

Police working methods to prevent
serial partner violence – focus on the
perpetrator of violence

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English summary of Brå report 2017:13

**The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) –
centre for knowledge about crime and crime prevention measures**

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå)
works to reduce crime and improve levels of safety in society
by producing data and disseminating knowledge on crime
and crime prevention work.

This report is a summary of the Swedish report
Polisiära arbetssätt för att förebygga upprepat partnervåld report no 2017:13.

The Swedish report can be ordered from Brottsförebyggande rådet, info@bra.se

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URN:NBN:SE:BRA-737

Summary¹

One of the Government's gender policy goals is to end men's violence against women. In the strategy for attaining this goal, the Government emphasises the importance of preventive work (Government Bill 2016/17:10). In the 2017 budget bill, the Government established the goal of reducing the number of women who are exposed to violence in intimate relationships. The importance of the Swedish Police "conducting proactive, well-considered, and structured crime prevention work" in attaining this goal is emphasised (Government Bill 2016/17:1). As part of the development efforts, Brå has been instructed to "identify and report on promising police methods and working methods, including factors for success, which can be used in the Swedish Police's work in order to prevent serial violence against women and children in intimate relationships". (Ju2014/04445/KRIM (partial)). The Government has specifically stated that Brå should focus on the police working methods for preventing men's serial partner violence against women, as well as on approaches and working methods aimed at persuading the perpetrators of violence to cease the violence.

Brå's instruction

Brå's instruction can be divided into four parts. Brå must:

- identify and compile police approaches and working methods for preventing men's serial partner violence;
- determine which of these are promising;
- determine whether they can be implemented into Swedish police working methods; and
- estimate which costs would be entailed in working according to the promising methods and working methods.

In order to find examples of promising police approaches and working methods, Brå has conducted a search of international and national research and evaluations in library and research databases. Brå has also looked at reviews, carried out by the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Swedish Police, and the Safer Sweden Foundation (*Stiftelsen Tryggare Sverige*), of cases involving deadly violence and has also interviewed police, police employees in Sweden and abroad, and representatives of organisations in Sweden which work with violent men.

¹ The Swedish original of this summary is available on Brå's website, www.bra.se. Click on the Publikationer tab, then enter the report number in the search field.

Police strategies for preventing repeated violence

In the written knowledge base which Brå has reviewed and the interviews which Brå has conducted, there are three important prerequisites for effective police preventive work focusing on the perpetrator of violence which have come to light, namely that:

- routines for the cooperation exist;
- there is systematically compiled and available information regarding known perpetrators of violence;
- measures and undertakings have been developed and worked out.

In addition, there are three conceivable strategies for how the police must work with perpetrators of violence in order to prevent repeated violence. The police can:

- physically prevent the perpetrator of violence from repeating their violence by arresting and detaining the perpetrator of violence;
- impede the perpetrator of violence's repetition of their violence by increasing the risk that the perpetrator of violence will be discovered, for example through surveillance and monitoring, or a restraining order with electronic monitoring (ankle bracelet);
- persuade the perpetrator of violence to change their behaviour. A classic preventive strategy is to deter the perpetrator of violence from repeating their violence through early police intervention or criminal justice intervention, and threats of new interventions. The behaviour of the perpetrator of violence can also be changed through treatment. The police's mandate does not include providing treatment, but the police can encourage a perpetrator of violence to accept such help and facilitate contact with treatment agencies.

Few evaluations of the police's preventive work with perpetrators of violence

Both international and Swedish research regarding police working methods against partner violence have related primarily to intervention activities and investigations, while there is very little research regarding the police's preventive work in respect of the perpetrator of violence.

Even in respect of the police's own work in the area, the primary activity in Sweden has been to streamline intervention and criminal investigative work, and to prevent repeated victimisation through protective and supportive measures for victims. There is an absence of a method for police interaction with *perpetrators of violence* to prevent serial partner violence. The Swedish working methods directed specifically to perpetrators of violence are restraining order and various types of conversations with perpetrators of violence. These have not yet been evaluated or have only been evaluated to a limited extent. In other words, there is limited knowledge regarding which police working methods are promising or have been proven to have a preventive effect.

