



Alternatives to Violence Project



Annual Review 2017 – 18

Registered charity no. 1085709

Registered office: Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT

Statements from our Patrons



I have been the Patron of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) since 2009.

Nine years later I continue to be an enthusiastic supporter of its work. Since 2009 the world seems to have become both more violent and more tolerant of violence. In these circumstances the work done by AVP has even more importance and I warmly welcome the activities described in this Annual Report.

It is particularly good to see that AVP is working so actively in prisons. Prisons in Scotland are hosting workshops and interventions for prisoners in England are also being provided through our correspondence course, *Facing up to Conflict*. In his recent report on prisons in England and Wales the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke, noted that "there have been startling increases in all types of violence. "In such an environment the work the AVP can do, in helping prisoners to think about other pathways than violence, is very valuable. It is valuable inside the prison and it is valuable when the prisoners are released to their families and communities.

I commend all those who work with AVP for what they doing, I admire the work AVP does in many parts of the country and I hope this report will be widely read.

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

Baroness Vivien Stern, Crossbench Peer, House of Lords

Prison experience is dominated by Fear. Through the deprivations prisoners suffer as a result of the loss of their freedom and the nature of the culture of many prisons, the experience is frightening. In order to survive people have to adapt to the slow trauma of the setting. The way to overcome Fear is by Trust. Developing trust in prison is difficult but there are opportunities and regime elements that are designed to help. Clearly AVP provides a means whereby people can learn about managing fear through developing trust and reinforcing resiliency.



Timothy C. Newell

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

"In the culture I grew up in and was socialised in, it was almost impossible for men to express "hurt". Instead the only way to express hurt was to call it or pretend it was anger. Anger was permitted. We need programmes like AVP to enable men to feel comfortable with feelings of hurt and vulnerability, and to move beyond the need to dress it up as anger."

Participant on workshop in the North West

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 independent branches in countries across the globe, AVP Britain being one of these. AVP Britain is a national charity, 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;
- Anyone who wishes to improve how they deal with strong feelings and conflict and build better relationships.

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 co-operate with others
- A stronger sense of one's 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.

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 2017 – 18 show the magnitude of the problem we face in UK society and the need for programmes such as AVP. These statistics illustrate some of the tensions in UK society, so that interventions such as AVP which support people in dealing with conflict constructively are increasingly necessary. Some of these are quoted below:

- The latest police figures for the 12 months to September from 44 forces show that robbery offences are up 29%; sex offences are up 29%; knife crime offences are up 21%, and other violent crime offences are up 20%.¹ Although police methods of reporting and the willingness of victims to come forward need to be taken into account, these statistics suggest an increase in violent crime. There were 37,443 knife crimes and 6,694 gun crime offences recorded in the year to September.
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales released in February 2018 reported that an estimated 7.5% of women (1.2 million) and 4.3% of men (713,000) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.²
- According to the British Medical Journal, universities in the UK have reported a fivefold increase in the number of students disclosing mental health conditions since 2007 (from 9675 in 2007-8 to 57 305 in 2017-18) and growing pressures on student mental health services, despite only a modest rise in student numbers.³
- In his Annual Report for 2017 – 18, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales reported 'some of the most disturbing prison conditions we have ever seen', including violence, drugs, suicide and self-harm, much of this related to reductions in prison staff.⁴

Although AVP workshops are never a panacea, they can support people in developing the self-awareness, knowledge and skills to help them understand the roots of violence and the way they respond to conflict. Based on this understanding, participants can practise new skills and behaviours which can break the cycle of violence and lead to more positive outcomes.

¹ Police crime figures, January 2018 : www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42815768

² Domestic Abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2017 <https://bit.ly/2nXfpTC>

³ See www.bmj.com/content/361/bmj.k2608

⁴ HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales: Annual Report 2017 – 18 <https://bit.ly/2KPsItD>

AVP Britain 2017 - 18

Successes and Challenges

During the period of this review (April 2017 – March 2018) an estimated 55 AVP workshops have been run across England, Scotland and Wales, with over 450 participants. Of this number 48 were community workshops and 9 were in prisons (in Scotland and Wales). In addition 5 taster workshops have been run in London and Leeds.

A synopsis is given below of some of the successes and challenges of the work carried out by the 5 active AVP Regions in the UK. Developments in our central work are described below in the Trustees' report.

Successes:



"I learnt a lot of things to a deeper level, even though I thought I was quite insightful and wouldn't learn a lot of new stuff, I did! I loved the interaction between the trainers and the attendees and how they were a part of the group. I am looking forward to Level 2."
Community participant, Cardiff.

