



# IMPRODOVA

## Factsheet

### Cooperation in multiprofessional teams

#### Challenges in working together in multi-professional teams

- Different organizational tasks, visions, values, goals and intentions
- Different rules, regulations and working mechanisms
- Different tools and instruments for assessing and reporting the risk of domestic violence
- The data collected by different professions are not comparable due to differences in the way the data is collected, the way it is stored and the lack of data
- Differences in the understanding of what constitutes domestic violence and the impact on different professions
- Lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various professions
- High staff turnover in organizations impairs communication, as it takes time for trust to develop
- The definitions and terms used differently by individuals and organisations

#### Example: Victims of domestic violence

- "Victims" (criminal justice system)
- "Survivor" (organizations working with victims)
- "Patient" (health system)
- "Tenant" (housing services)
- "Service user" (welfare agencies)
- "Client" (social services for adults).

#### What makes a successful cooperation?

An understanding of the challenges associated with working in a multi-professional team can help to identify components of a successful cooperation.

For effective cooperation between several institutions, it is essential that all partners have a clear and shared vision with clearly formulated and agreed objectives and targets. It is equally important that staff in all organisations are aware of the mission and objectives of the collaboration and have had the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings or questions.

For all services to work effectively, it is important to understand the needs from the perspective of the various stakeholders, including frontline practitioners.

#### Components of successful cross-organizational cooperation

It is essential to adopt a common approach, in which different professions work together to cooperate in an intelligent and effective way.

It is very important to understand and clearly define the roles of the different professionals working in multi-professional teams. Professionals in different organisations and different disciplines bring different but complementary expertise. For example, the expertise, knowledge and skills of a health professional will be completely different in practice from those of a social worker. Similarly, a police officer will have very different experience and knowledge than a domestic violence counsellor.

An adequate and timely exchange of information is very important. There should be clear mechanisms and protocols for the exchange of information between authorities - and these should be encouraged and monitored by management and supported by compatible IT systems. Effective information exchange is based on open communication and cooperation and facilitates the use of a

common language among different professionals.

Joint training events for different professions are also a good strategy for developing a common language.

Monitoring, evaluation and audit are equally important as they help to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for cooperation between different institutions.

## Principles of cooperation in multi-professional teams

Understand that without effective prevention and early intervention, the severity of domestic violence often escalates and it is therefore important to make every effort to identify and support adult and child victims earlier.

- Give priority to the safety of victims and their children when considering interventions and act immediately after the risk of harm becomes known.
- Data on all incidents of domestic violence should be recorded, analysed and shared with the management of institutions that cooperate regularly and appropriately.
- The informed consent of the victim should be obtained when first contacting the services to ensure that information can be exchanged between authorities without undue delay if necessary.
- Respect confidentiality and privacy wherever possible and understand the risks involved in exchanging information in relation to domestic violence.
- Develop and follow common guidelines and procedures to guide the exchange of information between different organisations.
- Ensure that victims are treated with respect and dignity by listening to them and believing their experiences and reassuring them that they are never guilty.
- Enabling victims of domestic violence to make well-informed choices for themselves wherever possible. No

decisions should be made for them without their participation.

- Ensure that services address the different needs of victims and survivors, taking into account their age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It should be recognised that such differences should not be used as an excuse for accepting or engaging in domestic violence or other harmful practices.

## Good practice examples

Various examples of good practice of cooperation in multi-professional teams were identified in Europe within the framework the IMPRODOVA project. Eight of them are introduced on the training platform. One of them is the Berlin Initiative against Violence against Women that is explained a little more detailed in the following.

### Berlin Initiative against Violence against Women (BIG e.V.)

The "Berlin Initiative against Violence against Women" (hereafter: BIG), founded in 1993, is committed to improving the living conditions of women affected by domestic violence and their children.

