amount of Youth Justice Police's time every week to focus on young people, talk about cases, offer the young person the chance to come in and talk about the options for a prosecution and what the processes are. Often young people don't want to call the police or go to the station, so it breaks the ice and gives them a chance to make an informed decision.

Young people who harm: considering a dedicated worker for young people who harm to look into the perpetrator when working with the victim and liaise with other services who may be working with the young perpetrator. This work is already happening informally but a more formal structure and dedicated people to focus on this work would be ideal.

Leaving Care: currently developing a transitioning agreement with the local leaving care team, which gives 18 year olds who are identified as high risk the option of working with the YPVA or an adult Idva service.

Using evidence of the volume of work and number of referrals received has meant that there are now two young people's violence officers (YPVOs). The YPVOs have not completed YPVA training but are experienced at working with high risk young people in the youth justice sector and work as caseholders supporting high risk young people experiencing intimate partner violence.