

Case study



Setting up domestic abuse services in Wales

Betsi Cadwaladr University
Health Board

Kim Jones
Lucy Clarke

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About Kim

Kim Jones is an occupational therapist with a keen interest in domestic abuse. Before training as an OT, Kim spent many years working with domestic abuse survivors. She saw first-hand the impact of abuse on the survivor's occupational identity.

In her final year of university, she undertook a role emerging placement with the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU). DASU is a third sector organisation who support people who are experiencing domestic abuse. They were so impressed with the impact of occupational therapy they asked Kim to remain with their team as a volunteer. Kim shared her learning and impact from the role emerging placement more widely (Jones 2020).

About Lucy

Lucy Clarke is an OT lead for mental health services. In 2020, Lucy was successful in securing a place on the Bevan Exemplars Programme which provided executive mentorship to implement a project of her choice. She was given training in leadership and business planning.

The COVID pandemic saw a significant rise in domestic abuse incidents. Lucy used the Bevan Exemplars Programme to develop the role that Kim had begun to carve in DASU. She applied to the Elizabeth Casson Trust and was awarded funding for an OT pilot study in DASU for six months.

Lucy and Kim, with the help of their partners in DASU and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board set out to demonstrate the value of OT in domestic abuse services.

About the innovation

Kim was employed as a band five OT in the autumn of 2020. This post was managed by Lucy and embedded in mental health services. During this pilot, Kim provided individualised OT programmes for 30 women.

She used the OCAIRS as an assessment tool to identify occupational need and to set OT goals. She used occupation focused interventions to improve occupational participation. These included OT specific and generic mental health interventions:

- goal planning
- practical problem solving
- graded practice
- skill building
- anxiety management
- sleep hygiene advice
- depression management
- mindfulness
- role development
- assertiveness skills training
- support to develop meaningful routines
- social skills training.

These interventions empowered survivors of domestic abuse to take control of their lives by helping them find employment, regain independence, and rebuild their social connections. This in turn meant that they were less likely to return to an abusive partner.

Lucy played an instrumental role in this project. She supported Kim to hone her therapeutic skills. But most importantly, she used her skills in influencing others to attract more funding and interest. Amongst other things, she presented to the Minister for Health, Commissioners and Senedd at the Bevan Commission showcase event.

Seeing the benefits of this project, the Health Board agreed to extend the funding for a further four months, allowing Kim to complete her interventions with all 30 women.

Impact

Kim and Lucy have shared the projects impact nationally to encourage others to see the potential for OT in this area (Jones and Clarke 2021, Clarke and Jones 2021).

They used the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure to record the outcomes of this project. At the end of the ten-month pilot, half the women made significant improvements in their ability to carry out daily living skills. Most felt more satisfied with their ability to perform their chosen occupations.

The impact of domestic abuse on health, employment and housing, is estimated to cost the economy £34,015 per victim, per year. Based on the measurable improvement in employment status and health during this project, a total saving of £510,225 to the economy is expected.

The project has also shown significant benefits to the quality of life of the women involved. Mair

(pseudonym) had been in an abusive relationship for seven years. After several attempts to leave her ex-partner, she was referred to OT.

She received support to establish a routine, to manage her anxiety and loneliness. After nine sessions, she saw improvements in her sleep, her ability to maintain her home, employment and friendships. Mair said 'Work have seen a massive change in my productivity, quality and concentration.'

The information that Lucy and Kim shared on the Bevan Commission website has attracted interest from a range of organisations, such as, Research in Practice. This training organisation wanted to improve the confidence of OTs in local authorities to recognise and respond to domestic abuse. They invited Kim and Lucy to deliver three online workshops for local authority OTs.

Pre and post data from the training shows a 62% increase in knowledge, 73% increase in skills and 77% increase in confidence. By sharing their learning, Lucy and Kim are amplifying the OT response to domestic abuse.

Are you feeling inspired to pilot your own innovation?

Share your ideas with the **RCOT Innovation Hub** who can offer support along your journey and share learning more widely.

References

- Jones K (2020) *Bridging the Gap* Occupational Therapy News, August 28(8), p54-55.
- Jones K and Clarke L (2021) *Domestic Abuse occupational therapy project: A response to Covid 19* Occupational Therapy News, October (29)10, p18-20.
- Clarke and Jones (2021) *Domestic Abuse Occupational therapy: A Project in Response to COVID-19*, Bevan Commission <https://www.bevancommission.org/projects/domestic-abuse-occupational-therapy-a-project-in-response-to-covid-19/>