

RESPONSIBLE MEN'S BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION PROGRAM



EVIDENCE, LEARNING AND EVALUATION SUMMARY

AUGUST 2024

The Responsible Men program is an approved men's domestic and family violence (DFV) behaviour intervention program, designed for men aged 18 years and older who have used violence and controlling behaviours in their intimate relationships. The program supports men around taking responsibility to change their attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and decision-making without using violence. The overarching purpose of the program is to improve the safety of women and children through men's attitudinal and behaviour change.

The program is funded by the Queensland Government Department of Justice and Attorney General.



Queensland Government



Ethical clearance was obtained from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee via a high-risk application in April 2023 (GU Ref No: 2023/247).

PROGRAM EVALUATION

In March 2023, Griffith University was contracted to undertake an independent evaluation of the Responsible Men program to examine its effectiveness. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach.

PROGRAM DATA:

- 650 referred men
- 188 partners or (ex)partners

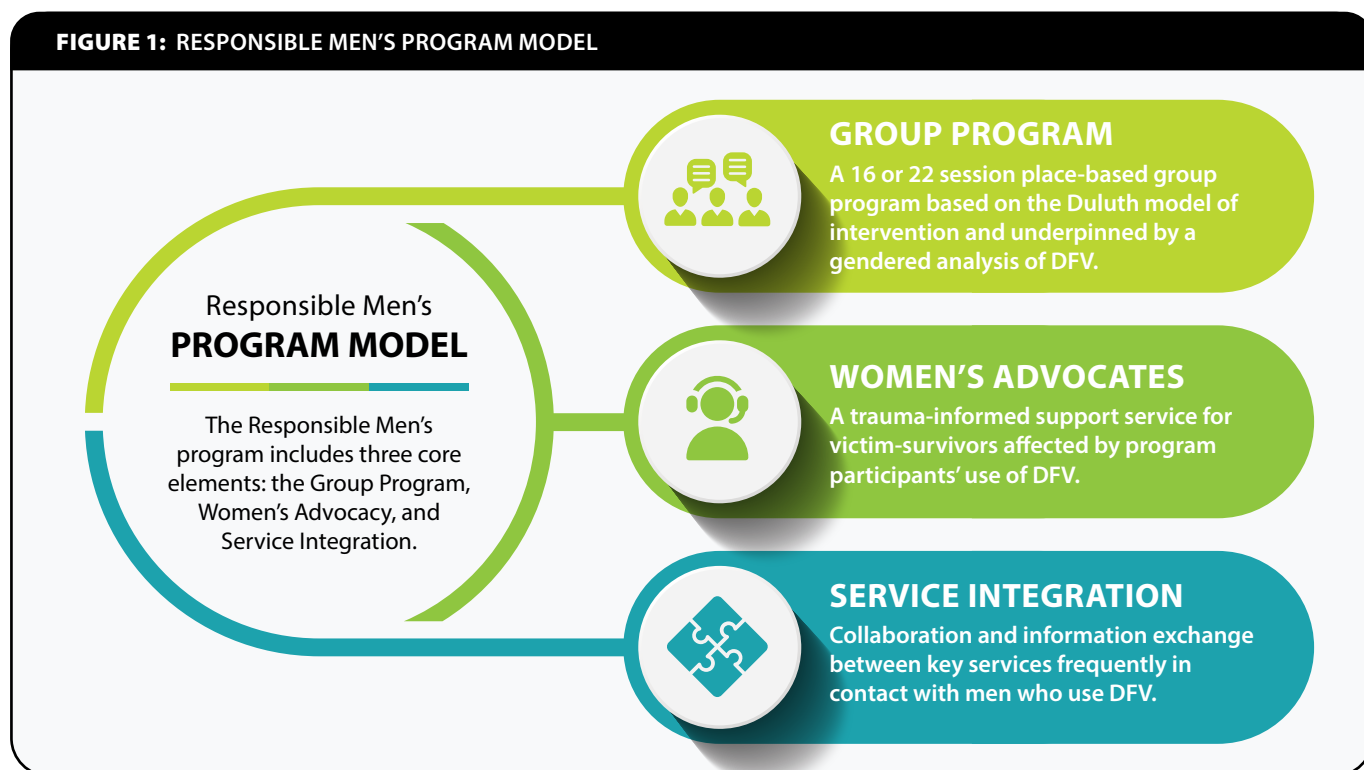
INTERVIEWS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

