



Alternatives to Violence Project



Annual Review 2015 – 16

Statements from our Patrons



AVP is a very valuable organisation. Many people's lives are distorted by violence and cruelty, and effects spread beyond the victim and the perpetrator to the wider family and the neighbourhood.

At a time therefore of emphasis on law enforcement and punishment it is very welcome that AVP sees violence reduction and prevention providing another answer, a cheaper answer that in the end leads to less pain and suffering.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivien Stern', written in a cursive style.

Baroness Vivien Stern, Crossbench Peer, House of Lords



The American prison psychiatrist James Gilligan has said that violence is provoked by the experience of being shamed or humiliated. 'All violence is an attempt to replace shame with self-esteem.' This rings true from my experience of working with prisoners and AVP. We know that prison, designed to punish through the deprivations inherent in the loss of liberty, has a damaging impact on most of those who experience it. Yet there are remarkable transforming experiences that arise in prison life from relationships with other prisoners, with prison staff and through the regime events of education, work, physical education, religion and offending behaviour programmes.

Often this transformation starts with one act of compassion and a meeting of minds. The power of AVP lies in the concentration of opportunities within the partnerships between participants and facilitators in a workshop to respectfully share experiences and stories to support and enhance the realistic self-esteem of all involved

Timothy C Newell

Tim Newell, Former Governor of Grendon and Spring Hill prisons, restorative justice practitioner, consultant and author

The Need for AVP

The vision of Alternatives to Violence Project is a nonviolent society. Our mission is to support people to handle conflict constructively and to build better relationships.

Statistics produced in 2015 – 16 show the magnitude of the problem we face in UK society and the need for programmes such as AVP. Some of these are quoted below:

- Although increased rates can be attributed to better reporting and recording, police in England and Wales recorded that violence against the person offences increased by 27% in the year ending March 2016, whilst the number of homicides (571) was up 34 on the previous year and among the highest recorded in the last 5 years. Police recorded offences involving the use of knives or sharp instruments increased by 10% in the latest year and offences involving the use of firearms over the same period increased by 4%.¹

- Some 8.2% of women and 4% of men were estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in 2014/15, equivalent to an estimated 1.3 million female and 600,000 male victims.²

- In the 2013 UK Wellbeing Survey, nearly 1 in 5 people in the UK aged 16 and older showed symptoms of anxiety or depression.³

- On 23 October 2015, the prison population in England and Wales was 85,106. Between 1993 and 2014 the prison population in England and Wales increased by more than 40,000 people, a 91% rise. 25,555 people entered custody in the first three months of 2015. The total population in custody in Scotland stood at 7,649, with 33,851 people entering custody in 2012–13. England and Wales have the highest imprisonment rate in Western Europe—locking up 148 people per 100,000 of the population.⁴

- Figures released by the Ministry of Justice in April 2016 show an alarming rise in the number of murders, sexual assaults

and attempted hangings in prisons in England and Wales during the previous 12 months.⁵

AVP workshops help people develop the self-awareness, knowledge and skills to understand the roots of violence and the way they respond to conflict. Based on this understanding, participants are able to practise new skills and behaviours which can break the cycle of violence and lead to more positive outcomes.

1. Office for National Statistics (July 2016): 'Crime in England and Wales, year ending March 2016'. London, Home Office

2. Office for National Statistics (February 2016): 'Focus on: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: 2014/15'

3. Office for National Statistics, (2015). Measuring National Well-being, Life in the UK, 2015. [online] Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/life-in-the-uk--2015/index.html>

4. Prison Reform Trust. 'Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile', Autumn 2015. Available online at <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>

5. Independent online, see: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/prison-system-in-total-meltdown-as-sexual-assaults-and-violent-crimes-soar-in-jails-a7004926.html>

“All parts were helpful. I've learnt new techniques and strategies to help with anger aggression and violence.”

About Alternatives to Violence Project

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) was first developed in a prison setting in the US in the 1970s. Over time it has grown and adapted and is now an international movement, with branches in countries across the globe. AVP Britain is a national charity in the UK, committed to working towards a nonviolent society.

AVP aims to support participants to gain the necessary awareness and skills to handle conflict better and build better relationships. We do this through interactive workshops which combine experiential learning and self-awareness with the practical development of skills in conflict management.

Anyone can access AVP workshops, however our priority groups are those we believe benefit most from AVP, being adults whose lives have been affected by violence or abuse. This can include:

- People in the criminal justice system, at risk of offending or ex-offenders;
- People who are affected by domestic abuse, as victims or perpetrators;
- People who are affected by violence or abuse which undermines their mental health.

