

Key Messages for Survivors of Domestic Violence & Abuse from the Evaluation of the Roadmap for System Change

This briefing paper shares key messages for survivors from the evaluation of the Roadmap programme. Main findings include the value of survivors' involvement in developing and delivering specialist domestic violence and abuse services; how to improve survivors' access to these services; and the characteristics of responsive survivor-led services.

The independent evaluation was undertaken by researchers from the University of Central Lancashire and Bangor University, University of East London and Manchester Metropolitan University. The full final report is available **here**:

https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Roadmap_Report_280921.pdf

Together, **Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE)** and **SafeLives (SL)**, developed and delivered, in collaboration with survivors, the Roadmap Programme over 5 years (2016-2021). Funded by the National Lottery's Women and Girls Initiative, the Roadmap Programme aimed to transform the response to women and girls experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

The Roadmap Services: designed by Survivors and Stakeholders

WAFE delivered the **Change that Lasts Programme** through 3 different interventions: **Ask Me** - Ambassadors were trained to enable them to raise awareness and provide advice and signposting to women experiencing domestic violence and abuse in their local communities; **Trusted Professional** provided frontline professionals with training and support so that they could offer a sensitive and appropriate service to clients who experienced domestic violence and abuse; and **VOICES** aimed to re-connect specialist domestic violence and abuse services with a responsive and survivor-led approach.

SafeLives co-designed a whole-family service with and for survivors and their families (**A whole family approach to ending domestic abuse**). The service provided different types of support which families could move between. These included: individual IDVA support; support for families who wished to remain in their relationships; support for survivors with complex/multiple needs; recovery work; and individual and group work for children and young people. In early 2022, these services could be accessed here:

ParagonSussex@theyoustrust.org.uk and via **Help for victims of domestic and sexual abuse | Norfolk PCC**.

'The amount of work that had gone into designing this project and looking at each different intervention, you couldn't ask for more, because they had a couple of years and it was all shaped by the survivors' (SL, Senior Manager)

'I really want to volunteer to give something back, just because of all the support and help I've had' (SL, Survivor)

Involving Survivors in Service Design and Delivery

Adequate time is needed to include survivors and stakeholders in service design.

Ask Me Ambassadors, many of whom were survivors, provided information and signposting to relevant services for those who disclosed domestic violence and abuse.

Survivors using the SafeLives' Co-designed Pilots graduated to the role of peer mentors, providing support to other survivors, who found this type of help useful.

The Roadmap Programme encouraged local commissioners to involve survivors in their work and, as a result, survivors were invited to join commissioning groups.

'...by 8 o'clock that night, she was on her way to freedom. It was amazing, she was really grateful for what I'd done and I felt proud...'
(WAFE, Ask Me Ambassador)

'She explained everything that they could help, for me, and for the children. And always individually...It was like, we can offer this for [older son], we can offer this for [younger son], and I thought, it was always really personalised.'
(SL, Survivor)

they were all at the right time for where I'm at and this has helped me like at this stage of where I'm going, it's helped me sort of put into practice things I've learned.' (SL Focus Group)

'I just felt that I was listened to and that... what I was saying was being acted on, so it was very much sort of led by me'
(SL, Survivor)

'[During Covid my workers] did call me every couple of weeks, just for a check and see how things were, and whether I needed anything whilst waiting. So, I wasn't forgotten'
(SL, Survivor)

Increasing Routes to Support for Survivors

Service providers need to acknowledge the diverse forms of Domestic Violence and Abuse and the diversity of people who experience it.

Services should clearly indicate who can use them (including any specialist support offered) and any groups they can't work with.

Flexible services that respond to changing needs over time and include both individual and groupwork are valued.

Where survivors have children, support (including parenting support) should be available to all family members.

Building Responsive Services

Supporting survivors with court cases, with contact negotiations and children's social care was an important part of the work undertaken by specialist domestic violence and abuse staff.

Survivors valued services that were survivor-centred and enabled them to exert choice over the pace and type of interventions received.

Survivors reported that they benefited from consistent, available staff who communicated with them and whose work was enhanced by use of toolkits and visual images.

During the pandemic, remote/digital service delivery for survivors and their children was feasible and could reduce pressure, but it was easier where a face-to-face relationship had already been established. However, online services may not be equally accessible to everyone.

'...everybody knows a little bit about domestic violence...but I certainly didn't understand the levels of violence and control...it opened my eyes.'
(WAFE, Trusted Professional)

'It's helped me be a better mum to the children and helped me understand them and what they've been through more'
(SL, Survivor)

'[Without my worker] I wouldn't actually have my [child] with us now. And [they're] still with us and because of all the work we've done'
(WAFE, Survivor)

'[my worker] was always available and always there whenever I needed her to be'
(WAFE, Survivor)

Recommendations

- Describing services as high or medium risk is confusing and can result in people being turned away.
- Survivors need to have this information before contacting services to make decisions about which support they wish to access.
- Domestic violence and abuse services need to clearly signal which people they work with: which geographical area is covered, whether they work with children and perpetrators, whether they work with survivors who are still living with the perpetrator or those who require accommodation or refuge.
- It is important that health services (including GPs, mental health and substance use services) and domestic violence and abuse services develop good channels of communication, joint plans and service provision in order to support survivors with multiple/ complex needs.
- All those working with survivors of domestic violence and abuse need to understand its different forms, and how it affects different groups.

If you are experiencing abuse, or think you may be, or are concerned about someone else you can find details of where to access support [here](#). If you are concerned about your own behaviour, Respect has information on how to access help [here](#).

Authors: Please contact Professor Nicky Stanley with any queries relating to this document (NStanley@uclan.ac.uk) at the University of Central Lancashire **Connect Centre for International Research on Interpersonal Violence and Harm**.
*Please note that all links were active at the time of writing