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## **Partnerships and Activism: Community Safety, Multi-Agency Partnerships and Safeguarding Victims**

Pamela Davies

### **Introduction**

In the last two decades of the twentieth century a shift took place in the field of crime prevention, policing and justice such that there is increased preoccupation with security (Johnston and Shearing 2003) at individual, local, national and global levels. The marked shift saw the primary function of policing become more forward looking. Until the 1970s policing had become focused on responding to crime with the prevention function reduced to deterrence. Since this decade there has been a greater focus on security and ways of predicting and reducing risk with a move to evidence based policing (EBP). Broader modernisation of the criminal justice system and a range of reforms and legislation, diminished faith in offender rehabilitation and widespread belief that the welfarist approach to crime reduction was not working, saw an increasingly punitive neo-classical approach creeping across England and Wales such that emerging trends in the governance of criminal justice are now complex. Some of the more recent developments are further explored below but currently the approach to tackling perpetrators and safeguarding victims has been impacted by the 2011, Reform and Responsibility Act, which prefaced the election of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) (and the Mayor's Office for Policing in the Metropolitan Police Authority in London) and saw PCCs becoming responsible for ensuring the maintenance of the police force and that the service is efficient and effective. PCCs also publish Police and Crime Plans, which set out local police and crime objectives. This reform

has also established PCCs as a central aspect of the victim reform agenda in England and Wales and, as Matthew Hall argues in Chapter 10 of this volume, these developments represent a significant watershed in the long-running transportation of victim services from being activist driven to market-driven. Processes of managerialism and ever-greater government influence and centralisation see national management of criminal justice institutions at the same time as increased marketization sees the growing profile of the private sector and voluntary organisations playing a significant role in supervision of offenders in the community and in supporting victims of crime. Amidst these complex developments around the governance of criminal justice and the shift towards plural policing, partnership approaches and multi-agency collaborations remain the touchstone for community safety and security.

This chapter focuses on multi-agency partnerships as a means of exploring the ways in which activism manifests in safeguarding victims. A range of supportive provisions and victim assistance schemes can now be identified in most jurisdictions across the world, all of which have differing relationships to their respective criminal justice systems. Some victim services are at arm's length or fully independent of the government, some are provided under statute, others by voluntary groups and charities. Several have been pioneered through the efforts of feminist activism. This chapter engages in a critical review of twenty-first century pluralised multi-agency approaches to tackling crime, preventing harm, responsabilising perpetrators and supporting victims. It will explore the strategies and politics that have seen an increasing emphasis upon prevention and individual responsibility on both victims and offenders. The chapter reflects on these developments and the conundrums and dilemmas this poses for victim safety and safeguarding. It does so through

a focus on multi-agency partnerships to tackle crime, disorder and harm at local levels and by drawing on a case study example: Tackling serial perpetrators of domestic abuse through Multi-Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC) and the subsequent Domestic Abuse Whole Systems Approach (DAWSA), both pioneered in the North East of England, UK. Though the examples drawn on emerge from local and regional approaches, the issues raised in this chapter are in no sense parochial. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is recognised as a global issue. The discussion offers insight into what this means in terms of community safety agendas: whose safety and security is prioritised? Why are multi-agency approaches continuing to proliferate? In particular, the chapter will consider what these developments appear to mean in terms of partnerships, activism, crime prevention, community safety and safeguarding victims. It will demonstrate altered relationships and shifting politics between how members of third sector organisations work in partnership with the police and other statutory agencies whilst remaining critical and engaged in campaigning for further reforms.

