

SUMMARY FINDINGS: the impact of DFM and TheHorseCourse on domestic violence and abuse in Dorset's *Troubled Families*

• Pre and Post measures across 3 approaches plus control •



“TheHorseCourse is highly effective in reducing domestic violence and abuse, with 51% fewer DVA flags at follow up. This compares very favourably with other DVA interventions in the published research literature” Professor Ann Hemingway, Bournemouth University

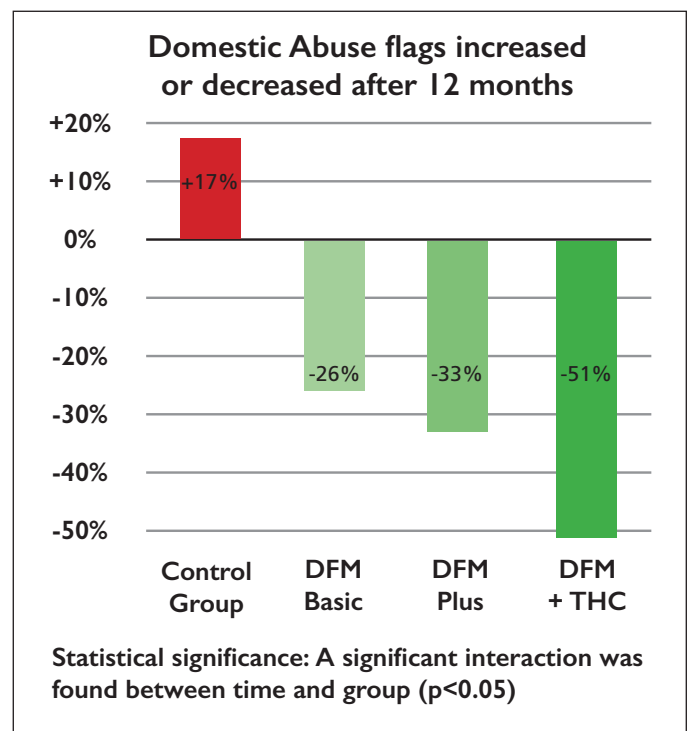
Since 2015 local authorities have received *payment by results* to support *Troubled Families* as set out in central government strategy. The target families are identified through data held by public services as having two or more problem areas, such as: domestic violence and abuse (DVA), worklessness, school absence, vulnerable children, mental & physical health or offending. In Dorset this programme is known as *Dorset Families Matter* or DFM.

This evaluation looked at flags per individual for DVA pre-intervention, and 12 months post. The data was collated by Dorset Council based on Police data and social care intelligence over the preceding six months. This study includes both perpetrators and survivors of DVA.

Those families engaged with DFM are offered lead professional support as a minimum. All support is based on a *whole family working* model, though some individuals may receive more intensive support than others. This study looked at individuals in four distinct groups, based on the support their families received:

- **Control Group:** Identified as meeting *Troubled Families* criteria but not attached to DFM. These families received no DFM support, and had only universal or statutory services available to them.
- **DFM Basic:** Actively engaged with a DFM Lead Professional.
- **DFM Plus:** Received DFM Basic support, plus one or more commissioned packages, such as play therapy or counselling from an external provider (other than TheHorseCourse).
- **DFM + THC:** Received DFM Basic support, plus one or more packages commissioned from TheHorseCourse.

Conclusions: DVA worsened (up 17%) where families facing multiple problems only had input from a universal or statutory service. Additional support from DFM was effective at all levels – with lead professional support only, flags at 12 month follow up were reduced by 26% ; and spending on additional support packages increased the impact. The group receiving packages from **TheHorseCourse** had the largest proportional decrease in DVA flags, down by 51%. TheHorseCourse is an innovative action-based approach focused on improving resilience skills and family dynamics for those with multiple complex needs.



	Total in group	DV flag pre-	DV flag post-	Increase / Decrease	
Control	10569	720	839	119	+17%
DFM Basic	2120	371	276	-95	-26%
DFM Plus	1119	193	130	-63	-33%
DFM + THC	268	49	24	-25	-51%



TheHorseCourse

For further information: aheming@bournemouth.ac.uk

Thanks also to Kate Underhill, DFM Data Analyst Manager & Kezia Sullivan, BU Research Assistant

*photo: THC participant was not part of this study