- 20 male program participants
 - 14 at completion
 - 6 between 4 and 6 months after completion
- 18 partners or ex-partners supported by Women's Advocates
 - 12 at the time of their (ex)partners completion
 - 6 between 4 and 6 months after their (ex)partners completion
- 6 program staff
- 3 women's advocates
- 5 stakeholders

KEY FINDING

Program completion is associated with improved outcomes for program participants and (ex)partners.

FIGURE 1: RESPONSIBLE MEN'S PROGRAM MODEL



1. The core program transitioned to a 22-session format in 2024 after a successful trial in 2023.

ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE OUTCOMES FOR MEN

PROGRAM UPTAKE AND ENGAGEMENT

- 44% of referred men commenced the program.²
 - 44% of commencing men completed the program
 - 63% of men who did not complete the program were exited early by facilitators due to a lack of attendance or engagement*
- * This might occur when men are assessed as using the program for system manipulation.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

- Men were more likely to commence and complete the program if they:
- were in a relationship with the aggrieved
 - had stable housing
 - self-referred.

OUTCOMES

- The program is associated with improved outcomes for participating men. Change described by program participants and (ex)partners included:
- an understanding of what constitutes DFV
 - a recognition of the impact of DFV on (ex)partners and children
 - improved thinking, self-regulation and communication
 - calmer family interactions.

CHANGE JOURNEY

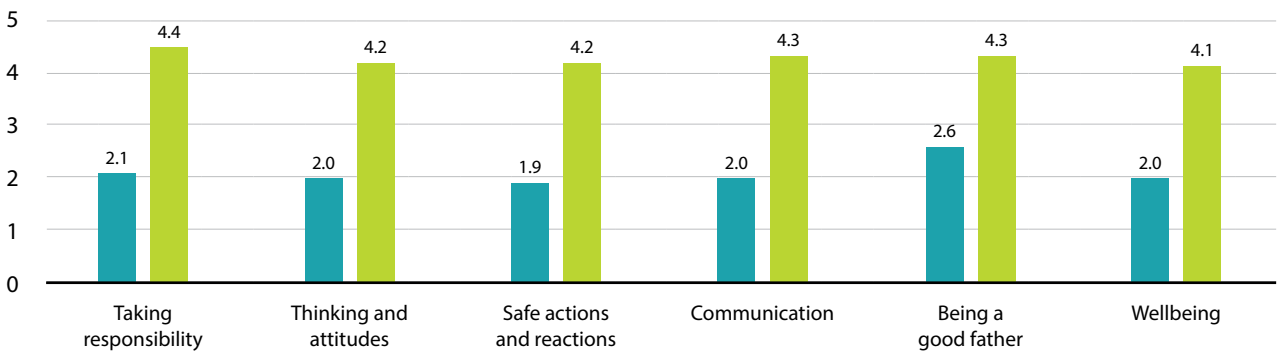
Internal motivation to change was a key factor in men's commitment to program completion and maintenance of behaviour change. At the start of the program, few men recognised the need for change. The shift from external to internal motivation is a process. The program facilitates this by helping men gain insight into abusive behaviours and their responsibility to change these. Those who develop internal motivation are set up to achieve meaningful change.