### **Background Context: Crime Prevention, Community Safety and Multi-Agency Partnerships**

In twenty-first century England and Wales, as noted above, there has been marked shift in the nature of policing from that which dominated much of the previous century. There is now a greater focus on security and ways of predicting and reducing risk. The rational choice and routine activity orthodoxy and community crime prevention initiatives of the latter quarter of the twentieth century paved the way for the birth of community safety, in the early 1980s. The concept and practice of community crime prevention and multi-agency partnership approaches to combatting crime and disorder have become the new tradition in preventing crime and safeguarding and protecting from harm and criminal victimisation. The

concept of community safety is now over 30 years old and during this period the position of the victim in matters of safety and criminal justice has become increasingly foregrounded. All of these developments were in the context of emerging evidence that the criminal justice system and police were ineffective in reducing crime, diminished faith in offender rehabilitation and weakened state and welfare provision and a socio-political climate where new-right politics was flourishing (van Ginneken, 2017). By the mid-1980s, the Five Towns Initiative (1986) had expanded and the Safer Cities Programme was launched in 1988, two years before the Morgan Report (1991) was published recommending the replacement of the concept of crime prevention with community safety. By 1998, the New Labour government paved the way for the creation of Community Safety Partnerships via the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. Police and local authorities, in partnership with probation and health authorities gave impetus to multi-agency collaboration.

Whilst the above provides a very brief background context to crime, prevention, community safety and multi-agency partnerships, taking into account the political climate in which developments took place, it is important to capture the extent to which these developments were exclusive to particular types of safety and security threat concerns and to particular sources of such threats.

### **Community Safety: For who and from what?**

In the context of tackling domestic abuse, the story of statutory partnership working to tackle such offending and reduce victimisation has been slow and is not yet won. Part of the reason for this this goes to the heart of the limitations of the community safety agenda. One

of the key criticisms about multi-agency working to tackle crime and disorder and of community safety partnerships, are the questions about whose safety is prioritised and safety from what?

Though community safety has the potential to embrace a wide range of anti-social experiences in its remit, the paradigm that unfolded emphasised the partiality of the dominant community safety project (Davies, 2008). The image of community assumed by the mainstream community safety industry was, for a long time, at odds with a gendered approach to understanding and responding to crime, offending, social harm and criminal victimisation. The 'broken windows' thesis of Wilson and Kelling (1982) (Walklate and Evans 1999) took hold in the 1980s and early 1990s. The windows smashed and boarded up in their thesis however, are those broken by incivilities caused from the outside and not from within. Whilst feminist campaigning on violence against women was vociferous in this period, the zero-tolerance approach that unfolded did little to seriously challenge the dominant ethos of community safety, which prioritises making public places safe whilst marginalising the safety concerns behind closed doors. As Walklate has observed much more recently (Walklate, 2018), so much remains to be done in terms of understanding the precarious existence of women who live with violence and gendered thinking still needs to inform our community safety agendas.

The voice of reason embedded within the rational, progressive, modern and objective rational choice theoretic, which underpinned the dominant community safety agenda is an abstracted form of reason, a masculinist, and instrumental/economic choice form of rationality (Davies, 2011). Such a model provides only a partial understanding of what social

(economic) life is really about especially for women who are coercively controlled and who are constantly in fear of being raped (Brownmiller, 1975) and who suffer repeatedly and silently from men's physical violence's in their own homes. Others writing in this volume (O'Leary and Green in chapter x) observe how emotions have been stripped from our criminal justice processes. Rational choice reduces emotions and they are especially constricted with respect to crimes which are intimate and of a sexual nature (Hayward, 2007).

Following other feminist inspired commentators on the community safety agenda, I have argued for a more refined approach to community safety in which violence that emerges from within households is accounted for and responded to (Davies, 2008). Using the example of domestic violence as a crime involving intimate insiders (Crawford, 2007), I have drawn attention to the artificial division between the public and private realm in relation to community safety where a pane of glass literally represents the cut-off between public and domestic disorder. This line of arguments suggests that community safety approaches generally and responses to violence and abuse specifically, are often removed from the everyday, usually highly local and frequently familial existence in which they are embedded. They are too far removed, and abstracted from the (albeit often dysfunctional and malignant) micro communities which they seek to change for the safer. The conclusions of such arguments support recommendations for a more proactive, relevant and closer to home policy response following Walklate and Evans (1999). Such policy would have a greater emphasis on families and sets of personal relationships, on local social dynamics, formal and informal networks in communities in order to restore the local equilibrium. Close ties, the local and 'quite small units' (Walklate and Evans, 1999:138) need to matter. These

'quite small units' include family living arrangements, intimate and personal, formal and informal relationships and ties, working and professional relationships. Very, very local areas and small units possess harm reducing skills, which are capable of producing successful and effective outcomes to conflict and for restoring equilibrium at the same time as they are also capable of wreaking havoc, destroying trust and producing conflict.

