

PROGRAMMES OF HELP TO PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – EXPERIENCE AND ATTITUDES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

The article tries to react to a very current issue of help to perpetrators of domestic violence. Most organisations in the Czech Republic focus only on help to victims of domestic violence. The possibility of providing help to perpetrators of domestic violence still remains to be an unexplored area. Thus, the aim of the research was to map organisations in the Czech Republic that could provide such help, to find out what experience with perpetrators of domestic violence these organisations have had up to now, and what is their attitude to such help. The research results showed that help provided to perpetrators of domestic violence is considered to be a necessary part of domestic violence prevention. A number of organisations that could provide help to perpetrators of domestic violence were found. Most of these organisations were found in the South-Moravian and Central-Bohemian Regions, fewest of them were found in the Olomouc Region. Advisory centres for family, marriage and interpersonal relations and marriage and family advisory centres were the organisations that had most experience with perpetrators of domestic violence. These organisations were able to provide most social-legal and psychological consultancy within their competencies. Despite their above-mentioned experience with perpetrators of domestic violence most of them support the idea of establishing special workplaces that would focus only on work with this specific group of people. What seems to be the most problematic matter is especially the fact that the system of help to perpetrators of domestic violence in the Czech Republic is not controlled and consistent enough.

Key words: *a perpetrator; domestic violence; non-profit organisations; experience; help*

INTRODUCTION

Although the issue of domestic violence has been dealt with within social work in the Czech Republic for many years, the help to perpetrators of domestic violence itself has been topical in our country for only 4 years. It has generally been talked about domestic violence more because in 2004 a new offence of maltreatment of a person living in common home was implemented in the criminal law, as well

as an institute of banishing a person from their home, which was included in the criminal law in 2007. What stuck in people's mind was especially the possibility to banish the perpetrator from their home and establishment of intervention centres helping victims. Implementation of the institute of banishing a person from their home brought about a question asking what will happen to the perpetrator of domestic violence (hereinafter referred to only as "DV") in the future? Is

banishing them from their home satisfactory punishment that will lead to their correction or is it necessary to establish contact with them and further work with them? Nowadays we already know that if we want to reduce the amount of domestic violence and improve the quality of the victims's life, we need to work not only with the victim, but with the perpetrator, too.

In Germany, for example, there are not only organisations helping victims, but also a number of facilities for work with DV perpetrators (66 programmes altogether are provided). Both types of facilities are a part of the inter-institutional Alliance against Domestic Violence. An institution (BAG-TäHG e.V.) which roofs organisations working with DV perpetrators was founded in Germany in 2007. The aim of this institution was to be mainly to interconnect the organisations among one another and thus to increase quality of work with DV perpetrators, and to implement standards for this work (Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Europe 2008, BAG-TäHG 2011).

In terms of providing help to DV perpetrators, the Czech Republic is still at the very beginning (Marvánová-Vargová et al. 2008). However, we can already see some remarkable progress. Despite initial disapproving attitudes and scepticism concerning such help the first programmes focused on work with this group of people have begun to be developed in our country. Those organisations that had increasingly more experience with DV perpetrators volunteered to take charge of the work. The incentive leading to creating the programmes that are needed so much (Hrubý 2010, Pechtorová 2010) were perpetrators themselves, who were interested in solving their situation, and recently also interest shown by professional public. At present there are 7 programmes that offer help to perpetrators of DV. However, they do not provide a national and systematic measure in this area (NAP DN 2011). The special kind of help offered is only within 5 regions, i.e. the special service is not available for everyone.