Workshops in handling conflict are delivered by teams of well-trained volunteer facilitators. Workshops are mostly delivered over 3 days and are a minimum of 15 hours, but taster sessions and more flexible patterns of delivery are increasingly being developed. Using exercises, discussions, games and role-plays, participants develop five core conditions for handling conflict and building healthier relationships:

- Raised self-esteem with self-awareness
- Improved communication skills, especially listening and assertiveness
- Greater willingness to trust and cooperate with others
- A stronger sense of own values
- Enhanced skills for handling conflict in the moment and solving problems in relationships

Research literature shows strong associations between each of these core conditions and healthy, non-violent relationships. In each of these areas, 94% or more of AVP participants report making progress as a result of their workshop.

AVP is more than an anger-management or violence-reduction programme. Our workshops combine self-development, self-awareness and group-building with communication skills and conflict-handling techniques. This all-round approach helps participants both to manage strong feelings and conflicts and to build healthier relationships in the long-term.

Adults are rarely living in isolation. They are part of complex family, work and social networks. The benefits of one person learning to handle conflict and build better relationships are shared among those around them. In this way AVP contributes to a culture of non-violence, leading to safer and healthier families and communities.

AVP Britain : What we have achieved

Highlights and Challenges

During the period of this review (April 2015 – March 2016) an estimated 50 AVP workshops have been run across England, Scotland and Wales, with approximately 517 participants. Of this number 39 were community workshops and 11 were in prisons (in Scotland & Wales).

Highlights:

Some regions – notably the North West and London – have an established model, largely based upon the traditional ***3-day workshop***, and are providing workshops on that basis. This appears to be successful where strong partnerships have been built up, based on proved benefit to participants. The North West are proud that they have been able to extend their provision this year to 20 workshops based around the Greater Manchester area. Participants are largely referred through Social Services.

It is good to see that our ***work in prisons*** continues, although only presently in 2 regions (Scotland and Wales). A step forward was taken in Parc Prison, South Wales this year, in that 5 of the violence reduction team in the prison and 3 prisoners have completed a Training for Facilitators (T4F) course. Whilst this is a very positive development, it will need to be monitored to ensure that new facilitators are supported, mentored and gain the necessary experience.

We live in a changing environment, and it is heartening to see regions adapting to that environment. This means that – as well as the traditional 3-day workshops – ***new and exciting initiatives*** are taking place across the country, so that AVP can be responsive to the client base we wish to benefit. The York group has initiated the SUNSHINE project - monthly evening sessions using group exercises on building healthier relationships, to help build self-esteem. Started in September 2015, this initiative has been very successful, helping up to 100 people, many in the recovery community. Another project in the York area is KYRA (a support group for vulnerable women): weekly workshop sessions, lasting 6 sessions.

At the heart of these new initiatives is an understanding that, to be successful and to be relevant to the communities we most wish AVP to benefit, ***workshops need to be accessible and relevant to people's needs***. This has led to some groups developing sessions with partner organisations, and to recruiting and training facilitators from the locality and from the target organisations themselves. This has happened in Scotland and is likely to develop in York and in South Wales. We look forward to hearing more of these developments, and encourage regions to network and share learning.

Strong ***partnerships*** are key to success. This is demonstrated by the ongoing partnership which exists between the North West Region and Social Services Departments. York is looking to build on their partnership with the KYRA group and with local MIND, for whom they have run a taster. Other regions are also building strong partnerships, including Scotland and Wales.

Good local ***publicity*** seems often to be key to success. In Leeds the development officer and volunteers attended networking events, designed, printed and distributed new posters, and sent out regular emails to people who had signed up to receive updates. As a result of this participants on the March workshop doubled, with a majority drawn from priority groups. Some regions are also developing their own websites and social media.

Another key to success is having ***a strong local group of volunteers***, with a clear strategy and delegated roles. The Leeds group recruited and inducted 9 new volunteers (up from 2 at the beginning of the period) and held weekly volunteering sessions at the office. Current volunteer roles in the Leeds group include: outreach and publicity, social media, workshop bookings, fundraising, workshop host, steering group and facilitation. Some of Scotland's success is attributed to revamping the core committee – giving key roles and accountability to different people, enabling them to make real progress in a lot of different areas. Knowing that a group is all pulling in the same direction really helps to motivate and engage volunteers.