New **partnerships and venues** have been opened up in several regions. In London and the South East, it was particularly gratifying to work with a small number of the residents of St Mungo's (a homeless charity) over a four-week period and register changes in behaviours, as confirmed by staff. A successful workshop was also run in Highpoint prison.

In Scotland, a new venue was set up for 2018/19 in Cumbernauld, whilst in the North West, the Regional Coordinator has worked with Manchester Quakers to run two central workshops, these being more accessible than some venues in the suburbs.

In South Wales 3 new partnerships were developed under an Awards for All Wales grant – with Swansea Carers, a group for BAME women in Cardiff and Single Parents Wales, a social enterprise which works to support single parents through activities and training. More flexible delivery models were developed to meet the needs of these partner organisations and their client groups, including a course of one-day weekday sessions over 5 weeks, a 2-day weekend course, and a 2.5-day weekend course. 6 new apprentice facilitators were recruited

from these workshops, and – following a Training for Facilitators course – they have received further ongoing training and support to enable them to become fully-fledged facilitators. This model will be evaluated and rolled out further if it is found to be successful.

Challenges:

Perhaps the largest challenge facing Regions is an over-reliance on a limited number of dedicated volunteers. This threatens the viability and continuity of services when key people retire or move on, as has happened during the year in Leeds. Accessing sufficient facilitators to run workshops can also be a problem, in particular lead facilitators. It can also be problematic attracting enough participants to make workshops viable.

“Appreciated the trust and honesty of all and the willingness to share experiences to help another person resolve their issue / problem.” *Workshop participant, Swansea.*



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 the 504 inmates who enrolled on the course from April 2017 to March 2018, 394 successfully completed, providing a completion rate of 78%, compared with 75% for the previous year.

A half-page article in *'Inside Time'* (the national newspaper for prisoners and detainees) in February 2018 led to a significant increase in applications over the following months.

In the South West the Regional Committee is working to pilot FUTC in the community, as a model for more rural, scattered communities.

The following quote from a participant who completed the course illustrates its impact:

'I found the course very helpful overall, and have taken things from it to use in my day to day life. It has been an eye-opener and made me a better person who now holds back and thinks before I act. I found it all helpful and can't fault it.'

Trustees' Report 2017 – 2018

At our National Gathering in autumn 2016, volunteers clearly stated their wish for Trustees to work towards appointing a National Coordinator in order to support activity in the Regions, improve communications and ensure that AVP Britain is sustainable into the future. This request has steered much of our work this year. Looking back on the year, we can confidently say that much has been done to improve AVP Britain's governance and communications and to move towards a better financial position. At the same time, we are aware that the core work of the charity often depends on a few willing volunteers, and that activity can suffer or even cease when key people retire or move on. AVP Britain's financial position remains an urgent and pressing concern, with serious consequences in the next 12 months unless we can establish a sustainable basis on which we can continue to operate. Due to a considerable period without a National Coordinator, Regions have grown more diverse and independent. While this can be a strength, it can also mean that vital learning isn't shared, and that quality and consistency suffer.

Highlights of our work in 2017 – 18:

- Supported by a grant from the Tudor Trust, we appointed a Development Officer in December 2017 to support us in improving our governance and communications and in raising the necessary funds to appoint a National Coordinator. At the time of writing, all AVP Britain's key policies have been revised or rewritten and posted on our national website. Work is also ongoing to raise the necessary core funds for a National Coordinator.
- A Business Plan and Strategy have been drafted.
- The Trustees have set up active sub-committees to work on governance, communications, finance and fundraising and monitoring and evaluation.
- The system of 3-monthly reports has continued and ensured that Trustees have an overview of developments across the organisation. The 3-monthly e-newsletter is also a key mechanism for sharing information, and has been well received.
- We appointed two new Trustees – one with financial and the other with HR experience and expertise.



Challenges:

The main challenge which AVP Britain faces is the fact that we rely very heavily on a relatively small number of committed volunteers. This can cause real problems when key people retire or move on. During the year activity ceased in one Region, and the work of a second Region was rescued only by a volunteer stepping in. Trustees are aware that – moving forward – we need to look at more sustainable structures and ways of working.

The second main challenge continues to be the financial sustainability of the charity as a whole. Whilst Regions are sometimes successful in raising funds, much of these are for specific projects and therefore ring-fenced. We need to develop a finance and fundraising strategy that will enable us to be cost-effective in the longer-term. Trustees are looking for expertise to enable us to do this.