Three foreign police working methods

Although there is little research, Brå has found three foreign working methods which have been implemented in different locations in England, the United States, and Canada. However, none of these three working methods are exclusively police methods; instead, they are examples of different types of cooperation models. The working methods constitute concrete examples of how the conceivable police strategies of preventing, impeding, and changing can be put into operation in practical police work. The working methods meet the criteria of:

- the police are a primary actor;
- there are documented descriptions of the working method;
- there is a clear focus on actions against the perpetrator of violence;
- there has been some form of evaluation.

According to those who have evaluated the working methods, the results are promising. However Brå counsels some caution in interpreting the results from these evaluations, since they are encumbered by certain methodological problems.

Matac – a cooperation model with focus on the perpetrator of violence

Multi agency testing and co-ordination (Matac) is a working method which comes from Great Britain. It is an operational form of cooperation on an individual level, where the police and other relevant agencies and parties meet every fourth week (in so-called Matac meetings) to discuss individual perpetrators of violence and to produce, together, an action plan regarding which measures are to be implemented in order to persuade that specific individual to stop the violence. The police are responsible for leading and coordinating the Matac work, which means that the police:

- identify which perpetrators of violence have the highest risk of relapse into partner violence and must therefore be discussed in the Matac meetings;
- lead the Matac meetings;
- follow up on the work and ensure that all participating parties perform the commitments they made during the Matac meetings.

The choice of measures which are applied depends on the motivation of the perpetrator of violence to receive support and help. There are two “tracks” of measures, green and red.

- The green track is for perpetrators of violence who are motivated to stop and receptive to support and help. In such case, the strategy is to help the person to change their violent behaviour through access to treatment against the behaviour or to other forms of supportive intervention, such as substance abuse treatment, psychiatric care, residential support, and electronic monitoring with an ankle bracelet.

- The red track is for perpetrators of violence who are opposed to help. In such case, the police deliver warning letters, inform the local police about the perpetrator of violence, disseminate a photo of the perpetrator of violence, work to detect other criminal activity in which the perpetrator of violence is involved, and issue restraining orders.

An evaluation of Matic showed that the perpetrators of violence were reported for fewer offences after the Matic activities than before. However, the evaluation suffers from a number of methodological shortcomings, such as no control group and no information regarding the length of the follow-up period or whether the perpetrators of violence were detained during any part of the follow-up period. Brå's assessment is thus that the result of the evaluation must be interpreted with great care. However, those who work under this method perceive the results as positive and regard the working method as promising.

DVI – efforts to deter and detain perpetrators of violence

Domestic Violence Intervention (DVI) is a working method from High Point, North Carolina, USA. The working method is inspired by a working method called *Pulling Levers*, which was originally designed to reduce shootings and serious gang violence, but which were developed for adaptation to prevent serial partner violence. The principle of DVI is that the more frequently a perpetrator of violence is suspected of partner violence, the more comprehensive the measures against them.

Known perpetrators of violence are assigned to one of four levels, from A to D, depending on the number of times the individual was suspected of partner violence. A-level perpetrators of violence have been suspected three times, B-level perpetrators twice, and C-level perpetrators once. D-level perpetrators of violence are not yet suspects but they demonstrate risk behaviour. Each level has prescribed routines regarding the measures which are to be taken. Perpetrators of violence on the B, C, and D levels have direct meetings with policy and local community representatives where they are provided with deterrents and persuaded to change their violent behaviour. The most criminally active perpetrators of violence on the A level are, with all available criminal justice means, brought to trial and detained in order to prevent serial partner violence.

