



Alternatives to Violence Project



Annual Review 2016 – 17

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.

Eight 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.

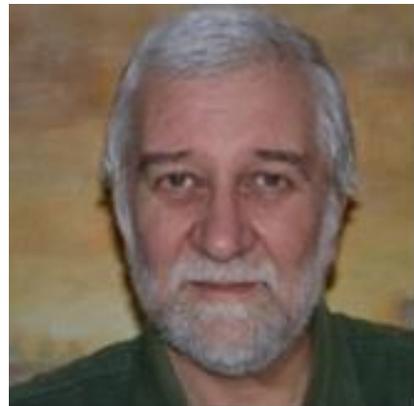
I commend all those who work with AVP for what they doing, I admire the work AVP does in many parts of the country and I hope this report will be widely read.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivien Stern'.

Baroness Vivien Stern, Crossbench Peer, House of Lords

Changing the way we look at ourselves and the world calls for experience, support and resilience. Prisons can offer that opportunity and some prisoners make use of that time to learn more about themselves and adjust to become the person they want to be. With the current crisis in our prisons however such attempts can prove very challenging in an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear, and little hope for a better future. We know from the experience of AVP that taking part in workshops can be transformative, not only as a means of developing personal growth, confidence and problem-solving approaches to conflict but in supporting people to see themselves differently, to take on roles that enable others to grow and change. It is in how we define ourselves that much of our behaviour is understood and confirmed.

I know four men who became facilitators of AVP through prison workshops and although they served long sentences they realised through AVP that they were accepted in pro-social leadership roles and could operate with good effect in supporting others address critical issues of violence, anger and control. That possibility exists within AVP, a precious legacy that has been developed over the years. It is relatively rare in a prisons programme and deserves recognition and celebration.



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.

In a period of financial austerity where small and medium sized voluntary sector organisations have been affected by cuts in public sector funding, many working in the field of criminal justice have been squeezed out or struggle to survive. This means that there are less opportunities for rehabilitation, making the work of AVP even more valuable.¹

Statistics produced in 2016 – 17 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:

- According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), police-recorded crime has risen by 10% across England and Wales – the largest annual rise for a decade – in the 12 months to March 2017. Although the ONS is clear that much of the rise in violent offences recorded by police is down to better recording by forces, it also believes some of the increases may be genuine.²

The latest crime figures also show an 18% rise in violent crime, including a 20% surge in gun and knife crime. The official figures also show a 26% rise to 723 in the homicide rate.

More alarmingly, the statisticians say the rise in crime is accelerating, with a 3% increase recorded in the year to March 2015, followed by an 8% rise in the following year, and now a 10% increase in the 12 months to March this year.

- Some 7.0% of women and 4.4% of men were estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in 2015/16, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female and 651,000 male victims.³
- The Mental Health Foundation estimates that, every week, 1 in 6 adults in the UK experiences a common mental health problem such as anxiety or

¹ “Voluntary sector “squeezed out in justice reforms, MPs conclude Third Sector Sept 2016

² Office for National Statistics: Crime in England and Wales Statistical Review for year ending March 2017

³ House of Commons Library Briefing Paper No 6337, 21st June 2017: ‘Domestic Violence in England and Wales’

depression and that 1 in 5 adults has considered taking their own life at some point. ⁴

- In his 2016 – 17 Annual Report, the Chief Inspector of prisons in England and Wales reported growing concerns on safety, including levels of self-harm and the number of deaths in custody. Violence continued to escalate at an unacceptable rate, and significantly more prisoners than before said that they felt unsafe. ⁵



AVP workshops help people develop 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 are able to practise new skills and behaviours which can break the cycle of violence and lead to more positive outcomes.



'On the Friday night I had no hope, and now I see there are other people like me and there is hope to change.'

Participant from a workshop in Coatbridge, Scotland

'Very healing at this moment in time. Have learnt ways to connect with better understanding. Mainly achieved by allowing space and not having to be the one that holds things together.'