Generally, work with perpetrators of domestic violence should result from the cognitive-behavioural theory of social work. An assumption for work with a perpetrator of violence is the fact that men are not born

being violators. They used violence because they had been taught to do so and because they considered such behaviour to be the last possibility to gain power and control over their partner (Ille and Kraus 2005). The basic aim of work with perpetrators of DV should be social control, support of a change of behaviour and improvement or restoration of their social functioning, i.e. help while restoring or gaining such skills and information that will allow the perpetrators to cope with requirements of the environment and vice-versa (Matoušek et al. 2001). The help should focus on questioning the existing behaviour and on a change of behaviour patterns and thinking leading to violence (Voňková and Spoustová 2008). The focus of the approach is change and development (Matoušek et al. 2001). The programmes of help should be based on a combination of behavioural and cognitive techniques (Čírtková 2004). The behavioural theory is based on the fact that behaviour of an individual is learned in the interaction with the environment. The aim is particularly a change of behaviour that prevents the perpetrator from successful and independent functioning (Matoušek et al. 2001). A range of techniques, which serve mainly for elimination of unsuitable behaviour patterns, is used within the therapy. Cognitive techniques are mainly to question the existing habitual manners of thinking, such as: I do nothing bad, women should be glad I do it, etc. (Čírtková 2004). Therapeutic sessions with DV perpetrators should ideally be led by two workers, a man and a woman. A therapy led by a man and a woman can provide a model of a respectful equal relationship and division of responsibility. This can show to perpetrators that differences of opinion can be solved in favour of both persons involved (Marvánová-Vargová et al. 2008).

It is known that DV perpetrators do not admit their fault and therefore they do not search for help (Buskotte 2008). Based on these statements we wondered if the organisations that provide social help had experience with DV perpetrators and if they were able to provide necessary help in case the DV perpetrators were interested in getting it. In this respect we also wanted to verify whether or not there is a negative attitude to helping DV perpetrators. Last but not least, we wanted to gain proposals regarding who

should take charge of prospective work with DV perpetrators in the future.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The basic aim of the research was to map an attitude and experience of non-profit organisations in the Czech Republic regarding help to perpetrators of domestic violence. 4 research questions were implied in connection with this basic aim:

1. Research question: What is the attitude of non-profit organisations to providing help to perpetrators of domestic violence?
2. Research question: Do the selected non-profit organisations provide social services also to perpetrators of domestic violence?
3. Research question: In what way do non-profit organisations help perpetrators of domestic violence or what particular kind of help do they offer?
4. Research question: What would non-profit organisations recommend in terms of providing help to perpetrators of domestic violence?

Significant factors leading to asking the research questions were mainly the following:

- Institutional barriers (insufficient quality of services for perpetrators of DV - lack of theoretical and practical experience, inaccessibility of the services to everyone – regional inaccessibility).
- Structural barriers (a network of services for DV perpetrators that is not developed enough).
- Existence of negative myths and prejudices about perpetrators of DV (Foltysová 2009).

The quantitative research strategy was chosen in order to fulfil the determined aim and to answer the questions having been asked. An inquiry by means of a telephone survey was chosen as the research method and technique. The telephone survey consisted of five questions: two closed dichotomic questions, one filtration question and two semi-closed questions.

The basic research file consisted of non-profit organisations from all over the Czech Republic. The selective file – the examination

unit consisted of only those organisations that met the following criteria (quota characters):

- The organisation being included in the register of social services providers.
- The kind of provided social service – specialist social consultancy, crisis help, telephone crisis intervention.
- The target group of clients of the particular organisation had to include – persons in crisis or perpetrators of criminal offences, in the following age group – young adults (19–26 years old) and adults (27–64 years old).
- Organisations meeting the above-mentioned criteria but not dealing with particular specific groups such as: help only to women – victims of domestic violence, to people with a health handicap – physical – hearing – eyesight – mental – combined, to people suffering from a mental disorder, to people threatened with addictions or already addicted to addictive substances, to foreigners and refugees, to senior citizens and children.
- Organisations meeting the above-mentioned criteria whose offer of services did not include a programme of help to perpetrators of domestic violence.

The inquiry unit consisted of workers of particular selected organisations.

244 organisations were selected and addressed, out of which 188 workers of the selected organisations were willing to get engaged in the survey. Thus the return was 77%.

The following organisations had the biggest representation among the selected organisations: advisory centres for family, marriage and interpersonal relations; marriage and family advisory centres and citizens advisory centres.

The research was carried out in the months of March and April 2011.

RESULTS

244 workers of the selected organisations were addressed, 188 of them answered the survey questions (the data are in integers).