MAINTENANCE OF CHANGE

4-6 months after program completion, some participants reported sustained improvements. Others reported 'falling back'. Research increasingly recognises setbacks as part of men's journeys of behaviour change, in the same way that relapse is an accepted part of rehabilitation from alcohol and other drug (AOD) use.³ This suggests the need for ongoing support for men using violence to prevent future or ongoing DFV.

“Originally it was something to get myself out of jail ... [so] I could go into court and go 'hey, don't send me to prison I'm trying to be a better person'. Then probably about halfway through, that opinion changed.

FIGURE 2: CHANGE STAR



Change Star data shows a significant difference between men's mean scores between Program Start and Program End (2.1 out of 5 compared to 4.3 out of 5).

■ Program Start ■ Program End

2. Other referrals were inappropriate/unsuitable, or the program was at capacity.

3. Boxall, H. (2023). Reimagining Desistance from Male-Perpetrated Intimate Partner Violence: The Role and Experiences of Female Victim-Survivors. Springer Nature.

SAFETY OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN

The Women's Advocacy component of the program plays a critical role in achieving the overarching goal of improving women and children's safety.

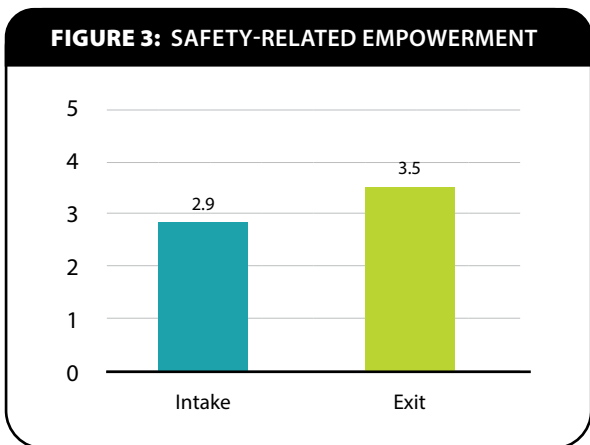
UPTAKE AND ENGAGEMENT

Women's involvement with the program ranged from one-off contact to regular engagement for the duration of their (ex)partners program participation or beyond.

SAFETY-RELATED EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

Outcomes data showed a statistically significant difference in women's safety-related empowerment scores over time. That is, an increased belief in the ability to achieve safety goals with the support available, resulting in a greater sense of control over their lives.⁴

FIGURE 3: SAFETY-RELATED EMPOWERMENT



INFLUENCING FACTORS

Improved outcomes for partners or ex-partners were associated with:

- Men's program participation and completion
- Relationship status – women who remain in a relationship with the program participant reported greater levels of safety and lower rates of revictimisation
- Women's engagement with Women's Advocacy – while positive outcomes were more pronounced for women whose (ex)partners completed the program, engagement with the Women's Advocate had a positive effect even when men did not engage.

This highlights the important role of Women's Advocacy support for victim-survivors as men's behaviour change varies and is beyond women's control.

BENEFITS

Victim-survivors provided overwhelmingly positive feedback. In particular, women valued:

- simply being able to talk to someone
- tangible support and advice, referral pathways, and education around DFV
- seeking and receiving information regarding current support needs
- the valuing of women's agency and the non-judgmental nature of support provided
- feeling heard and validated in their experiences as a victim-survivor.

“ It was validating, it was someone for me to talk to who understood the behaviours... I've somewhat been conditioned to just have to deal with it or... [feel like] no-one's going to care, no-one's going to do anything, no-one's going to help.

4. Goodman, L.A., Thomas, K.A., Heimel, D. (2015). Do We Know That Domestic Violence Programs are Making a Difference? A Guide for Using the Measure of Victim Empowerment Related to Safety (MOVERS).

YFS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first peoples and the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and work. YFS is a proudly inclusive organisation and an ally of the LGBTQIA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy community.