Thus, in 2008 I concluded that 'Operationalising community safety at the very local levels requires a much more grass roots understanding of how windows can be broken from within and not always from without' (Davies, 2008:xx). By engaging more effectively with 'knowledge holders' at very local levels, a more inclusive crime prevention and community safety paradigm might be more successful in tackling serial perpetrators of domestic abuse. As noted above, feminist activism has made inroads to the community safety agenda in the 1980s and 1990s by raising awareness of abuse and the unsafety of women in the home. As I will now outline, the story of multi-agency working to tackle domestic abuse has remained work in progress.

#### *Multi-Agency Working and Domestic Abuse*

Partnership approaches were identified early in the new era of community safety as a way of tackling domestic abuse (Barton and Velero-Silva, 2012). Since the mid-to-late 1980s, there has been increasing reliance on such partnerships to prevent abuse and protect from it. Prior to this, single agency responses were typical and there was very little information sharing, particularly between statutory and voluntary agencies. Domestic violence forums proliferated in the 1990's inspired by the 'Duluth approach' in Minnesota, USA. During this decade, government leadership on domestic abuse saw national action plans emerge. By



the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, prompted by a combination of Home Office guidance and legislative requirements to form partnerships to tackle crime and disorder, information sharing in England and Wales became more routinized (Westmarland, 2012).

Though a tradition of partnership approaches to tackling inter-personal violence and abuse are well established in England and Wales, they have tended to operate largely within the confines of a traditional criminal justice paradigm, which seeks to hold perpetrators to account through legal sanctions, and mandated rehabilitation solutions. We shall return to this question of criminal justice solutions later in the chapter. First, we pause to consider the nature and extent of activist driven service provision.

### **Activist Driven and Research Underpinned Service Provision and Policy Development**

As noted above, feminist campaigning on violence against women slowly impacted on the policing of domestic violence abuse in the early 1990s. The first Home Office circular on victims (in general) and policing was published in 1990. It took another ten years for the second to be published in 2000 with little other policy documentation featuring violence against women and girls until the 2000s. Activist driven developments have played a significant part in securing services for victims of inter-personal violence. However, as also noted above, this sits alongside the emergence of market-driven victim services.

Broadly understood, activism concerns taking collective action in order to bring about change. Goddard et al (2014) outline three types of grassroots counter movements and social justice organisations in the US, each of these aim to raise consciousness and fight for justice system reform: *activist social justice organisations* where advocacy and organising

work is at the core of what they do, *programme and service delivery social justice organisations* centring on consciousness raising of systemic injustices and deprivations and third, *advocacy and policymaking organisations* which often serve as umbrella organisations helping organise and coordinate protests and bring the voices and viewpoints of grassroots organisations directly to the offices of lawmakers. The authors point out that the social justice organisations that fall within this typology nevertheless fall within a continuum:

‘on the one end are more liberal-oriented organisations that works within formal government channels; and on the other end are more radical organisations that are openly critical of the government and working towards community sovereignty’ (2014: 85).

Historical examples of collective social action include violent and non-violent strategies to effect change and these can include raising public consciousness and awareness of specific issues, lobbying either for or against such issues, and a variety of other pressure group activities including demonstrations, marches, protests and petitions. Examples of feminist activism are many and varied and in the context of raising the profile of women as victims/survivors, national feminist activism has undoubtedly played a key part in effecting change. The great hostility faced by feminist influenced activists of the 1960s and 1970s nevertheless saw the salience of gender in understanding all matters connected to crime, victimisation and justice gather momentum.