AVP Britain Trustees are committed to the mission of AVP and to the value of our work. It is questionable, however, how widely AVP is known about, in particular amongst the audiences we aim to attract to our workshops. There is a marketing and publicity job to be done, which will be part of the role of a National Coordinator.

Trustees would like to **thank** all those - facilitators, volunteers, Regional Coordinators and committees - who have worked so hard during the last year to promote, facilitate and support AVP workshops in communities and prisons across Britain. We know from the comments we receive that AVP is potentially life-changing. Many thanks also to all those who have contributed to AVP financially – for instance through standing orders and donations. We also thank our fundraisers who have trusted us to use their resources well.

During 2017 – 18 **the Trustees** were:

- Jane Harries, Chair
- Anne Martin, Vice-chair
- Marie Walsh, Treasurer (from March 2018)
- Joan Neary
- Colin Mallinson
- Matthew Knight (from December 2017)
- Peter Horton (resigned October 2017)
- Alan Saleh (came to end of 2nd term of service, October 2017)

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.

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.

Safeguarding

One incident was reported and dealt with during the year.

Jane Harries, Chair of Trustees

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Financial Report

In 2017 – 2018, charitable expenditure accounted for 95% of our total expenditure. It cost us £116,398 to run the organisation and deliver the programme. Approximately 51% of our income came from grants, 18% from donations and 30% from workshop fees. We are extremely grateful to all those who fundraised for AVP during the year and to all those individuals and organisations who have funded our work. Our particular thanks go to the Flapjack Trust, the Tudor Trust and the Reckitt Trust for their support.

Our lack of a national coordinator has resulted in an increased workload for volunteers and one negative consequence has been less capacity for fundraising. Over the year our overall income was down by almost 20% compared to 2016-2017. The grant funding we secured centrally was up on last year, and donations were also up by 90% but significantly less grant funding was obtained by the regions. Although our expenditure was also reduced, we showed a deficit for the year of approximately £7,600 overall, just under 7% of our total income. This was, of course, covered by our reserves, but is a not an outcome that we want to repeat. We need to support the regions better with their fundraising as well as with volunteer recruitment and retention, especially at Regional Committee level.

Like any charity we have the direct costs of running our programme, i.e. the workshops and our distance learning programme, Facing Up to Conflict (FUTC), and we have the indirect costs of running AVP Britain central office and the organisation as a whole. The trustees believe that historically we have

underestimated the true cost of AVP workshops and FUTC and that over the last few years this has resulted in insufficient unrestricted funds to cover our annual running costs putting our national finances under strain.

Calculated as an average across the regions, and including overheads, the full cost of an AVP workshop (community and prisons workshops had broadly similar costs) was approximately £1,615 per workshop last year. The cost per participant in community workshops was therefore £243, while in prisons (due to a relatively larger average group size) this came to £162. Facing Up to Conflict has been delivered at a cost of £80 per participant completing the programme. Wherever possible we plan to adopt a full cost recovery approach to our fundraising next year to stabilise AVP finances and strengthen the organisation.

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT, BRITAIN						
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES						
For the period 1/4/2017 to 31/3/2018						
	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds		
		£	£	2018	2017	
				£	£	
Incoming Resources						
Grants		15,750	39,844	55,594	77,430	
Donations		18,569	1,000	19,569	9,619	
Workshop/Event Receipts		32,725		32,725	37,068	
Interest Received		564		564	20	
Other Income		312		312	11,073	
Total Incoming Resources		67,920	40,844	108,764	135,210	
Resources Expended						
Direct Charitable Expenditure	2	76,957	34,061	111,018	127,998	
Fundraising & Publicity	3	871		871	1,966	
Governance	4	4,509		4,509	4,120	
Total Resources Expended		82,337	34,061	116,398	134,084	
Net Resources before Fund Transfers						
		-14,417	6,783	-7,634	1,126	
Prior Year adjustment				0	-1,419	
Transfers between Funds		-500	500	0	0	
Net Movement in Funds		-14,917	7,283	-7,634	-293	
Balances brought forward at 1 April 2016		74,271	20,136	94,407	94,699	
Balances carried forward at 31 March 2017		59,354	27,419	86,773	94,406	



AVP
Building
Better
Relationships



“This course was amazing! The facilitators were spot on with their delivery, flexibility, empathy, understanding, listening, teaching and learning. It gave me such a new focus to move forward and hopefully find my confidence and identity”

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