

European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

Application Form - Ireland

General information

1. Please specify your country.

Ireland

2. Is this your country's ECPA entry or an additional project?

This is Ireland's ECPA entry.

3. What is the title of the project?

MEND [men ending domestic abuse]

4. Who is leading the project? Please give contact details.

The South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (SEDVIP), under the management of the Men's Development Network (MDN), 30 O Connell St. Waterford, Ireland.

Co-ordinator John Doyle, Phone 0035351878866, email john@mens-network.net, www.mend.ie

5. What was the start date of the project? Is the project still running?

The project began in 2002 and is still running.

6. Please give a short general description of the project (Max. 150 words).

The MEND Programme provides a challenging but safe space for men to get support to change their abusive behaviour.

It works in a radical way with men to develop skills and insights that will enable them to change their behaviour so that their lives and the lives of those they love can be free from the tyranny of violence and abuse.

It also provides a service for the partners or ex-partners of the men on the programme.

Each Programme normally runs for 32 weeks comprising a weekly meeting lasting up to two and a half hours.

The primary aim of the Programme is the safety of women and children.

The Programme is part of a community response to domestic violence and the local management groups include members drawn from agencies such as the Probation Service, Health Service Executive, Women's Refuges and Rape Crisis Centres.

I. The project shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the theme.

7. How does the project contribute to the prevention and/or the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? (Max. 150 words)

The core objectives of the programme are the safety of women and children and behaviour change in men.

The partners or ex-partners of the men on the group programme in the majority of cases have not been in contact with other domestic violence agencies and their engagement in the Programme increases their safety, reduces their fear and links them in with key statutory and non-statutory agencies. During the course of the Programme they may be supported to safely leave an abusive relationship.

The men on the Programme are challenged to take responsibility for their abusive behaviour and are supported in practical ways and with the support of the group to change their behaviour and lead more respectful lives.

The successful outcomes from the Programme change lives, reduce crime and the fear of crime in a meaningful way.

8. How is the project related to the ECPA-theme selected by the organising Member State? (Max. 150 words)

The MEND Programme relates directly to the ECPA theme of "Prevention of Domestic Violence". As its name suggests, it is designed to help men stop being abusive towards their partners.

By engaging robustly with the men and supporting their partners, the Programme aims to break the cycle of violence and abuse, thus reducing the level of domestic violence among clients.

9. How is the project contributing to raising citizens' awareness of crime prevention? (Max. 150 words)

The MEND Programme operates within a community context and is explicitly raising the issue of domestic abuse and endeavouring to highlight the complex nature of this issue. Working directly with men and women on the Programme has raised awareness among families and communities.

Programme workers regularly speak about domestic violence on local radio and national newspapers. The Programme has organised conferences and seminars that have added value by raising awareness of the issue, including having leading practitioners (e.g. Paul Wolf Light, Mark Farrall) presenting on how the issue can be dealt with effectively.

It has engaged in poster and leafleting campaigns, developed an accessible and informative website that raises awareness of the issue and enables users to access the Programme. It has provided self-help literature for men who wish to change their violent behaviour that is of value to men in a pre-contemplative stage regarding motivation to change.

II The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives.

10. Evaluation and achievement of programme objectives.

What was the reason for setting up the project? What problem(s) did it aim to tackle? How, when and by whom were these problems defined? (Max. 150 words)

The 1997 Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women recognised the extent of Domestic Abuse in Ireland and, amongst other things, recommended that “intervention programmes for offenders should be adequately resourced and should be available in areas where support services for women and children (such as refuges) are already in place”.

It was in the Regional Planning Committee of the South East of Ireland that the need for intervention programmes within the Region was recognised. Accordingly, the South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (SEVIP) was set up as a regional initiative to work with male perpetrators of domestic abuse and commenced four local Programmes.

In 2008, these Programmes were re-launched as MEND [men ending domestic abuse]. This name was chosen in order to make the programme more accessible to clients and referral agencies and to emphasise the importance for all men, not just perpetrators of domestic abuse, to take responsibility for and be proactive about ending violence against women.

11. What were the objective(s) of the project? Please, if applicable, distinguish between main and secondary objectives. (Max. 150 words)

As outlined in the answer to question 7, the main objectives of the programme are the safety of women and children and behaviour change for men.

This leads to the following secondary objectives:

- a reduction in violent and controlling behaviour by men who complete the Programme with their current and/or future female partners and children;
- a partnership approach between women's service providers (i.e. women's refuges, domestic violence support services and rape crisis centres) and those working with men;
- improved data on outcomes; and
- an appropriate community alternative to prison.