A special computer system was developed in order to be able to take the right measures and to follow up on the work. In it, information about known perpetrators of violence and which measures the police have taken against them is compiled; this information is available to all police officers in the area. The names of all perpetrators of violence who were previously subject to a measure under DVI are red-flagged in the system so that the information cannot be missed.

According to one evaluation, the working method may have had a certain effect on the most serious violence. Namely, the percentage of partner violence cases in High Point where the victim received physical injuries was lower after the implementation of DVI. The percentage of partner murders

and partner manslaughters also declined. However, no comparisons were made with trends in areas where the working method was not implemented. Moreover, it is not clear whether the explanation for the reduction is that the most criminally active individuals have been detained, or because the less criminally active individuals have been deterred from repeating the violence.

SRP – a model for systematic motivational work

The *Second Responder Program* (SRP) for perpetrators of violence is a working method from London, Ontario, Canada. It is an example of a structured and systematic working method for the purpose of encouraging men suspected of partner violence to enter into therapy for their violent behaviour during their time in freedom until trial. SRP is directed towards men who are deemed to be at a medium or high risk of relapsing into violence. The police's role here is to identify men at a high or medium level of risk and to provide their names to psychologists at the police crime victim group. The psychologists, who are employed by the police, are tasked with then contacting and encouraging the men to visit specially trained therapists so that during their time in freedom until trial, they can begin to receive treatment for their violent behaviour.

An evaluation of SRP shows that the motivational work can have different outcomes depending on the choice of method of contacting the men. Telephone contact by the police-employed psychologist was more effective than such contact by letter. When the project was repeated in a somewhat changed form, the motivational work was deemed to be even more effective when the men were contacted by the psychologists as early as when the men were detained.

SRP was repeated in the Ontario, Canada cities of Woodstock and Sudbury. Unlike in London, there were no psychologists employed by the police. Due to prevailing confidentiality provisions, the police could not share the suspects' contact information with outsiders. In order to get around the problem, the therapists were made police volunteers. This way, the police could share information about the suspects with the psychologists.

According to the evaluation, the therapy to which the perpetrators of violence were sent was promising. The individuals who were treated relapsed to a significantly lower level than the control group. The subsequent therapy was not, however, included in the police work. The police's role in SRP is to identify the risk group and facilitate contact between the perpetrators of violence and psychologists. In other words, the cooperation between these two parties is central to the working method. Taken as a whole, SRP is a promising example of how the police, together with other parties and applying structured routines, can contribute to encouraging men who commit partner violence to accept treatment measures.

Lessons drawn from reviews and the experiences of professionals

Since there is only a small amount of research in Sweden and few evaluations of preventive police work focusing on the perpetrator of violence, Brå has also gone through reviews of cases involving deadly violence in order to identify how the police could have worked to prevent it. In addition, active police and representatives of different bodies that work with treatment of perpetrators of violence have shared their experience.

Reviews of cases involving deadly violence

The primary observations in reviews of cases involving deadly violence are consistent with that which was emphasised in the three working methods described above. Specifically:

- there is a need for routines for facilitating cooperation and coordination of efforts;
- the police need to have access to compiled background information regarding the matter and the individuals involved;
- the police must be knowledgeable in respect of the fundamental mechanisms behind partner violence as well as both police and other agencies' available measures and interventions for perpetrators of violence and victims;
- in some cases, the deceased's application for a restraining order had been refused, which brings up the issue of how the investigations regarding restraining orders are conducted and whether restraining orders can be used and followed up on in a more effective manner.

Interviews with active police

Brå's study indicates that there is an interest and willingness among active police to work with measures directed towards perpetrators of violence. However, there is some uncertainty regarding the legal restrictions on work of this type. The interview subjects have several suggestions for ways in which the police could develop their work. These suggestions as well are highly consistent with the above-mentioned working methods. They include:

- developing the work on discussions which are intended to provide referral to, or encourage, treatment, or which are for the purpose of causing the perpetrator of violence to understand the consequences of their actions and that there is something to be gained by stopping;
- reviewing the possibility of conducting surveillance of perpetrators of violence who are deemed to be at high risk of repeating their violence;
- following up on compliance with the restraining order, and working more actively with the perpetrator of violence in order to effect change.