BIG is committed to creating social and professional conditions in the field of first aid for domestic violence that reduce the incidence of domestic violence and provide better protection and appropriate support for those affected by domestic violence. This includes strengthening the rights of victims and ensuring that abusive men are held accountable for their actions. Only if practices are improved in all relevant areas is this considered possible and sustainable. In order to carry out this work, a multi-professional, well-connected and active network and a cooperative approach is therefore required.

BIG comprises three work units: BIG Coordination, BIG Hotline and BIG Prevention.

The BIG Coordination establishes inter-organisational cooperation by involving all relevant professional groups and social forces involved in domestic violence and creating efficient cooperation structures for them.

It focuses on the three groups involved in domestic violence (victims, children and perpetrators), analyses practices or gaps, and then develops or improves practices that improve and enhance the protection of victims. Their working methods aim to first identify weaknesses and gaps in practice through feedback from victims and the cooperation network. The problems identified relate, for example, to difficulties with authorities or in cooperation, lack of offers for specific target groups, gaps in legislation, etc.

The BIG Coordination Office then invites the experts responsible for a case to work together to develop solutions that can be put into practice in the best case.

### **The cooperation network of the BIG Coordination**

The BIG Coordination has an extremely large and diversified cooperation network in which all relevant actors from various professions and institutions are involved.

- Psychosocial sector: all counselling and intervention centres, projects and initiatives in the context of domestic violence and related areas, all women's shelters and women's shelters in Berlin and many more in Germany, asylum centres, job centres and many more.
- Sector of child and youth welfare: especially youth welfare offices, children's emergency call, girls' emergency call and e.g. a children's theatre
- Health sector: hospitals, trauma clinics, the Berlin Outpatient Clinic for Protection against Violence for documentation of injuries and S.I.G.N.A.L., another coordinating NGO in Berlin, specialised in health sector interventions in cases of sexualised and domestic violence

- Executive: Berlin police officers at various levels from the base to the headquarters
- judicial sector: lawyers, district and public prosecutors, family courts
- Education sector: schools and other educational institutions, including universities
- Political sector: all relevant Senate administrations and -, the State Commission against Violence, Integration Commissioner of the Berlin Senate, Equal Opportunities Commissioner of the districts.

### **Work measures**

- Working groups often meet only for a very specific question or dilemma. An example of such a practice is an expert group dealing with risk assessment and case conferences.
- In contrast to working groups, which are only formed on a transitional basis, there are also a number of regular round tables. The aim is to exchange information on current developments, requirements and challenges in connection with police work.

### **Results of the multiprofessional cooperation**

- The Protection against Violence Act (2002) is an initiative of the BIG Coordination.
- The Berlin definition of domestic violence (2001) has been valid for almost two decades.
- The police's approach to domestic violence includes a proactive approach. This is also anchored in the police quality standards. This is intended to facilitate the victims' access to appropriate support services: With the victim's consent, the Berlin Police pass on the contact details to the BIG Hotline and a counsellor contacts the victim by telephone within a short period of time.
- Particularly in the area of training and further education, much has been achieved through the BIG Coordination, which also offers training and information events. This is important - after all, further

training is an effective means of consolidating the results achieved in practice.

#### Sources

Ali, McGarry (2019): Domestic Violence in Health Contexts: A Guide for Healthcare Professions

Berliner Initiative gegen Gewalt an Frauen (BIG e.V.): <https://www.big-berlin.info/>

HAIP-Netzwerk (Hannoveraner Interventionsprogramm gegen häusliche Gewalt): <https://www.hannover.de/Leben-in-der-Region-Hannover/Verwaltungen-Kommunen/Die-Verwaltung-der-Landeshauptstadt-Hannover/Gleichstellungsbeauftragte-der-Landeshauptstadt-Hannover/Wir-f%C3%BCr-die-B%C3%BCrgerinnen-und-B%C3%BCrger/Hannoversches-Interventionsprogramm/%C3%9Cber-HAIP>