Table 1 shows an attitude of the addressed workers of the selected organisations to

providing help to perpetrators of domestic violence. The aim was to find out how the professional public see help to DV perpetrators, whether or not they consider it as important as help to victims; 180 of the

addressed workers consider providing help to DV perpetrators as important as providing help to victims, 8 workers consider help to DV perpetrators not significant.

Table 1. Attitude to providing help to perpetrators of DV (n=188)

yes	no
180	8

Table 2 shows experience of the organisations with perpetrators of domestic violence. It means whether or not they have been in contact with them, may it be for the reason of providing help or for a different one. The purpose of asking this question

within the survey was to find out whether or not perpetrators attend some non-profit organisations providing help to persons in crisis. The results proved that 95 organisations had had experience with DV perpetrators, 93 organisations had not.

Table 2. Experience of organisations with perpetrators of DV (n=188)

yes	no
95	93

Table 2 is followed by table 3, which depicts an offer of help to DV perpetrators by the selected organisations. Table 3 includes only those organisations that have had experience with DV perpetrators. The main purpose of this question was to find out whether or not the organisation that was in contact with a DV perpetrator offered to him/her necessary

help; 69 of the addressed workers answered yes, i.e. they offered help to them, they tried to deal with their problem, 26 workers answered no, i.e. they did not deal with the problem of the perpetrator and referred them to a different organisation that deals directly with this issue.

Table 3. Offer of help to DV perpetrators (n=95)

yes	no
69	26

The organisations that have had experience with DV perpetrators and that tried to offer help to them are involved in Table 4. This table shows the kinds of help that the above-mentioned organisations are able to provide to perpetrators of DV. In this case 69 out of 188 addressed workers gave their answers. It was

possible to choose more possibilities. The most frequent option was social-legal consultancy (48 times), psychological consultancy (44 times), psychotherapy (38 times), telephone crisis intervention (16 times), and the last one was a different kind of help (11 times).

Table 4. Kinds of help offered to DV perpetrators (n=69)

Kind of provided help	Number of answers
Social-legal consultancy	48
Psychological consultancy	44
Psychotherapy	38
Telephone crisis intervention	16
Others	11

Within the survey, all addressed workers of the selected organisation were asked to propose an institution or an organisation that should take charge of work with DV perpetrators in the future. The answers are shown in Table 5. The addressed workers could choose only one of the options offered. The following option was chosen by the biggest number of workers: establishment of a

new social services facility specialized only in work with DV perpetrators (like intervention centres for victims) (74 times), the second most frequent option was the following one: any existing organisation providing social services to persons in crisis (61 times), option: others was chosen 42 times, and option "I don't know" was chosen 11 times.

Table 5. Proposal of organisation that should work with perpetrators of DV (n=188)

Organisation that should take charge of work with DV perpetrators	Number of answers
A new facility specialized only in DV perpetrators	74
An existing organisation providing social services to persons in crisis	61
Others	42
I don't know	11

Table 6 shows a brief summary of experience and offer of help to perpetrators of DV in each region at selected organisation. In case of each region the following is specified:

- how many surveys were received (in brackets how many organisations were addressed in the relevant region);
- what is the ratio of experience and lack of experience with DV perpetrators in the relevant region within received surveys;
- how many organisations having some experience are able to offer help.

DISCUSSION

If we want to generally summarize the received results, we can say that they exceeded our expectations. Several years ago there were only negative opinions regarding providing

help to perpetrators of DV. The arguments against establishing help programmes for perpetrators of DV lay especially in reluctance of DV perpetrators to search for any help. So why should something be established when perpetrators are not willing to make use of it? However, as the times have been changing and our society developing, this opinion has been increasingly abandoned. Within the survey itself we were very happy that a vast majority of social workers of the selected organisations consider help to DV perpetrators to be as important as help to victims themselves (Table 1). This is also a proof of the fact that the initial negative attitude to help to perpetrators is being abandoned and the sense of the work itself is beginning to be perceived positively. This finding was also an answer to the 1st research question, which asked about the attitude of non-profit organisations to providing help to DV perpetrators.