Participant from a workshop in Swansea, Wales

⁴ Mental Health Foundation. (2016). Fundamental Facts about Mental Health 2016. Mental Health Foundation: London.

⁵ HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2016–17, 18 July 2017.

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 2016 – March 2017) an estimated 56 AVP workshops have been run across England, Scotland and Wales, with over 350 participants. Of this number 48 were community workshops and 8 were in prisons (in Scotland and Wales). In addition over 16 taster workshops have been run, most notably in Scotland.

A synopsis is given below of some of the highlights and challenges of the work carried out by the 6 AVP Regions in the UK. Developments in our central work are described below in the reports of the Trustees and the Operations Committee.

Highlights:

The traditional **3-day workshop** remains the basis of our work across the UK. This appears to be successful where strong partnerships have been built up, based on proven benefit to participants. This is particularly true of the North West Region, where referrals are made through Social Services on a regular basis. In April 2016 – March 2017 21 workshops were run around the Greater Manchester area.



Other regions have found running a successful community workshop programme more challenging, largely due to the difficulties in raising awareness with target audiences. This is increasingly being overcome by **the formation of successful partnerships** with a variety of organisations. Some of these are listed below:

- Due to partnership work, the Leeds group have been able to run 10 workshops with 127 participants. Partnerships include Leeds Beckett Students Union, New Wortley Community Centre/Offender Support Team, Community Rehabilitation Company (Probation), Angels of Youth, and Barnsley and Kirklees Recovery College.
- In South Wales a partnership project with four third sector organisations is being developed, including a multi-ethnic women's group in Cardiff and an Ethnic Youth Support group in Swansea.

- The London region is actively involved in setting up partnerships with the Metropolitan Police, SHP (Single Homeless Project), 999 Club Deptford (homeless charity), MIND and HMP Highpoint
- Scotland has built up a network of partner organisations who receive and often share information about workshops. In addition, they are engaged in a specific funded contract with the Coatbridge Health Improvement Team.

Developing successful partnerships can mean that regions are able to offer **workshops to vulnerable groups at low or no cost**. In Scotland a grant from Coatbridge Health Improvement Team has enabled them to run a series of workshops with fully funded places. This is also the case in Wales, where an Awards for All Wales grant has made it possible to offer a series of free workshops to four organisations. The London Region has also raised funding to provide free workshop places for target groups. Partnership has other advantages too: thanks to their partnership with Leeds Beckett Students' Union, Leeds now has an excellent workshop venue which is high quality, very low cost, centrally located, and easy to find.

A common element to new partnerships being formed is **a desire to reach out to more diverse audiences** and to increase the diversity of our volunteer base. New target audiences include young people (Leeds and South Wales), offender services and probation (Leeds), and the homeless (London).

Raising awareness and developing partnerships is hard work and a couple of Regions – notably Leeds and Wales – have secured funding for **Development Officers** to develop this work strategically. Whilst building up partnerships takes time, there is evidence that this is now bearing fruit, with an increase in activity in these two areas.

Work in prisons took place in 2 regions (Scotland and Wales) in 2016 - 17. Scotland has continued their successful partnership with Addiewell prison. After completing a Level 2 and a Training for Facilitators workshop in Parc Prison, South Wales, there was then a gap in provision because of staff shortages and the pressure of work due to increased rates of violence amongst the prison population. These problems now seem to have been overcome, and workshops in Parc are due to resume, but this illustrates current strains in the prison system in the UK. The Regional Coordinator recently gave a presentation to prison officers in Cardiff and then completed a 'Light Touch Approval Form', which will hopefully lead to access to other prisons in South Wales. In North Wales the steering committee has made very positive contact with the new Berwyn 'super prison' in Wrexham, and they are hopeful that AVP workshops will be able to run there.

Challenges:

Although the above highlights are encouraging, AVP work is not without its challenges. Regions mention **how difficult it is to successfully publicise our work**, meaning that it can be difficult to get sustainable number onto community workshops. Leeds are aiming to overcome this challenge by recruiting volunteers with a specific publicity and outreach role. Regions are also increasing their use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Strong local steering committees with clear strategies and delegated roles is also key to success, but it can be difficult to recruit people to committee roles, thus endangering the sustainability of our work.

