

Risk assessment and risk management by police

Principle 1. Adopting a gender-specific approach

Expected result: Trained police officers are capable of understanding the gender dynamics of intimate partner violence and can develop, with the contribution of victims and the collaboration of other relevant agencies, strategies that ensure victims' safety from physical and psychological violence.

Recommendations for improving gender-specific approaches to risk management

Analyse training needs to identify levels of knowledge and understanding of the gendered dynamics of intimate partner violence across policing roles and ranks.

Introduce mandatory training for any police involved in risk management of intimate partner violence.

Co-produce training with local multiagency stakeholders.

Evaluate training programmes and build monitoring of quality into data collection and reporting.

Risk management should be built on an understanding of how gender and women's inequality shape women's and children's experiences of intimate partner violence, and of how gender affects victims' options and perpetrators' behaviours, to inform effective risk management strategies.

A sound understanding of the gendered dynamics of intimate partner violence and coercive control are essential for managing risk. Ideally, risk management interventions should follow risk assessments that include coercive control indicators and that explicitly inform practitioners' judgements about risks. Risk management must maintain a focus on safety planning with victims and on holding perpetrators accountable in order to reduce the likelihood of lethal violence and the harmful consequences of intimate partner violence on women and children. To this end, police leadership should promote and implement training programmes that enable police officers to identify the gendered dynamics that underpin intimate partner violence, especially coercive and controlling behaviours.

Coercive and controlling behaviours have been defined in the following ways:

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour (107). Such acts include controlling access to technology and/or monitoring online behaviour, including cyberstalking.

Multidisciplinary collaboration can improve police practice (108), and police can increase their own capacity in this area by working with women's rights organisations and victim services agencies to increase understanding of the impact of gender on risk assessment and risk management of intimate partner violence.

Police leadership should routinely conduct reviews and analyses of the learning and development needs of police, paying special attention to developing the necessary understanding of the gender dynamics of intimate partner violence and the impact of gender on risk management procedures and processes. Based on the training needs assessments, mandatory training plans for all police officers involved in risk management should be implemented. Training plans can be distinguished by different levels of competence and according to the specific role of police officers undertaking risk management activities.

However, all police officers should receive at least basic training on the gender dynamics of intimate partner violence. The number of hours and the curriculum will depend on the specific local and national contexts in which the police are operating. Implementation of training should mirror professional practice standards, be evaluated for impact, involve multiple delivery methods (e.g. online, classroom, one-to-one instruction) and be repeated at regular intervals to embed learning. The training should also be embedded within the police performance management framework.

To make use of all available knowledge and experience in the community, training should be co-produced with, or informed by, local multiagency groups and specialised women's services, including those supporting migrant women, disabled women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, minority ethnic women and children.

Training should also be evaluated to ensure that all front-line police responding to intimate partner violence can apply their understanding of the gendered dynamics of coercive control and other aspects of abuse, including how gender intersects with other personal characteristics. This means that monitoring and evaluation systems should be built to accommodate analysis of gender as a key indicator.