12. How was the project implemented? How were these objectives translated into actions? What was the action plan of the project? (Max. 300 words)

The actions to implement the objectives of the project have been as follows:

- Four local interagency steering committees were set up in the South-Eastern counties of Wexford, Waterford, South Tipperary and Carlow/Kilkenny which were responsible for the establishment of four Programmes in those areas;
- Facilitators and Partner Support Workers chosen and trained;

- Funding received from the Department of Justice and Equality¹;
- Became members of Respect UK, an organisation that assesses and certifies intervention programmes;
- Best Practice and Policies (e.g. child protection) and protocols (e.g. risk management meetings) developed;
- Leaflets and posters designed to raise awareness and bring referrals into the programme. “Self-Help Booklet for men who want to change their violent behaviour” amended and adapted, with permission, original Australian version. 1000 booklets distributed. Organised mail-shots to various key groups including General Medical Practitioners, Counsellors and Social Workers;
- Organised and published frontline research entitled “Referring Men”;
- Developed MEND website to increase awareness of Domestic Violence and to enable users to access the Programme;
- On-going professional training and conferences/seminars organised with key practitioners from UK (Paul Wolf Light and Mark Farrall) and US (Michael Paymar and Ellen Pence);
- As programme develops, individual programme statistics and key information gathered centrally and submitted to the funder;
- Weekly risk assessment feedback taking place between Partner Support Workers and Facilitators plus monthly joint risk management meetings;
- Participation in various fora on Domestic Violence,² engaged in all evaluation processes commissioned by the funder, organised external evaluations of Carlow/Kilkenny and Waterford Programmes;
- Co-ordination team completed key training on Early Childhood Attachment and General Trauma that impacts on behaviour within adult intimate relationships.

13. Was the context analysed before the project was implemented? How, and by whom? Which data were used? (Max. 150 words)

As noted at Question 10, the context for the project was the 1997 Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women. In the opening chapter, entitled “Domestic Violence Extent and Nature”, the widespread occurrence of Domestic Violence was set out and various studies and research referenced.

These included Respect UK’s policy and guidance documents relating to best practice principles and minimum standards of practice for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated women’s services which were key to the analysis of the specific context when it came to the development of Perpetrator Programmes.

¹ Now funded by Cosc, which is the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, an executive office within that Department

² Including Local Area Networks (LANs), The South-Eastern Regional Planning Committee and Cosc’s Domestic Violence Intervention Programme’s (DVIP) Committee. Co-ordination Team and SEDVIP members attended National Practitioners Networking meetings in Ireland and the UK and in 2009 we hosted the meeting of practitioners in Wexford

14. Has the project been evaluated? Internally and/or externally? Process and/or impact evaluation? How, when and by whom? Which data and techniques were used? (Max. 300 words)

Yes. There are various levels of evaluation as follows:

External National

In July 2004 The Department of Justice and Equality and Law Reform commissioned Thangam Debbonaire et al to conduct a study of the Programmes operating in Ireland.

SEDVIP has engaged with Cosc, who fund the Programmes, to develop tools for ongoing evaluation to accurately gauge the value and impact of this complex piece of work which is expected to lead to changes in practices that will contribute to increased efficacy in the Programmes.

External Local

Since the Programmes began, the Carlow/Kilkenny and Waterford Programmes have each been externally evaluated. In both cases the evaluations, which had different focuses, gave positive feedback and led to changes in practice and structure.

Internal Local

At the completion of each Programme both the men on the Group Programme and the partners who availed of the Partner Support Service are asked to complete evaluation forms. There is almost 100% satisfaction with the Partner Support Service with the women feeling safer and empowered as a result of consistent contact during the course of the Programme and after. It is important to reiterate that the women who are contacted by MEND when their partners are on the Programme usually have had no contact with other domestic violence services.

Likewise there is very positive feedback in relation to the men's Group Programme. Feedback has demonstrated that levels of violence end or significantly decrease and there is also a positive impact on other forms of abuse also.

SEDVIP, together with the funders plan to develop more robust models of evaluation leading to more evidence-based results. It is important not to continue simply to evaluate old models. Already our training, study of current research and reflection on practice suggests the need to develop new treatment models. See response to Question 16 for documentation of research undertaken to date.

15. What were the results? Was the project implemented as originally intended? To what extent were the intended objectives of the project achieved? Please refer back to the objectives mentioned in question 11. What works/has worked for whom in what circumstances? Were there any unexpected side-effects? (Max. 300 words)

The feedback has demonstrated that, in general, the Programme successfully achieves its aims as outlined at Question 11.