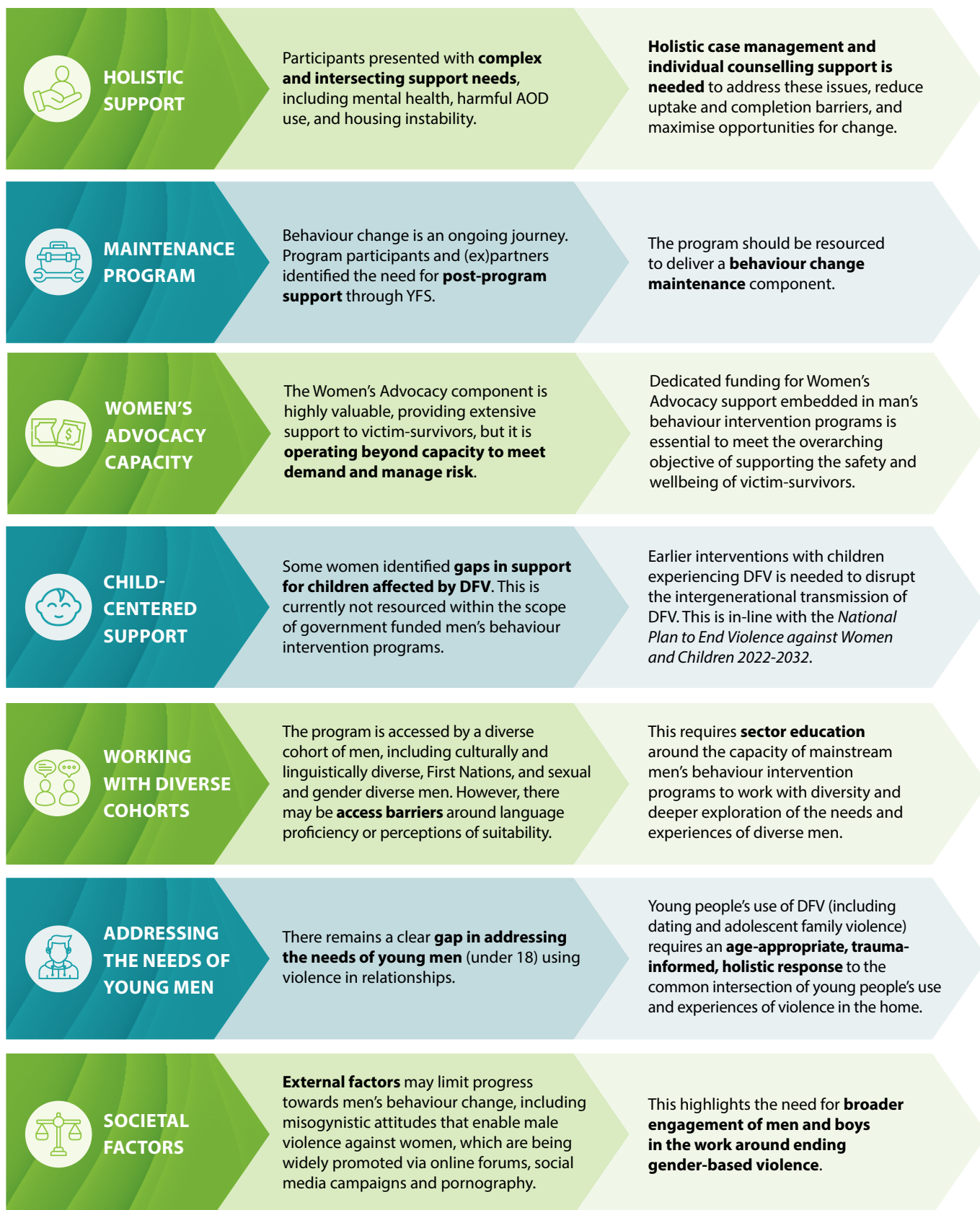
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OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM AND SECTOR ENHANCEMENT

Key learnings offer insights for YFS, other men's behaviour interventions and the DFV sector more broadly.



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