As noted in chapter 3, it was the 1960s and 1970s in the UK and US that saw the emergence of the modern movements against violence against women as part of the wider women’s liberation movement. Whilst a variety of new and different feminist perspectives can now be identified, each prioritising different political strategies, there are some common

features across feminist positions regarding violence against women and girls. The most obvious of these is that they ask *the woman question* and this means effecting change through doing criminological and victimological research, *for* rather than *on* women (Smith and Wincup 2000). Feminist strands of scholarship, activism and research have exposed 'domestic secrets' (Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe, 2007) and in the 1970s, the enormity of the problem of what was then called 'wife battering' began to emerge. Since the 1980's, this activist inspired scholarship has all exposed the domestic sphere as a key site for the violence and sexual abuse experienced by women and children (See for e.g. Brownmiller 1975; Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 1998; Hanmer and Maynard 1987; Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Kelly, 1988; Kelly and Radford, 1987; Stanko, 1985, 1988). These knowledges, 'get behind the mere appearance of things' (Mawby and Walklate 1994:19) and at the events that "go on behind closed doors' (Walklate, 2005) that we do not 'see' (Walklate, 2007b:49) and as such, have been key to furthering a more inclusive crime prevention and community safety strategy. Such knowledge challenges the domain assumptions that have always informed the law and order agenda and, those that more recently have shaped the community safety agenda. They problematise gender stereotypical strategies and policies whereby only some qualify as suitable targets for community safety interventions. Indoor sites for criminal victimisation have been overlooked, as have the risks of serious violence and abuse, particularly to those women and children who spend much of their time at home with those they know and often trust the most.

The impetus of the wider women's liberation movement impacted on the increased centrality of the victim within the Criminal Justice System in the latter part of the twentieth century. Feminist influences on the victim movement drew particular attention to the

under-reporting and poor recording of domestic abuse and violence against women as well as the cultural constraints on conceiving of domestic abuse as 'rubbish' police work, not real crime, not real policing and thus the poor policing response. Thus the victims' movement corresponded with, and blurred with, the 'second wave' feminist movement. The latter raised awareness of the victimisation of women in the home and of women's experiences of sexual violence and campaigned for such violence with all of its attendant emotional and psychological impacts to be recognised by the criminal justice system and society more widely (Davies, 2011). Similar movements gathered pace elsewhere in the world. Over the last 40-50 years, women and children suffering serious, multiple, repeat and serial forms of violence and abuse from men within the familial and intimate context - now termed domestic abuse – is recognised as a wider violence against women and girls problem, (VAWG) and a global issue. As Sebba (2001: 36) notes, lobbying by feminists and organisations devoted to victim assistance was:

instrumental in the intensive barrage of victim-related legislation and policy reform which were instigated in the 1980s and 1990s ... and included the granting of procedural rights to victims in the course of the trial process (and subsequent proceedings), victim-oriented sentencing dispositions such as restitution, the introduction of state compensation boards and victim assistance programmes.

### **Safeguarding from violence and abuse since the turn of the century**

Since the 1990s, the politicisation of crime victims in western liberal societies has fuelled a rhetoric espousing that victims of crime should be at 'the heart of the criminal justice system'. Pressure for change has involved activism around campaigning for victims' rights as well as procedural justice. This can be as seen in the various iterations of the Victims Charter (1990, 1996) through to the introduction of and revisions to, the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (2013, 2015). Indeed, some progress had been made from the late 1990's - early 2000s. Co-location of criminal justice agencies has emerged in some jurisdictions and joint-working has proliferated in some areas but this progress has been negatively impacted/undone by subsequent austerity measures (Davies and Biddle, 2017). Policies applied by the 2010-2015 Coalition government, and continued under the Conservative administration, have changed the way victim support is managed. Featherstone and colleagues (2012:177) call this a period of 'austerity localism' which, in the context of domestic abuse, where it interfaces with women's safety, is problematic (Vacchelli, 2015). Collaboration between statutory agencies and local women's networks have been compromised and local feminist inspired women's groups perceive they have lost out, resulting in the further marginalisation of domestic abuse victims (Buser, 2013; Clayton et al., 2016; Vacchelli, 2015; Westwood, 2011). From 2014-2015, provision of services for many victims have rested with Police and Crime Commissioners, who are also responsible for establishing local policing priorities. The current national strategy 2016-2020 (Home Office, 2016), promotes a co-ordinated response, within which regional and local initiatives have proliferated.