In the context of contributing to the safety of women, the following outcomes were achieved:

- women who did not have prior contact with other domestic violence services were supported in creating an appropriate safety plan and provided with the key domestic violence services in the local area;

- women who wanted to get barring orders or separate from their partners, even though their partners were attending the Programme, were supported to see this through;
- physical violence often stops completely and other forms of abuse were reduced;
- the women felt empowered by virtue of being listened to and supported consistently by the Partner Support Service;
- the support to the woman often impacts positively on her capacity to be a good parent as she may be feeling more empowered and safer;
- in situations where the men engage constructively with the Programme, the partners experience a greater degree of respect and better communication.

In terms of behaviour change in men:

- the response from the majority of partners, where they are still living together, is that physical violence stops;
- there is increased capacity in their ability to manage difficult emotions and, where they practice the tools they have learned during the programme, this capacity continues;
- respectful communication with partners and children is normally an outcome of the Programme;
- a decrease in anxiety or depression;
- more attention paid to mental and physical health and well-being.

16. Are there any reports or documents available on the project and/or the evaluation of the project? Please, provide references to the most relevant ones. (Max. 5 references)

- An evaluation of intervention programmes in Ireland working with abusive men and their partners and ex-partners by Thangam Debonnaire. Commissioned by The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform:
<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Evaluation.pdf/Files/Evaluation.pdf>.
- **Referring Men – An exploration of front-line workers’ needs for referring abusive men to MEND domestic abuse intervention programmes** – copy attached at **Appendix 1**.
- **“How to deal with Domestic Abuse – A self-help book for men who want to change”** – January 2010, copy attached at **Appendix 2**.
- **National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2012-2014** – Cosc, The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, available at:
<http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Final%20Electronic%20NS%20full%20doc%203%20March.pdf/Files/Final%20Electronic%20NS%20full%20doc%203%20March.pdf>.
- **Programme Evaluations** of individual programmes, over the years, as part of the internal monitoring and review process and to inform changes to programme practice.

III. The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches.

17. Why is the project innovative, original or creative in its methods and/or approaches? (Max. 150 words)

The Programme is an innovative project in the sense that, for the first time in Ireland, a targeted and structured programme was designed to change violent behaviour in men. We believe that the experience could form a useful template for other countries thinking of putting in place domestic violence perpetrator interventions programmes. The fact that it was a grass-roots development involving all the key stakeholders of facilitators, partner-contact groups, referring agencies and a State-funded agency working together is a unique feature. The approach of using regular partner contacts to monitor the safety of women and children of the men on the programmes is also innovative.

IV. The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible.

18. How and to what degree were relevant stakeholders involved (directly or indirectly) in the project? (Max. 150 words)

Project stakeholders

- Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence provides funding and policy direction.
- The South-East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme developed the Programme, established the management committee and local boards and takes responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the Programmes. This includes training and deploying Programme facilitators and partner support workers as well as looking after all the negotiation and implementation of protocols with the other stakeholders in the project.
- Women's support services provide contact and support for the partners of the men on the Programmes, are members of the board of each local Programme and influence the implementation of the annual programme.
- Agencies and individuals who refer men onto the Programmes are also involved as board members of individual Programmes and through the negotiation and implementation of the protocols for the Programmes.
- The families affected by the Programmes work with the women's support services to provide feedback to the Programmes on progress being made by the men who attend the Programmes in terms of changing their behaviour.

19. Which other (local, national, international) partners were involved in the planning, development and/or implementation of the project? Who were they and what were their roles? (Max. 150 words)

Respect UK provided access to policy and guidance as well as advice relating to best practice principles and minimum standards of practice for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated women's services which were key to the analysis of the specific context when it came to the development of Perpetrator Programmes. The Programme is affiliated to RESPECT to ensure access to its

research and policy expertise and to ensure ongoing monitoring of the quality of its materials and practices.

V. The project shall be capable of replication in other Member States.

20. How and by whom is the project funded? (Max. 150 words)

The project is funded by Cosc, the Irish Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, from monies provided by the Department of Justice and Equality. Funding is provided quarterly. The budget is agreed annually and monitored via quarterly financial reports and audited accounts.

21. What were the costs of the project in terms of finances, material, infrastructure and human resources? (Max. 150 words)

An amount of just over €250,000 is granted to the project each year, which pays for all assessment and pre-Programme work, Programme facilitation, administration and partner support work.

Two full-time staff work on the assessment, organisation and policy work and their work is overseen by a part-time Executive Director. The referral infrastructure is maintained through protocols and agreements between the partners in the Programme and the agencies that refer men to the Programmes.

The budget and business plan for the programme for 2013/14 is attached at **Appendix 3**.