Table 6. Situation in each region

Regions	Number of received surveys (addressed persons)	Experience with perpetrators of DV		Offer of help within experience	
		yes	no	yes	no
Region of Hradec Králové	9 (14)	5	4	4	1
Region of Plzeň	11 (11)	6	5	5	1
Region of Pardubice	9 (12)	4	5	3	1
Region of Olomouc	5 (6)	1	4	1	0
Region of Liberec	10 (11)	6	4	5	1
Region of Karlovy Vary	7 (7)	5	2	3	2
South-Bohemian Region	14 (20)	7	7	6	1
Moravian-Silesian Region	27 (36)	11	16	7	4
Central-Bohemian Region	20 (31)	10	10	9	1
Region of Highlands	11 (13)	8	3	6	2
Region of Ústí nad Labem	14 (18)	9	5	5	4
The Capital of Prague	13 (21)	4	9	3	1
South-Moravian Region	28 (31)	14	14	9	5

What was very surprising for us was the finding regarding experience of the organisations with DV perpetrators. Based on many statements saying that perpetrators of DV refuse to change their manner of behaviour, they do not want to work with their inclination to violence, and they particularly do not want to see an expert regularly (Bednářová et al. 2009), we had expected minimum experience of the organisations. But the opposite was true. Almost a half of the organisations addressed had already had some experience with perpetrators of DV (Table 2). In our opinion, this is very positive and it is also a proof of the fact that despite the above-mentioned statements perpetrators of DV do attend these organisations. Another question is the reason why the perpetrators attended the organisation. According to the workers addressed, the purpose was not always searching for help regarding their own problem. It is also interesting to look at the ratios of experience and lack of experience in each region. Here we can see that considering the number of surveys received in each region, the ration is almost fifty-fifty in all regions (Table 6).

In those cases when a perpetrator attended one of the selected organisations (for any reason) we attempted to find out if the organisations tried to further work with the perpetrator, it means if they tried to offer help to them. Interest of the perpetrators in such cooperation played an important part in this case. When perpetrators were interested in it, almost a majority of the organisations having some previous experience with perpetrators were able to provide them with an appropriate kind of help (mostly social-legal and psychological consultancy) (Tables 3, 4). The organisations that did not try to work with DV perpetrators usually stated that instead of offering help to perpetrators they referred them to a different organisation that was more competent regarding this issue. In this case another important finding was the fact that despite the demandingness and particularity of work with DV perpetrators the existing organisations are willing and able to offer help. It means that despite the low number of programmes specialized directly in perpetrators of DV in the Czech Republic, a perpetrator has the possibility to gain help in each region. So the question asking whether

or not the selected non-profit organisations provide perpetrators of DV with social services can be answered positively. The services of help are accessible in each region even though such help is mostly not specialized (Appendix 1).

This is important to know while asking other questions regarding establishment of programmes of work with perpetrators of DV, whether or not new facilities specialized in perpetrators of DV should be established, or whether or not the existing ones are sufficient. We asked the workers of the selected organisations a similar question. Although more than a half of these workers had had experience with perpetrators of DV and were able to provide them with help within their services, they preferred establishing new facilities that would specialize only in work with the particular group of people (Table 5). Besides this opinion, there were also numerous workers who would not establish anything new and who would make use of the existing organisations more. Such organisations should for example offer a special programme for perpetrators of DV within their services. We take both sides in this respect. According to what some of the addressed workers said, the services that their organisation provides are sufficient for dealing with this problematic group of people. It would be enough to develop this service more and adjust it directly for the particular target group. The already existing methodology of work with perpetrators of DV can be helpful in this respect. This methodology was elaborated in 2004–2006 within the project called Programme of Partner Aggressor Therapy, which was financially supported by the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic. The National Action Plan of Domestic Violence Prevention for the period of 2011–2014, which was approved of in April 2011, brings another alternative of establishment of specialized workplaces. Among its aims this plan counts on providing therapeutic services for violent persons, implementation of national workplaces for systematic work with violent persons within programmes of resocialisation, and on support of social work with violent persons. A fundamental element here is building of a consultancy centres network for work with violent persons and development of appropriate standards (NAP DN 2011).

