

Women as Protectors UK



Type of intervention



Individual Work



Group Work

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:



Tertiary prevention

Adults (21 Years +) | Female | Individual Setting, Group Work | English

Target population

Women who have a partner who may be being assessed for risk of sexually harming a child or who is in the criminal justice system and could pose a risk of sexual harm to a child.

Delivery organisation

NSPCC working in partnership with Circles South East. NSPCC is a national charity/NGO in the UK, specialising in child protection work. Circles South East is a local charity in the south of England that originally developed 'Breaking the Cycle', the model on which this is based. NSPCC has been licensed to adapt and extend the intervention and to undertake a rigorous evaluation of its effectiveness.

Mode and context of delivery

Women as Protectors has the following key elements:

- Group or individual work with women with a focus on assessment, support, awareness raising, education and empowerment.
- Individual work with named children as part of a 'keeping safe' plan, with a focus on awareness raising and identifying safe adults in their network.
- Volunteer development and ongoing support and training.
- Community education - the recruitment and maintenance of volunteers in the community; building capacity and knowledge in relation to child sexual abuse and its prevention.

The group and/or individual work programme and support in protective parenting for women, is based on 'Breaking the Cycle', developed by Circles South East. 'Breaking the Cycle' has been written as a group programme for small numbers of women, which can be delivered as consecutive sessions or as a block over a four day period. It is also adaptable for 1:1 so can meet the needs of large, rural counties, in which referrals may be dispersed and group delivery may not be feasible.

Individual support in protective parenting is provided by trained community volunteers. The development of these volunteers is intended to build community capacity to prevent child sexual abuse.

The programme is supported by a manual.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Two professionally qualified social workers, with experience of child sexual abuse work, are required to co-facilitate the groups, undertake assessments, write reports and take part in multi-disciplinary meetings. They also require training in the 'Breaking the Cycle' model.

Community volunteers are matched with each participant. They do not require a professional qualification but need specific training on child sexual abuse and on this way of working. They are supervised by a social worker or Volunteer Coordinator.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

'Breaking the Cycle' has been written as a group programme, consisting of 20 hours. It can be delivered as 10 sessions of two hours, run at a set time over 10 consecutive weeks or as a block of 20 hours over a four day period. The programme is sequential, but delivery can be structured to suit group participants and service providers alike. The programme has been designed to work with a small group of participants at any one time (it is recommended a minimum of three to a maximum of six women per group; any larger number would impact upon timings and process).

Description of intervention

Women as Protectors has four main elements as described above:

- group or individual work
- volunteer support in protective parenting
- direct work with children
- volunteer and community development

Women attend a group or individual programme and are supported beyond the life of the group in protective parenting, by a trained community volunteer with whom they have been matched.

Women participants have a partner who is currently being assessed for risk of sexual harm or who is in the criminal justice system. Participation is voluntary. They can be referred by Children's Social Care or can self refer. They can join the group and have their capacity to protect assessed, as well as their support needs identified and can access ongoing support through an identified, trained volunteer.

Participants examine the links between the emotional impact of finding out about the risk of sexual harm and their subsequent cognitive processes. These processes inform any subsequent understanding of the abuse and decisions related to that understanding. This is important in ensuring the women's future autonomy and informed decision

making.

Many women in this position experience a sense of social isolation (which may be aggravated by the man's manipulation). Group work reduces the sense of isolation through peer support, helps re-build trust, reduces cognitive distortions, improves problem solving abilities and helps participants in handling conflict; it may also increase self-esteem.

Good group work techniques are required, appropriate modelling and the use of self-instruction through Socratic and open styles of questioning. Although group work is the primary method of service delivery, the theoretical model of this programme is based upon the principles of cognitive therapy; introducing participants to strengths based approaches and using mindfulness techniques and exercises to facilitate a more objective and considered perspective.

- Session 1 - An introduction to the programme
- Session 2 - An introduction to positive approaches
- Session 3 - Identifying the issue
- Session 4 - Identifying the issue
- Session 5 - How could this have happened to me and my family?
- Session 6 - How could this have happened to me and my family?
- Session 7 - Victim awareness and communicating with children about sexual abuse
- Session 8 - Good Lives Model
- Session 9 - Making sense of it all

Evaluation

The programme is the subject of a rigorous outcome evaluation. For more information contact todonnell@nspcc.org.uk at the NSPCC.

References

For information about 'Breaking the Cycle' on which Women as Protectors is based, see www.circlessoutheast.org.uk.

Calahane H, P. G. (2013). Treatment Implication Arising from a Qualitative Analysis of Letters written by non-offending partners of men who have perpetrated child sexual abuse. *Journal of child Sex Abuse*, 720-741.

Fisher, D. and Beech, A. (1998) Reconstituting families after sexual abuse: The offender's perspective. *Child Abuse Review: Vol 7*

Fisher D (2008) Better Lives Model TVSOGP HMSO publication

Smith, Gerrilyn, "Assessing protectiveness in cases of child sexual abuse" in "Assessment of parenting psychiatric and psychological contributions" Reder, P; Lucey, C, (1995)

Ward T. Maruna S. (2007) Rehabilitation Routledge

Contact details

For information about Women as Protectors contact Trish O'Donnell at the NSPCC - email todonnell@nspcc.org.uk

For information about the original model Breaking the Cycle see www.circlessoutheast.org.uk email info@htvcircles.org.uk