22. Has a cost-benefit analysis been carried out? If so, how, and by whom? What were the findings? Please provide supporting information. (Max. 150 words)

A detailed evaluation of inputs and outputs is carried out each year and revised at the end of each cycle. The latest version of the evaluation form is attached at **Appendix 4**.

Over 1000 contacts with men and over 750 contacts with women are made annually in the course of the preliminary assessment, individual and group work with the men and their partners or ex-partners during the four individual Programmes.

Cosc has established³ a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme Committee to support the work of intervention programmes and to improve overall delivery of the Programmes and their outcomes by working towards:

- strengthened co-operation and co-ordination between Programmes and other relevant service providers including uniform protocols and procedures;
- improved data to help with understanding who and why the Programmes help as well as outcomes research;
- implementation of the lessons from the data collected.

Cosc is currently working with the Programme to create a new post-Programme follow-up scheme to track the behaviour of the participants over an 18-month period.

³ Under action 16 of Ireland's National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014

23. Please describe the context of the project in as much detail as possible: basic theory or principles which form the basis of the project, geographical area, legal context, timescale. (Max. 300 words)

Theory and principles

Domestic Violence Perpetrator Intervention Programmes grew from the need to address the issue of perpetrators of domestic violence.

A need for intervention programmes in Ireland was identified in 1996 Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women. The Report recognised the extent of Domestic Abuse in Ireland and recommended that “intervention programmes for offenders should be adequately resourced and should be available in areas where support services for women and children (such as refuges) are already in place”. It also recommended in that Regional Planning Committees determine strategies at a regional level.

Prior to the introductions of programmes the response to the violence had mainly been the provision of assistance and sheltered accommodation to the victims of domestic violence.

Geographical area

The need for intervention programmes in the South East of Ireland was recognised as part of a co-ordinated community response. Accordingly the South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (SEVIP) was set-up with the Men’s Development Network (MDN) being tasked with establishing 4 programmes, with local inter-agency steering committees, and looking for sustainable funding and training to deliver these MEND Programmes.

Timescale

The Programmes commenced in 2002 following a period of planning, preparation, establishment of appropriate protocols and securing the necessary funding from the Department of Justice and Equality. The Programmes have been refined over the intervening period and are now in a mature state.

Legal and policy context

The Irish Government is of the view that interventions in cases of domestic violence should be via the civil and criminal courts and intervention programmes for perpetrators rather than family-based mediation. Prevention of violence is strongly emphasised in Ireland’s National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014 and one of the key actions in the strategy is to strengthen measures to deal with domestic violence perpetrators. SEVIP is a trusted government partner in terms of achieving this objective.

24. Please, write a one page description of the project

The MEND Programme provides a challenging but safe space for men to get support to change their abusive behaviour. It works in a radical way with men to develop skills and insight that will enable them to change their behaviour so that their lives and the lives of those they love can be free from the tyranny of violence and abuse.

The Programme is part of a community response to domestic violence and the local management groups include members drawn from agencies such as the Probation Service, Health Service Executive, Women’s Refuges and Rape Crisis Centres.

It also provides a service for the partners or ex-partners of the men on the programme. The primary aim of the Programme is the safety of women and children.

Each Programme normally runs for 32 weeks comprising a weekly meeting lasting up to two and a half hours.

A total of 4 Programmes are currently operating and comprise the following stages:

- Initial screening and risk assessment;
- 1 to 1 work as appropriate for those who pass the initial screening; and
- an intervention programme of 32 weeks.

Referrals are made to Programmes by courts, probation officers, social workers, healthcare workers, spouses or partners of the men or the men themselves.

All Programmes have a dedicated partner contact element and dedicated partner contact worker(s) who are contracted by the Programme management to work with any partner or ex-partner of the men on the Programme who wish to be involved. This work informs the Programme facilitators of the safety of the men on the Programmes and allows them to challenge any man whose behaviour outside the Programme is not matching his statements in the Programme. The partner contact worker also provides practical support and advice to women in violent/controlling relationships.

The Programmes are designed to make changes in both cognitive thinking and behaviour of the men who attend them with the aim of:

- helping men stop being violent and abusive;
- helping them learn how to relate to their partners in a respectful and equal way;
- showing them non-abusive ways of dealing with difficulties in their relationships and cope with their anger; and
- keeping their partners safe from further violent and abusive behaviour.

The key priorities of the Programmes are:

- a reduction in violent and controlling behaviour by men who complete the Programme with their current and/or future female partners and children ;
- improved safety for women and children;
- a partnership approach between women's service providers (i.e. women's refuges, domestic violence support services and rape crisis centres) and those working with men;
- improved data on outcomes; and
- an appropriate community alternative to prison.