



Home Office

Impact of social research in policy making: domestic violence protection orders pilot study

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Background

- Domestic violence is a volume crime for the police, comprising at least 15% of all violent incidents reported to the police in England and Wales.
- Domestic violence costs both the private and public sectors a substantial amount of money. There are also human costs, to the health, well-being and futures of victim-survivors and their children. Walby (2009) estimated that domestic violence costs £15.7 billion in public services, loss of economic output, and human and emotional costs.
- A pilot ran from June 2011 for 15 months in three police force areas: Greater Manchester, West Mercia and Wiltshire to test a new civil provision, Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs).
- Domestic Violence Protection orders are designed to provide immediate protection for victims following a domestic violence incident in circumstances where, in the view of the police, there are no other enforceable restrictions that can be placed upon the perpetrator. They aim to give victims time, space and support to consider their options by placing conditions on perpetrators, including restricting/removing perpetrators from households, and preventing contact with victims for up to 28 days.

Research questions and methods

An evaluation was conducted which aimed to address the following:

- 1. How were DVPOs implemented and delivered across the three pilot sites?*
 - 2. What did practitioners, victim-survivors and perpetrators think about DVPOs?*
 - 3. Were DVPOs effective in reducing domestic violence across the pilot sites?*
 - 4. What was the value for money of the pilot?*
- A mixed methods approach was followed, comprising both qualitative and quantitative elements.*
 - Surveys, interviews and focus groups were used to gain an understanding of how DVPOs had been implemented, process issues, and the views of victims, perpetrators and practitioners.*
 - The main quantitative elements of the evaluation aimed to provide an estimate of the impact of the pilot on victimisation and assess its value for money.*
 - The impact of DVPOs on re-victimisation was measured by comparing differences in the numbers of pre and post domestic violence incidents between DVPO cases and matched, similar cases where DVPOs were not used.*
 - Police incident data were considered the best available measure of re-victimisation, although potentially subject to reporting issues.*



What we did to create impact

- A **close relationship** with policy colleagues is key. Build trust, value their often extensive knowledge, help them think through the questions they need to answer. (The initial question *Should we roll out DVPOs nationally* needed to be broken down into relevant component parts).
- Recognise there is **more to policy than scientific evidence** - policies are not made in isolation, there are complex interactions between different policies and at different geographical scales, be prepared to compromise.
- Select **appropriate methods** to answer the different questions robustly, within time and cost constraints.
- **Timeliness** is paramount – when policy makers say want information soon they mean hours/days/weeks – not months. Asking them to work to a slower schedule will mean they go elsewhere.
- Deliver **interim results** – that can feed into policy, policy making is an iterative process and it keeps policy makers and ministers engaged.
- Be prepared to **adapt and be flexible** - improve elements of the process as you go along, action research.



What we did to create impact

- **Academic rigour** and **peer review** important – builds confidence in the results, allows you to speak authoritatively.
- **Education/persuasion** – take time to explain why a control group is important, policy makers care about research evidence in so far as it helps them to make better decisions.
- Build good relationships with **delivery partners** - to improve and understand implementation issues along the way.
- Give as **clear a message** as you can – policy makers do understand uncertainty but don't want so many caveats that the research is useless. Translate results into simple language that is relevant for them.
- Give clear **recommendations** – useful to stress how things can be improved.
- Be **transparent and clear about the limitations** of the work.
- **Disseminate** results appropriately **to practitioners** – in a format that they can easily use and understand
- Aim to **publish** if quality is sufficient - to build the evidence base and contribute to understanding what works, for whom, and in what context.
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/260897/horr76.pdf