Some groups, notably Leeds and South Wales, have recruited Development Workers to help promote and develop AVP in their area.

Whilst this really enables growth and development, it also brings with it the challenge of sustainability.

AVP has its challenges, or course, but there is so much good practice around the country that there are real grounds for optimism. We hope that regional groups can improve their networks, so that learning and support can be shared.

Operations Committee:

An Operations Committee was set up by Trustees at the National Gathering in September 2015, to take forward essential operational matters, in part considering the present lack of central staff.

Some of the achievements of the committee to date include:

- The development of a new AVPB website (launched in May 2016)
- The production of a new logo and letterheads to go with our new strapline - 'Building Better Relationships'
- The development of a new manual, including a wider range of exercises for different audiences
- Collating workshop evaluations from across the country, and
- Piloting a national newsletter.

We thank the committee for its work.

Evaluating our work:

AVP recognises the importance of evaluation so that we are able to demonstrate how our work benefits participants, and so that we can learn and grow as an organisation.



“The role play was really important, as we were encouraged to put ourselves in other people’s positions, and the group engaged respectfully.”

For many years AVP Britain has asked workshop participants to complete a written feedback form at the end of the workshop. This self-assessment questionnaire was reformed recently to focus on how participants considered they have changed between the start and finish of the workshop. The survey covers 8 statements of social skills and enables the participants to rate their current ability on a scale from “always” to “never” both at the start and at the end of the workshop. The statements relate to the core themes of the workshop. The end survey has 3 further questions and an opportunity for participants to tell us what they enjoyed or otherwise.

A significant survey of workshop feedback was undertaken during the year. Data from 238 participants, who attended 25 Level 1 workshops in the 15 months starting April 2015 was analysed. Of the 238 participants 187 gave additional information on the end survey form. Scores of “always” and “most of the time” were compared, showing varying improvements in social skills between the start and finish of the workshop.

For the most part the responses were very favourable. Over 92% rated the workshop as excellent or good. Of those who paid their own fees 86% described them as excellent or good value for money. 90% stated they would recommend the workshop to other people. The written responses provided by the 187 participants are a valuable resource for AVP that can be used in future development in terms of relevance, effectiveness and accessibility.

Whilst we recognise the value of analysing the forms we use across AVP Britain nationally, we are aware of the importance of external evaluation of our work, and hope that we can consider commissioning at least one example of this in the coming year.

Facing Up to Conflict (FUTC)

Our distance learning programme, Facing Up to Conflict, continues to bring the AVP approach to prisoners who are unable to attend workshops in person. Of 750 inmates who enrolled on the course from April 2015 to March 2016, 534 successfully completed, providing a completion rate of 71%, compared with 66% for the previous year. This is attributed to the introduction of a new application form, which communicates more clearly the level of commitment that will be required from participants if they choose to enrol.

51% of those completing the course described it as 'excellent' and the remaining 49% described it as 'good'. 99% wrote that they would recommend the course to others. On completion, 98% felt that they were better at handling conflict and solving problems, and 96% felt that they were better at communicating with others. Such statistics are brought to life by the comments we receive from grateful participants, such as the following:

"I just wish the course was on offer at all prisons, because I did the CALM and TSP courses and gained nothing, but AVP has filled me with important knowledge and new skills.

Thank you so, so much, you've changed me for the better."

The work of our of volunteer coursework assessors remains invaluable. Over the past twelve months we have recruited two more assessors, and at the time of writing, two more are going through the enrolment process.

Following concern over the funding of the programme, at the end of the previous year, a new fundraising strategy was developed. A steering group was formed, and applications have been submitted to a variety of charitable trusts and foundations. Although this is an ongoing process, the results so far have been most encouraging, and an important new funding stream has been created.

Trustees' Report 2015 – 2016

As can be seen from the section on our achievements for 2015-2016, some AVP regions are very vibrant, and exciting developments are afoot. Trustees are aware of the importance of helping Regions to network and communicate with one another to share good practice and overcome obstacles. During the year we have re-established the practice of asking Regions for 3-monthly reports, and then disseminated the main findings from these. We hope that this is helpful, and will continue to think of ways in which we can encourage vibrancy throughout the organisation. Strong charities need to have robust governance procedures in place, so that all in the organisation are clear about where responsibility and accountability lies and where they can turn to for support and advice. Without this bedrock it is difficult to envision or plan for the future. We have faced challenges with governance this year, but hope that – with detailed work and application of AVP principles – we are on the road to a more sustainable future.