In order to ensure continuity of provision and development into new areas of work, there is a need for **a sustainable funding strategy**. This is an issue that is being grappled with both in the regions and centrally. There is a growing recognition that – although our main target audience is vulnerable communities – we need to secure funded partnerships and some paying clients to sustain our work.



Whilst some regions are thriving, others miss the support of **a central coordinator** in the organisation. **Effective communication** within the organisation and across regions also remains a challenge. Trustees are aware of these challenges and are working towards putting solutions in place.

Operations Committee:

The Operations Committee was set up by Trustees at the National Gathering in September 2015 and is responsible for taking forward essential operational matters in the organisation.

This year the committee has:

- Developed a comprehensive new Facilitators' manual, incorporating new exercises for audiences such as prison inmates and youth groups;
- Produced new versions of handbooks for facilitators handbook, for prison work and for volunteers;
- Amended and improved the public and private sections of the AVP Britain website. However, there have been limitations in what has been possible

given our tight financial resources and the website is a relatively old design. Scotland and Wales also have their own websites;

- Re-launched the internal newsletter. It is distributed quarterly and provides information of what is happening in the regions, centrally and in AVP International. We hope it will increasingly be used as a forum for exchanging information and ideas amongst AVP members; and
- Run workshops on trauma and resilience in London and Glasgow.

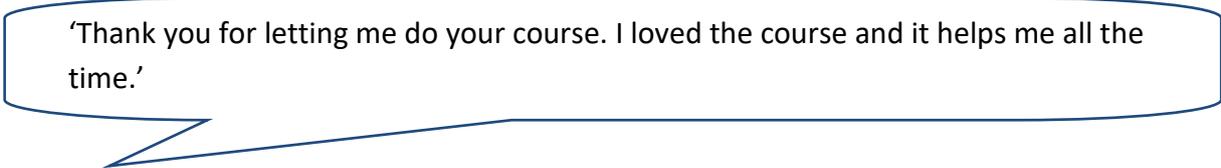
We thank the committee for its work.

Facing Up to Conflict (FUTC)

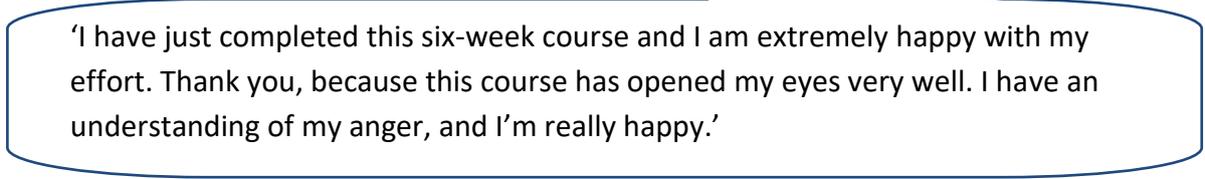
Our distance learning programme, Facing Up to Conflict, continues to bring the AVP approach to prisoners who are unable to attend workshops in person. Of the 498 inmates who enrolled on the course from April 2016 to March 2017, 373 successfully completed, providing a completion rate of 75%, compared with 71% for the previous year. The course was available in 66 prisons throughout the UK. The work of our volunteer coursework assessors remains invaluable. We presently have 5 active assessors.

The FUTC coordinator has actively sought funds from charitable trusts and foundations throughout the year. As an illustration, between September 2016 and May 2017 46 applications for funding were made, with 8 being successful and bringing in a total of £16,500.

Some quotes from participants who completed the course illustrate its impact:



'Thank you for letting me do your course. I loved the course and it helps me all the time.'



'I have just completed this six-week course and I am extremely happy with my effort. Thank you, because this course has opened my eyes very well. I have an understanding of my anger, and I'm really happy.'