Interviews with representatives of agencies that work with violent men

Brå has also spoken with representatives of agencies that work with treatment of perpetrators of violence. They emphasise that:

- the police play a key role in using the time immediately after an arrest to encourage the man to seek help;
- there should be systematic and structured cooperation between the police and treating parties, which is particularly important in terms of preventing the work from being tied to an individual and thus vulnerable to personnel changes.

New working methods can lead to new costs

Brå has determined that carrying out detailed calculations of the projected cost of applying the foreign working methods found by Brå is meaningless, since these methods cannot be transferred directly into a Swedish context. Since the working methods presented are based on cooperation, it is also not possible to isolate the calculation of costs for the police's work. However, Brå has identified four types of costs which are conceivable, based on the models presented. These are costs for:

- creating and maintaining registers;
- planning, organising, coordination, and follow-up;
- personnel (who perform new job tasks);
- premises.

If there is an interest in developing the crime prevention work with a focus on the perpetrator of violence and in using the know-how from other countries, the police regions must have clear directives, tied to the allocation of resources, as to how the work is to be reinforced. It is likely that both new and reallocated resources will be necessary to develop the work within this area of crime.

Brå's assessment

Brå's experience is that there is a willingness among active police to develop work which focuses on the perpetrators of violence. In discussions which Brå has conducted with the police there is, however, an uncertainty regarding the legal restrictions on individual-oriented police work, where measures other than those which are a direct consequence of the offence which has been committed are employed. In order for the police to be able to develop their preventive work focusing on perpetrators of violence, it is necessary that the Swedish Police:

- investigate what police officers may do within the scope of the prevailing regulatory framework; and
- communicate with the organisation as a whole regarding what is expected of those who work with these matters, as well as what they may and may not do.

Study compliance with instructions and take stock of local initiatives and working methods

During the course of its work with this instruction, Brå has found that the police operate under instructions which include parts of the foreign working methods. Brå has also encountered various local initiatives and working methods which, in different ways, are reminiscent of the foreign working methods. Brå therefore recommends that the Swedish Police not only look outwards for new working methods but also:

- investigate whether the police are actually working pursuant to existing instructions;
- otherwise identify existing impediments and work to eliminate them;
- take stock of existing local initiatives and working methods, and review which could be included in the regular work;
- subsequently, review which working methods that are not in place would enable the police to work with more focus on the perpetrators of violence;
- initiate trial projects where new working methods, or developed existing methods, are implemented in such a way that they can be evaluated.

Based on the foreign working methods, Brå has chosen to highlight several possible areas of development and believes that the Swedish Police should explore whether the conditions exist for development in these areas.

Clarify who has primary responsibility for work with an increased focus on the perpetrator of violence

If the police are to focus on the perpetrator of violence, either by using the foreign working methods as a model or by developing the local initiatives and their existing working methods in respect of perpetrators of violence, there should be clarification regarding where in the organisation – on the

regional or the local police level – responsibility rests for the work. The suggestions advanced by police in the interviews are that the units for crime victim coordination and personal safety (Bops) should be developed such that they also work with the perpetrators of violence. However, some emphasise that there are problems with this proposal. It is thus appropriate for the Swedish Police to investigate how work focusing on perpetrators of violence can be integrated into the agency’s work and/or which organisational and resource adjustments need to be made.

Attempt to create a system to collect information regarding known perpetrators of partner violence

One of the conditions for the foreign working methods is that there are registers/systems where information regarding perpetrators of violence (and, to a certain extent, victims) are collected. The information in any such register/system is updated on a continuing basis regarding any specific perpetrator of violence, including information regarding both new offences for which the perpetrator of violence is suspected as well as measures taken by the police and other parties. This information is used for planning which measures are to be taken. Within DVI, the information is also made available to external personnel when they go out on an emergency call.