There has been significant economic and political change in the period since multi-agency working became the dominant approach to tackling domestic abuse, which have influenced

partnership working in many areas of social policy and have affected local agenda setting and commissioning. At the same time, significant victim-focused policy reform has occurred. Whilst significant attention is now paid to the problem of VAWG, the so-called 'criminal justice response' remains stubbornly ineffective in terms of tackling the problem. There is a plethora of civil and criminal justice options in the criminal justice toolkit for tackling domestic abuse yet, despite such commitments too many women become victims. An estimated 1.2 million in England and Wales experience such abuse in the year ending March 2017 (ONS, 2018a) and, on average, two women are killed each week by a current or former partner (ONS, 2018b). Legislative changes to the definition of domestic abuse in England and Wales, followed two decades of policy reform directed towards an integrated strategy to tackle VAWG (HMIC, 2014, 2015). There are many criminal and civil intervention options, some of which see prospective victims provided with information about their partner's previous violent behaviour, advocating preventive ideologies. For example, legally enforceable short-term protective measures include Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Protection Orders (DVPOs), introduced via the Crime & Security Act (2010). DVPOs resemble the 'barring orders' operating elsewhere in Europe: the Austrian Protection against Domestic Violence Act 1996 and the German Protection from Violence Act 2002 (Bessant, 2015). Additionally, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme 2014 (DVDS or Clare's Law) provides a framework for members of the public to ask about a person's history of domestic abuse or intimate partner violence. The latter are part of a recent shift occurring internationally, of further legislation and campaigns targeting primary prevention at men (Cismaru and Lavack, 2011). Additionally, significant recent change affecting the 'policing' of domestic abuse across many countries is the widespread recognition that domestic abuse is an issue of power and control.

### *Power and (Coercive) Control*

Intimate partner violence, whether between heterosexual or same sex couples (Donovan and Barnes 2017) is widely understood as a pattern of behaviours that can be physical, emotional, economic and sexual in nature. In the UK, it is now recognised that the dynamics of domestic abuse are connected to the concept of coercive control, which captures both the psychological and physical aspects and on-going nature of the behaviour and the extent to which the actions of the perpetrator control the victim through isolation, intimidation, degradation and micro-regulation of everyday life (HMIC, 2015).

Walklate and colleagues (2017) note that the implementation of this offence in England and Wales has so far been patchy, and, based on their gendered analysis of coercive control, they conclude that more law will not improve responses to intimate partner violence.

Others are also wary of the wholesale adoption of coercive control as an approach that seeks to explain variations in domestic violence (Walby and Towers, 2018). In Brisbane, Australia, Douglas (2017) reports legal engagement can be an opportunity to extend an intimate partner's coercive control. Coining the phrase 'legal systems abuse', Douglas cites survivors' comments as evidence of how the legal system continues to be harnessed by perpetrators as a tool to extend coercive control beyond separation.

The question of what to do about violence against women has long been a concern of UK governmental policy and VAWG is recognised as a global issue. It has been on the agenda of the United Nations for over twenty years and in 2016, member states of the World Health Organisation adopted a plan of action to tackle it. Broader international obligations derive

from human rights protections enforceable through the European Court of Human Rights. Other international provisions include the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the 'Istanbul Convention'). Article 16 relates to treatment programmes for perpetrators and the Convention requires signatories to provide legislative or other measures to support prevention together with specialist support for victims. Thus feminist activism has developed and impacted considerably at local, national and international levels.

Despite considerable reforms to provide a more effective response to victims of domestic abuse, the dominant criminal justice paradigm (recourse to legislative interventions paying particular attention to the role of the police) has been centre stage. This approach remains inadequate in respect of safeguarding women and tackling perpetrators. The challenge to effect change remains in the lap of a broader range of local stakeholders.