It is also worth mentioning other proposals that the addressed workers mentioned. Among other organisations that should take charge of work with perpetrators of DV the following ones were named most frequently: Probation and Mediation Service (PMS), intervention centres (IC), or existing organisations working with victims, which would also start working with perpetrators of DV as another target group. However, in our opinion, none of the above-mentioned possibilities is worth taking into consideration. For example regarding the PMSs there is a problem with probation clerks not being therapists. Probation clerks usually only watch that there is no relapse. They try to make perpetrators come to the conclusion that what they did is not in compliance with law and that their behaviour is not all right (Jandová 2010). Minor research regarding the above-mentioned intervention centres helping victims was conducted within the survey. Within the research two questions were sent by email to all intervention centres. 9 ICs out of 14 answered the questions. The research examined an attitude of ICs to establishment of programmes for perpetrators of DV and prospective cooperation with organisations that work only with DV perpetrators. All the ICs addressed had a positive attitude to the establishment of programmes for perpetrators. The ICs do not refuse prospective future cooperation with already existing programmes for perpetrators, some of them have already started cooperating with them (Prague, Brno). In this respect a number of ICs mentioned the fact that in compliance with law they provide only the social services that focus on help to persons threatened by domestic violence, it means not to violent persons. This is how we can directly react to the answers of the workers addressed within the survey who proposed ICs or different organisations working with victims of domestic violence also for work with DV perpetrators. It means cooperation with them yes, working with them no. A good example of cooperation is between the IC Prague and Viola - an information and advisory centre for persons who behave in a conflict manner in relationships. Although both centres operate under one organisation (the Social Services Centre Prague), they work separately. Both centres cooperate in the following way: when women clients from the IC wish to give their

conflict partner another chance, the partner is offered a one-shot or repeated session in Viola. If the situation develops well and if both partners agree, the psychologist in Viola can offer a partner therapy. When a person is banished from their home, the IC Prague sends the Viola leaflet to the police who offer the leaflet to this person. It is important to point out that in this case the IC acts only as an intermediary, not as a provider. The psychologist of the Persefona Citizens Association, which provides help to victims of domestic violence, mentions a similar example. In 2010 the association developed a programme of therapy for perpetrators of domestic violence while they only kept a role of an intermediary. The aim of the programme is to gradually implement the programme considering what is already available (i.e. contacting workers – organisations that would take charge of the work with perpetrators). The psychologist herself says that it is not possible for an organisation to provide help to both victims and perpetrators. It would not be safe and convenient for neither of the groups, both of them could feel threatened (Čechová 2010). The same applies for other organisations whose target group are only victims of domestic violence. Providing direct help to perpetrators is impossible in any way.

Another research question was to find out in what way non-profit organisations help perpetrators of domestic violence or what particular kind of help they offer. The help offered was most frequently provided in the form of social-legal and psychological consultancy (Table 4). The question is whether or not the offered help is sufficient. We consider this form of help to be efficient rather in less significant cases of domestic violence. According to Foltysová the approaches and methodology are not adapted to work with DV perpetrators in most existing non-profit organisations (Foltysová 2009). In more serious cases of domestic violence we would rather recommend a special programme of help using cognitive-behavioural methods. The programme should be based on the following principles: confrontation with violent behaviour, taking responsibility for person's own violent acts, confrontation with routine patterns and offer of a different alternative of thinking and acting (learning to handle conflict situations

in a non-violent way, self-control), or putting up with emotional or psychological childhood experiences there were affected by violence (Godolf 2000, BAG-TäHG 2007). Based on newly learned approaches and behaviour models DV perpetrators will not have to resort to violence because they will be able to handle a conflict situation in a non-violent way (Ille and Kraus 2005). The cognitive-behavioural approach plays the main part while working with DV perpetrators in a number of European countries, such as Austria, Germany, Scotland, Belgium, and England (Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Europe 2008). In our country this approach is used for example in the SOS Diaconia Centre within a therapeutic programme for violent persons.