Trustees' Report 2016 – 2017

AVP Britain Trustees are committed to the mission of AVP and to the value of our work. We are heartened by the vibrancy of some AVP regions, and by exciting developments that are afoot. At the same time we are aware that other regions need further support in order to be able to develop their work. In the absence of central staff we have aimed to improve channels of communication with and between the regions, particularly through the AVP Britain newsletter and through our 3-monthly reporting system.

Highlights of our work in 2016 – 17:

- In December 2016 a Strategy and Action Plan was developed for AVP Britain and this was approved in our Trustees' meeting in March 2017. This will be presented for approval at our next AGM in October 2017.
- We have established a timetable for reviewing and updating key policies, and key policies have been re-drafted during the year. These are all available on the members' section of our website.
- We have secured funding from the Tudor Trust to appoint a national Development Coordinator for 6 months, who will support us in getting the organisation to a position where we can once again employ a National Coordinator. This was a need that was expressed strongly by those who attended our AGM last year.
- An appeal letter for funds was sent out to all AVP volunteers, which secured a good response.
- A new newsletter coordinator was appointed, who is able to send out newsletters and information to volunteers via Mailchimp.
- Trustees and Operations Committee have worked together to improve the information and support available on the AVP Britain website.

Challenges:

During the year Trustees have faced a number of key challenges.

Issues with communications and IT within the organisation have caused problems both for volunteers in the regions and at national level. Trustees are working to put accessible yet secure systems in place and ensure that volunteers can access a timely response when experiencing technological problems.

We are grateful to Regional Committees for the work they are undertaking to raise the necessary funds to maintain and develop their work. At the same time, Trustees are aware of the necessity to be active in fundraising nationally so that AVP Britain is sustainable into the future. There is a need for a strong finance and fundraising strategy to strengthen our central work and to enable us to

recruit a National Coordinator. We are confident that the appointment of a Development Coordinator in the very near future will enable us to make a step-change towards becoming a self-sustaining organisation which is more able to provide the support which volunteers need.

Despite efforts to recruit new Trustees internally and through external channels, the number on the Trustee body has reduced to 6, and we will lose two more Trustees at our AGM. This has increased the burden on the remaining Trustees. We will continue to seek new recruits, and aim to involve volunteers in task and finish projects as we have done this year. We thank all those who have served as Trustees for their service.

During 2016 – 17 **the Trustees** were:

- Jane Harries, Chair (from March 2017)
- Anne Martin, Vice-chair (from March 2017)
- Alan Saleh, Treasurer (from March 2017)
- Joan Neary
- Colin Mallinson
- Peter Horton
- Cristina Sargent, Treasurer (resigned March 2017)
- David Grundy (resigned May, 2016)



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
(Chair)*

Financial Report

In 2016 -17, charitable expenditure accounted for 95% of our total expenditure.

It cost us £102,444 to run the organisation and deliver the programme. 57% of our income came from grants, 7% from donations, 27% from workshop fees and approximately 8% 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 2017 – 18.

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 1/4/2016 to
31/3/2017

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2017 £	2016 £
Incoming Resources					
Grants		27,501	49,929	77,430	18,686
Donations		9,449	170	9,619	11,465
Workshop/Event Receipts		37,068	0	37,068	40,942
Interest Received		20	0	20	95
Other Income		10,073	1,000	11,073	2,433
Total Incoming Resources		84,111	51,099	135,210	73,621
Resources Expended					
Direct Charitable Expenditure	2	90,688	37,310	127,998	97,429
Fundraising & Publicity	3	1,966	0	1,966	864

Governance	4	4,120	0	4,120	4,151
Total Resources Expended		96,774	37,310	134,084	102,444
Net Resources before Fund Transfers		-12,663	13,789	1,126	-28,823
Prior Year adjustment		-3,622	2,203	-1,419	
Transfers between Funds		15,097	-15,097	0	-170
Net Movement in Funds		-1,188	895	-293	-28,993
Balances brought forward at 1 April 2016		75,459	19,240	94,699	123,691
Balances carried forward at 31 March 2017		74,271	20,135	94,406	94,698



'Such a skilfully taught course. I would recommend it to everyone.'

Participant from a workshop in Cardiff, Wales

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