### **Recent Developments: Tackling serial perpetrators of domestic abuse and safeguarding victims**

#### *Multi-Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC)*

Developed in a northern police region, MATAC is the shorthand name for a new type of collaborative partnership to tackle serial perpetrators of domestic abuse. MATAC is an intelligence led approach to targeting the most harmful and serial domestic abuse perpetrators. The multi-agency process ensures that the relevant agencies are involved in the effective management of perpetrators. The partner agencies are key stakeholders who all have a shared aim to protect from domestic abuse, reduce such victimisation and



prevent from further harm whilst responsabilising the perpetrator. Representatives from a range of agencies (including local government, third sector, health, criminal justice and housing) located in different places (see for example those listed in chapter x of this volume), have a shared investment to share information and determine actions to manage perpetrators. MATAAC was launched as a new approach to tackling perpetrators of domestic abuse and was rolled out when training on the new coercive control legislation was being delivered in a north of England police area. The overall aim is to prevent further domestic abuse related offending. The objectives are to improve victim's safety; criminal justice system outcomes; offender behaviour and partnership engagement. The operationalisation of the MATAAC is now detailed in the MATAAC Handbook (provide reference) but the kernel of the innovation remains a multi-agency collaborative partnership. Evaluations of the MATAAC found positive outcomes. However, for the purposes of this chapter, it is the tensions that emerged during the course of the evaluation, particularly those linked to feminist framed advocacy service stakeholder organisations and representatives, that are of interest. The arguments in this chapter are similar to those articulated in Chapter x of this volume where the focus is specifically on feminist framings of victim advocacy and the tensions that accompany the delivery of advocacy within sites of criminal justice.

As noted above, though the evaluation showed positive outcomes, tensions surfaced within this holistic strategy designed to *prevent* violence and *protect* from it. The theory of change underpinning the MATAAC approach seeks to tackle serial domestic abuse perpetrators at the same time as working to protect victims and prevent future victimisation. Recently, there has been a marked shift towards the targeting of perpetrators. Holding perpetrators to account and efforts to reduce re-offending are now part of a comprehensive strategy

(Devaney, 2014; Donovan and Griffiths, 2013; Donovan and Hester, 2014; Featherstone and Fraser, 2012). This orthodoxy suggests a co-ordinated and holistic response is most likely to be effective (Dobash et al., 2000; Gondolf, 2002; Kelly and Westmarland, 2015; Rajagopalan et al., 2008; Rivett, 2010). However, there are nuanced ideological differences and political sensitivities regarding *what* should be done and *how* it should be done. As noted earlier, different feminist perspectives have subtly distinct allegiances to the concepts of male domination, sexual inequality, gender hierarchies, dominance, and power arrangements. Our research encountered perceived concerns about victim safety, alongside the heightened focus on perpetrators and this is a manifestation of the nuanced ideological approaches to tackling domestic abuse by those who are generally wedded to a feminist influenced theory of change.

The contentious issues and anxieties that emerged in relation to this holistic strategy coalesced around victim safeguarding, safety and risk and the idea of ‘responsibilising’ serial perpetrators. The question of whether or not concerns about victims’ safety and risk are well founded is a very pertinent one. The imbalance of power in abusive relationships is the crux of the problem. Stakeholders are all too aware that at the points of intervention, there are escalated risks, to victims’ safety. Seemingly dissenting views about the capacity of MATAAC to prevent and protect are healthy reminders of how highly volatile, threatening and risky domestic situations can be and how women, who are separated from their violent partners, are at risk of post separation fatal violence. The undercurrents of concern that emerged during the evaluation are rooted in real anxieties and reflect the complex feelings, emotions and frustrations felt by those affected by, and those concerned with improving the way we tackle, domestic abuse. Cautionary voices in the form of healthy scepticism from

a minority of different partners in the MATAC provide a constant reminder of the subtle and coercive forms that domestic abuse can take. Friction between practitioners who work with perpetrators and those who work with victims is a positive friction. The tensions around these issues ensure all multi-agency partners and stakeholders are aware of the safeguarding protections surrounding victims and the importance of safety planning.