An example from abroad is worth mentioning. In Austria programmes for perpetrators of DV are offered in various advisory centres for men. They work either as independent advisory centres or as part of other organisations offering services to different target groups, too. However, independent advisory centres offering special services for men (especially perpetrators of DV) prevail. Most programmes for perpetrators in Austria work with a different conception and under different conditions. It is positive that each federal land in Austria disposes of at least two advisory centres offering help to violent men (15 centres altogether) (Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Europe 2008, Männerwelten 2011).

Besides investigating attitudes and experience regarding help to perpetrators of DV, the research also focused on mapping social services within each region of the Czech Republic (Table 6). What we tried to do in each region was to find as many organisations able to provide help also to perpetrators of DV within their offer of services as possible. In this respect the biggest number of possible services were found in the Moravian-Silesian, South-Moravian and Central-Bohemian Regions. In these regions there are also organisations that have already developed special programmes for perpetrators of DV and that work with them (Appendix 2). Besides these organisations there is a number of other organisations that do not dispose of special programmes but that are able to provide necessary help to perpetrators of DV. The smallest network of such organisations

was found in the Regions of Karlovy Vary and Olomouc. We would recommend expanding the network of advisory centres in these regions.

CONCLUSION

At the end it is possible to say that the determined aim of the research was fulfilled. All over the Czech Republic a number of non-profit organisations willing to participate in the survey were addressed. The following organisations belonged to the selected and addressed ones: advisory centres for family, marriage and interpersonal relations, marriage, pre-marriage and family advisory centres, citizens advisory centres, social advisory centres, information and advisory centres, SOS helplines, and facilities of crisis help. Currently, the general attitude to help to perpetrators of domestic violence is positive. In terms of a comprehensive solution of the issue of domestic violence, other organisations consider work with perpetrators to be very current and necessary. In addition, nearly

a majority of these organisations are able to provide the required help to perpetrators, usually in the form of social-legal and psychological consultancy.

In connection with programmes of help to perpetrators of DV we should continue to try and develop an integral system of work with this specific group of people, and spread it in each region. In our opinion, compactness of the work itself could be achieved by development of unified general standards or methodology of work. Organisations should not be afraid to develop a programme for perpetrators due to the fact that the service may not be used. The research and the organisations that have already been working with perpetrators of DV are a proof of the fact that perpetrators attend the organisations and make use of the offered services. Perpetrators themselves resort to searching for a helpful organisation because domestic violence is in the forefront of public interest and spoken about in media much at present. This fact was also pointed out by the research results, because more than a half of the addressed organisations have experience with perpetrators of domestic violence.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

A map of the addressed organisations having experience with perpetrators of DV that are able and willing to provide appropriate help (n=69).



■ organisations that operate in the relevant district

Appendix 2

Organisations that have a special programme of work with a violent person in the Czech Republic:

- ČCE Diaconia, SOS Centre: “Programme for violent persons, perpetrators of domestic violence, and persons who are aggressive in relationships” (Prague).
- VIOLA – an information and advisory centre for men and women who have conflict relationships with close people (Prague).
- ADRA, a psychotherapeutic centre in Hradec Králové: “Work with aggression in the framework of therapy” (Hradec Králové).
- Centrum J. J. Pestalozziho, o. p. s., a crisis centre (Chrudim).
- Centrum nové naděje: “Prevention of Partnership Violence” (Frýdek-Místek).
- Social Services Centre Ostrava, a crisis centre for children and family: “Programme focused on handling aggression in relationships and in a family” (Ostrava).
- Persefona: “Safe coexistence – therapy of perpetrators of domestic violence – a new challenge” (Brno).

New programmes with an emphasis on work with violent persons for 2012:

- Diaconia of Silesia: “Domestic violence has two sides – a resocializing and therapeutic programme for violent persons.”
- Centre for Family and Interpersonal Relations and a helpline called Linka důvěry České Budějovice, o. p. s.: “A psychological and psychotherapeutic programme for perpetrators of domestic violence and their victims” (České Budějovice).