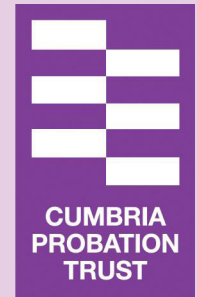


Cumbria Probation Trust



WHAT DO WE DO?

Cumbria Probation Trust works with offenders and the community to reduce the harm they cause and to support them in becoming useful members of society. We work closely with the police, courts and with a number of other partners across the county to deliver an effective service to the communities of Cumbria. Our range of activities may be wider than you think. We work with victims of crime, work with offenders in prison and provide Community Payback work as well as the traditional role of supervising offenders “on probation”.

Our aims include:

- protecting the public
- reducing re-offending
- ensuring proper punishment of offenders
- rehabilitating offenders
- ensuring offenders awareness of the effects of crime on the victims and the public

The majority of our work involves delivering the community sentences imposed on offenders by the courts. A Community Order contains requirements that we must deliver. The number and type of requirements attached to a Community Order depend upon the severity of the crime and previous offending behaviour.

One of the sentencing options available to the court is an Accredited Programme. Accredited Programmes are designed to address attitudes and behaviours that contribute to offending.

One of the programmes available in Cumbria is the Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP).

COMMUNITY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMME (CDVP)

This is a groupwork programme for men who have been convicted of violent and abusive offences against their female partner. It aims to help men stop being violent and abusive and promotes healthy relationships, founded on respect and equality. These aims are achieved by assisting the men to:

- recognise the extent of their abusive behaviour, e.g. verbal abuse as well as violence
- increase their awareness of influences on their behaviour
- learn skills to change their thinking and manage their emotions
- learn how to improve communication in relationships
- develop a personal plan to prevent relapse into abuse behaviour and to develop healthy relationships

Womens Safety Workers (WSW) make contact with the victims and partners of the men on the programme. They offer them information about the programme and about his attendance. They also receive feedback from her about the extent to which he is changing his behaviour.

HOW LONG IS THE PROGRAMME?

The programme contains 28 sessions and each session lasts 2 hours and 30 minutes.

The programme also involves homework between sessions.

Case Study - John*

A former Domestic Violence Perpetrator

*name has been changed

BEFORE THE PROGRAMME

At the start John was quite resistant. He cast himself in the role of 'group joker' in a way which could be intimidating and derogatory towards women. He tended to blame his partner for his behaviour and minimised his offence by admitting only partial detail. He missed several sessions and quickly reached the maximum number of absences from the group, so one more would result in him being removed and the possibility of going back to court.



DURING THE PROGRAMME

John was challenged by group members and the course material as the programme progressed. As part of the course, participants have to present an autobiography. John was resistant to sharing personal information with the group, saying that his father had warned him not to give details of his life to the group. Another group member pointed out that this meant his father was still in control of him. He listened to the group and later presented his full autobiography. This was a turning point for his engagement with the programme.

John went on to make links between his past and current attitudes, for example not feeling able to express himself as a child because his father would have seen this as a weakness, and subsequently tending not to express himself in adult relationships. John related strongly to a visual illustration of poor emotional management, showing how suppressed thoughts and feelings can pile up on top of one another, eventually resulting in an explosion of aggressive behaviour like a volcano. John remarked that this was the most powerful piece of learning for him so far.

Over the course of the programme John owned up to more of his abusive behaviour. He admitted that there was more to the current offence than he had first acknowledged. He recognised how he had historically used humour abusively in his relationship which, interestingly,

had been mirrored in his early behaviour in the group room. As he changed, he didn't lose his sense of humour but from that point directed it more constructively. He used the skills he was learning to interrupt his negative thinking about his partner.

ON COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAMME

John successfully made it to the end of the programme, an achievement in itself given the lack of scope for missing further sessions. A significant moment towards the end of the programme was when John spoke for the group, describing how they had all been on a journey from initially denying their behaviour to taking responsibility for it. He said that the course had made a big impact on his life. Since completing it, John describes continuing to use the skills learnt during the course in his everyday life. He acknowledges that he does not always find his relationship with his partner easy - the programme makes no promise of this. However, the skill he really values is that he is now able to empathise with his partner, taking into consideration her point of view. This is a big change for someone who used to blame the victim for his behaviour.