The roll-out and operationalisation of MATAC raised tensions common in multi-agency partnerships. The safety of victims is paramount and the central aim of a domestic violence reduction strategy. The *prevent* strand of such a strategy is operationalised alongside the support and service provision or *protect* strand. The former and the latter are designed to do two things simultaneously - tackle perpetrators and support victims. This 'holistic' strategy can present challenges for multi-agency approaches to domestic abuse and this was evident in the MATAC partnership. The policing of domestic abuse and strategies designed to tackle and prevent continue to rely on multi-agency partnerships in local communities. Longstanding tensions are inherent in such partnerships working to tackle VAWG. The MATAC is an innovative way to tackle serial domestic abuse perpetrators at the same time as working to protect victims and this process inevitably produces a complex mix of feelings and emotions from perpetrators, victims and stakeholders. Tensions are evident within MATAC, notably from members whose organisational and/or personal priority is ideologically and historically more clearly wedded to prioritising energy and funding towards only one aspect of this overall strategy.

The MATAAC process is now part of core police business –see below – and thus it is important that the MATAAC meetings are a multi-agency workplace for professional reflection, information sharing and genuine collaboration. A focus on perpetrators has traditionally not been ‘everyone’s business’ (HMIC, 2014), and, as partners grasp the importance of recognising mutual interests, tensions between key partner agencies is likely to subside. The tensions identified by the evaluation team illustrate the long-standing inherent conflicts in multi-agency partnership working generally including the need for continuous information sharing and communication. This is especially keenly felt in the context of multi-agency working to tackle serial perpetrators of domestic abuse and safeguarding of victims (Davies and Biddle, 2018). In the context of the MATAAC, which has a heightened focus on perpetrators, the underlying politics of community safety surfaced very readily in the heightened and intensified politicised climate of austerity localism (Davies and Biddle 2017). These tensions serve as healthy reminders of the divergent paradigms, ideologies, politics and working cultures at stake in multi-agency partnerships (Davies 2018).

#### *Domestic Abuse Whole Systems Approach (DAWSA)*

The integrated whole systems approach aims to bring about transformative change across key services dealing with domestic abuse. This includes the family courts and criminal justice system. Six police forces across the North East of England (Cleveland, Durham, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside), have come together to provide services across policing, partner agencies and third sector support agencies to better protection to victims and their families and to bring perpetrators to justice. The joint aim is:

‘To transform domestic abuse services with a strategic and integrated approach, giving police and partner agencies the ability to truly deliver

lasting change and provide a template for all forces and partnerships to deliver on, for the benefit of domestic abuse victims and their children'

The co-ordinated approach seeks to provide effective working within the criminal justice system, partnership work with civil and family courts and multi-agency support and offender management. The approach is developed out of an identified need to plug current gaps in services and is designed to join up disjointed and silo working practices between partners, which hampers the ability of partnerships to effectively respond to domestic abuse.

Pioneered by Northumbria Police over a period of three years (2016 – 2019), the project addressed three main elements:

1. Effective working within the criminal justice system
2. Partnership work with civil and family courts
3. Multi-agency victim support and offender management

The third component in the whole systems approach is especially focussed on tackling domestic abuse. It recognises that support for victims is provided whilst also addressing the root causes of perpetrator behaviour, particularly those who cause the highest levels of harm and engage in serial patterns of abusive behaviour. The approach builds on previous innovative approaches and embraces the MATAC, which seek to ensure multi-agency approaches address both victim safety and perpetrator management.

**From Activist and Research Underpinned Safety Agendas to a Mixed Economy of New (Institutionalised) Activism**

So, where are the current drivers for change coming from? What is the current state of play as regards partnerships, activism and safeguarding? The overview of safeguarding from violence and abuse well into the twenty-first century, illustrates what amounts to a new mixed economy of collaboration and partnership working to safeguarding victims of domestic abuse. It is clear that there remains a solid and enduring commitment to, and reliance on, multi-agency working to tackle such abuse. However, the importance and spirit of multi-agency working in the context of violence against women sees continued priority given to criminal justice responses. The examples noted above – MATAAC and the Whole Systems Approach (DAWSA) – illustrate that where there are shared visions to reduce domestic abuse via tackling serial perpetrators, protecting and supporting victims and preventing future victimisation, new partnerships appear less wedded to the criminal justice paradigm and more committed to a holistic approach where tackling domestic abuse is increasingly everyone's business (HMIC, 2015). Preventing victimisation from domestic abuse, safeguarding victims and responsabilising perpetrators is becoming embedded and normal at the local level.