Brå proposes that the Swedish Police be instructed to map which existing computer systems and registers could be used, or what a new system for such a working method would look like in Sweden, whether existing law permits collection of such data, and how legislation would otherwise need to be adjusted, if at all.

Clarify whether current privacy legislation must be adjusted in order to make effective cooperation possible

The working method which Brå describes is characterised by a structured coordination between various agencies and parties. Within the scope of this cooperation, information is shared about *both* the victim and the perpetrator of violence. The information which is shared pertains not only to offences which were committed, but also to risk factors for future offences. In order for it to be possible for the Swedish police to work pursuant to these working methods, certain things must be investigated and clarified, specifically:

- which cooperation falls within the scope of existing regulations for those who work with these matters;
- the extent to which cooperation today is prevented by uncertainty regarding how the privacy rules can be used or whether the regulatory framework is too restrictive;
- which adjustments to the privacy rules are justified if it proves to be the case that the rules are too restrictive for the necessary form of cooperation.

Increased focus on perpetrators of violence in the measures which follow from a risk assessment

There is an important difference between how the results of the risk assessments are used within the scope of the foreign working methods and how they are used within the Swedish police. In Sweden, the result of the risk assessment forms the basis for planning and decisions regarding support and protective measures for the *victim* as well as for the efforts made to have the crime victim participate in the legal process. In the foreign working method, such results are also used to plan and take measures against the *perpetrator of violence*. Brå's recommendation to the Swedish police would therefore be to review how the information which comes to light in the structured risk assessments can also be used in order to focus on, prioritise, and take measures against the *perpetrator of violence* as well.

Review possible routines for cooperation between the police and actors which provide treatment

The police's mandate does not include providing a perpetrator of violence with treatment so that they cease their violent behaviour. On the other hand, the police can play a significant role in *identifying* perpetrators of violence who could be relevant for treatment, *encouraging* them to accept help, and *facilitating* contact with parties which provide treatment. Brå recommends that the Swedish Police review the prerequisites for developing systematic routines to enable contact between perpetrators of violence and parties which provide treatment. In order to streamline this work, the police should receive training regarding how one can best encourage individuals to seek and accept support and help. One alternative would otherwise be to link to other professions which are specially trained in holding motivational conversations.

Make the investigative work less dependent on the participation of the injured party

An important part of preventing serial violence is that the perpetrator of violence be found guilty and sentenced for the offence. However, one problem is that investigations are often closed because the injured party does not wish to participate, and thus the perpetrator of violence cannot be found guilty and sentenced. Accordingly, it is important that the investigation rely as little as possible on the injured party's participation. This can take place through, for example, substantial primary work, such as carefully documenting the crime scene and the initial questioning, as well as obtaining doctor's certificates as quickly as possible.

More investigations and studies of police working methods are necessary

More evaluations of who specifically is affected by police work, and what the effects are, are necessary for knowledge-based police work. Evaluating crime prevention effects is not an easy task, but even simpler evaluations can be valuable. In such case, it may be important not to only shed light on the effects in quantitative terms, but also to find out how the efforts are perceived and whether they can have unintended consequences. One condition enabling follow-up and testing of new working methods is that they be implemented and applied in a structured and uniform manner.

Knowledge regarding different types of partner violence is important so that community efforts can benefit everyone

The existing working methods for preventing partner violence are based primarily on knowledge regarding men's violence against women. Brå's instruction has not included investigating whether, how, and in such case why, different types of partner violence (such as women's partner violence against men or partner violence in same-sex relationships) are best prevented in various ways. If community efforts to counteract partner violence are to benefit everyone, it is important for future studies and compilations of information to be based on these questions.

In this context, it is also important that the police, as well as other parties, have a mandate to see, prevent, and react to partner violence, that they be aware of their own preconceptions regarding who is the perpetrator or the victim of partner violence, and the possible consequences of these preconceptions on the handling of partner violence cases.



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