We have been unfortunate this year to lose a number of people from the Trustee body. This has left the Trustees currently rather depleted, and we are aware of our need for further hands on deck and specific areas of expertise. We hope to recruit further Trustees from the AVP membership, but are also open to sourcing Trustees through external advertising. We thank all those who have served as Trustees for their service.

We are grateful to Regional Committees for the work they are undertaking to raise the necessary funds for their work, but also to make their activities sustainable. Trustees are aware of the necessity to be active in fundraising nationally so that AVP Britain is sustainable into the future.

During 2015 – 16 *the Trustees* were:

- Richard Drake, Chair (resigned in March 2016)
- Anne Martin (Acting Co-chair from March 2016)
- Jane Harries (Acting Co-chair from March 2016)
- Alan Saleh
- Cristina Sargent, Treasurer
- Matthew Knight (resigned in March 2016)

- Pru Lambert
- David Grundy
- Mary Kennedy

Structure:

Alternatives to Violence Project, Britain is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, no. 4127409 (registered office The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT); and registered by the Charity Commission, no. 1085709 and registered in Scotland as charity no. SC039287.

The Governing Documents of AVP Britain are Articles and a Memorandum of Association. Company Members meet in an Annual General Meeting and appoint the Trustees/Directors. The latter appoint the officers: Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer.

The Operations Committee is responsible for some operational issues as set out in their terms of reference; six Regional Management Committees organise the programme locally; all committees report to the Trustees.

The company's annual income exceeds £100,000 and therefore an independent examination of accounts is required.

Health and safety report

No incidents have been reported.

Thank you

We thank all our volunteers for their extraordinary dedication in managing the organisation and maintaining a high standard of practice.

Given the challenging economic climate for fundraising we are grateful to all those who have standing orders with us and who have donated privately in any way. We also thank our funders who have trusted us to use their resources well.

***Jane Harries & Anne Martin
(Co-chairs)***

Financial Report

In 2015 -16, charitable expenditure accounted for 95% of our total expenditure.

It cost us £102,444 to run the organisation and deliver the programme. 25% of our income came from grants, 16% from donations, 56% from workshop fees and approximately 3% from other sources.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has helped, either by donating or supporting our fundraising. However, fundraising remains very difficult in the current economic climate, and Trustees are aware that national fundraising is a priority for 2016 – 17.

Please Support Us!

AVP is a small, effective community organisation, achieving a great deal on a low budget – please support us!

Support us with your time and energy by volunteering with us.

We are always looking for volunteer facilitators, office help and committee members, as well as new Board members with professional expertise to offer.

Support us financially.

We are a community of trained volunteers, supported by a small, part-time staff and we can make every £1 go a long way.

Donating just **£5 a month** will support a prison inmate to complete a distance- learning course on resolving conflict without using violence.

To become part of our work please visit

www.justgiving.com/avpbritain

and make a one-off, tax-effective donation or set up regular giving online.

Alternatively, please send a donation by cheque, payable to 'AVP Britain', to the address on the back page, or ask us to send you a standing order form.

Support us through your faith or community group.

Please recommend AVP for your charity collections. We can provide leaflets and other background information to help you

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT, BRITAIN

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

For the period 1/4/2015 to 31/3/2016

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2016 £	2015 £
Incoming Resources					
Grants		4,686	14,000	18,686	72,056
Donations		10,690	775	11,465	13,717
Workshop/Event Receipts		40,942	0	40,942	30,129
Interest Received		95	0	95	99
Other Income		2,120	313	2,433	5,527
Total Incoming Resources		58,533	15,088	73,621	121,528
Resources Expended					
Direct Charitable Expenditure	2	62,110	35,319	97,429	112,894
Fundraising & Publicity	3	764	100	864	216
Governance	4	4,151	0	4,151	5,033
Total Resources Expended		67,025	35,419	102,444	118,143
Net Resources before Fund Transfers					
		-8,492	-20,331	-28,823	3,385
Transfers between Funds		-2,670	2,500	-170	0
Net Movement in Funds		-11,162	-17,831	-28,993	3,385
Balances brought forward at 1 April 2015		86,620	37,071	123,691	120,305
Balances carried forward at 31 March 2016		75,458	19,240	94,698	123,690





AVP
Building
Better
Relationships

“There are different ways to deal
with conflict and violence.”

Alternatives to Violence Project

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