The spur to recent developments around the policing of domestic abuse is a complex mix of political - including diverse feminist influenced - drivers pushing for change. There are different feminist framings of victim advocacy in criminal justice contexts, (well illustrated in Chapter 6 of this volume). The MATAAC – a non-statutory partnership – features stakeholders whose allegiance to activism is wedded to particular social justice organisations. The core underpinning activist values of these stakeholders might vary on a continuum (Goddard et al 2014). At one end there are the more liberal oriented partners who are comfortable working with formal criminal justice organisations and existing legal frameworks. At the other end there are partners committed to a more radical approach where they are openly

critical of state agencies and those who abide by these institutional practices. The healthy mix of scepticism evident in partnership working means that collaboration is hard work. Stakeholders from charities and statutory bodies must find a way of working such that they become 'critical allies'. The MATAAC is a non-statutory partnership that provides the platform for this alliance to take shape. It operates effectively in spite of the austere local socio-economic and political context.

The earlier part of this chapter has outlined the various ways in which the community safety agenda has been variously advanced by a conflation of research, activism and policy developments. Several writers have marshalled these ideas together to develop an agenda for change as regards tackling violence against women. In the early 1980s a series of 'short and simple' books entitled 'What is to be done about.....' were published by Penguin in several countries. The books dealt with the central social and political issues of the day in an effort to offer a political agenda for the eighties. As Walklate reminds us (2019), as part of that series, Elizabeth Wilson, in *What is to be Done About Violence Against Women*, advocated a whole systems approach. It is now approaching 40 years since the publication of this larger social context agenda for tackling violence against women in the 1980s. The DAWSA approach outlined above has just (in 2019) been embedded across six police forces with additional limited involvement from two other force areas in the UK. The speed of change in revolutionising how violence against women is addressed has been staggeringly slow with little shift in behaviour and more continuity with the past than discontinuity. In this new mixed economy of collaboration and partnership for safeguarding victims of domestic abuse there are promising examples of collaboration and indeed, whole systems

approaches including domestic abuse first responder cars, stalking clinics, collaborative training and many other innovative practices in local areas.

As a final observation I turn to the fate of Victim Support. Commentators have opined that, in the 1980s, Victim Support, became 'institutionalised'. This Charity had been a pioneering and radical service provider with roots in an activist driven movement with a critical edge. As its source of funding became increasingly tied to government it became less of an 'at arms length' service provider and increasingly beholden to the Home Office. In 2002, the Home Office stated explicitly that Victim Support should provide 'value for money' (National Audit Office, 2002) and the rationing of services become a key feature of service provision for victims of crime. I draw attention to this particular trajectory because there are similarities evident between this pathway and that of the pathway of multi- agency approaches to tackling domestic abuse. The assimilation and incorporation of different feminist voices within the established multi-agency approach to tackling domestic abuse is, at one level, a success story. However, as with the trajectory of Victim Support, there are now concerns that the larger players (SafeLives) are taking over at the expense of smaller local activist and innovative groups. Those winning the tenders to provide support may be pressurised to succumb to operate according to professional codes and institutional practices. The healthily critical and often dissenting feminist inspired voices are in danger of becoming voices from the inside, the stubborn, often seen as difficult, once independent partner having compromised their independence by becoming contained within the collaborative partnership. Does this signify a loss or trade off where by the 'at arms length' activist has become the hamstrung activist from within? At worst inertia, at best slow



change rather than revolutionary activism, perhaps now characterises partnership approaches to tackling domestic abuse and safeguarding victims.

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