



A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE STEPPING OUT PROGRAMME

***DELIVERED BY STEPPING STONES
INDEPENDENTLY EVALUATED BY ROCK POOL***

February 2020

The Stepping Out Programme was created to offer support to women at risk of or who have experienced domestic abuse across Central Bedfordshire.

Delivered by experienced Practitioners, support includes:

- Emotional support – building self-esteem / confidence;
- Practical support – finances, next steps, healthy relationships, decision making, accompanying services users to appointments, offering support in professional meetings;
- Information around domestic abuse – increasing knowledge and understanding, implementing strategies to manage risk.

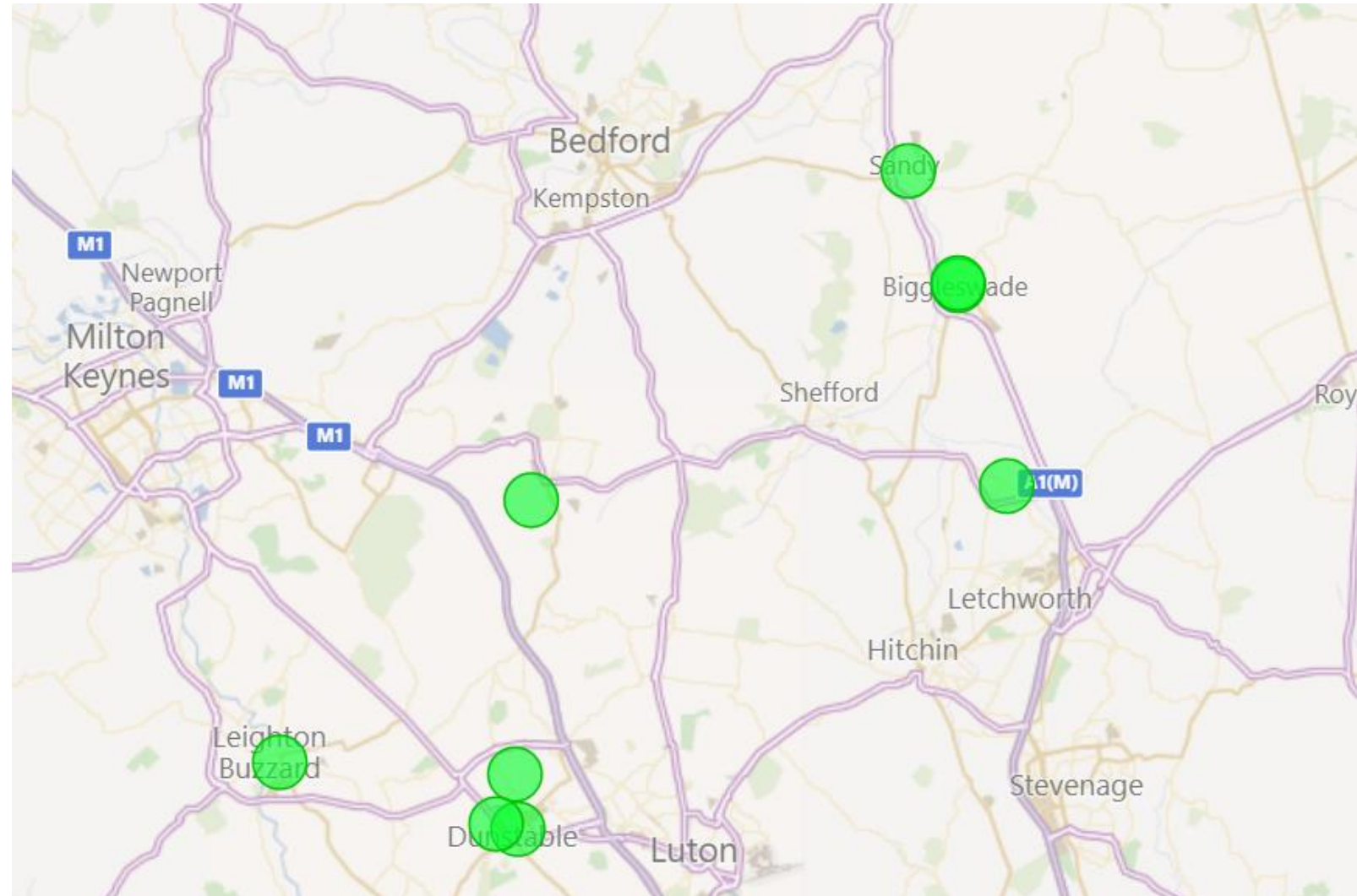
Key highlights of the project from 2017-2019 include:

- Funding in-kind from Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) in the form of office space (Dunstable and Stotfold) and provision of Council laptops.
- Practitioners that are able to access Council systems and are invited to MARAC when necessary.
- Multiple delivery locations covering the whole region.
- Participated in College open days and provided specialist DA/healthy relationship workshops.
- One year (one-off) funding for an additional Practitioner funded by Public Health in CBC.



The service started in 2017 and includes 4 practitioners offering outreach support from various locations across Central Bedfordshire including:

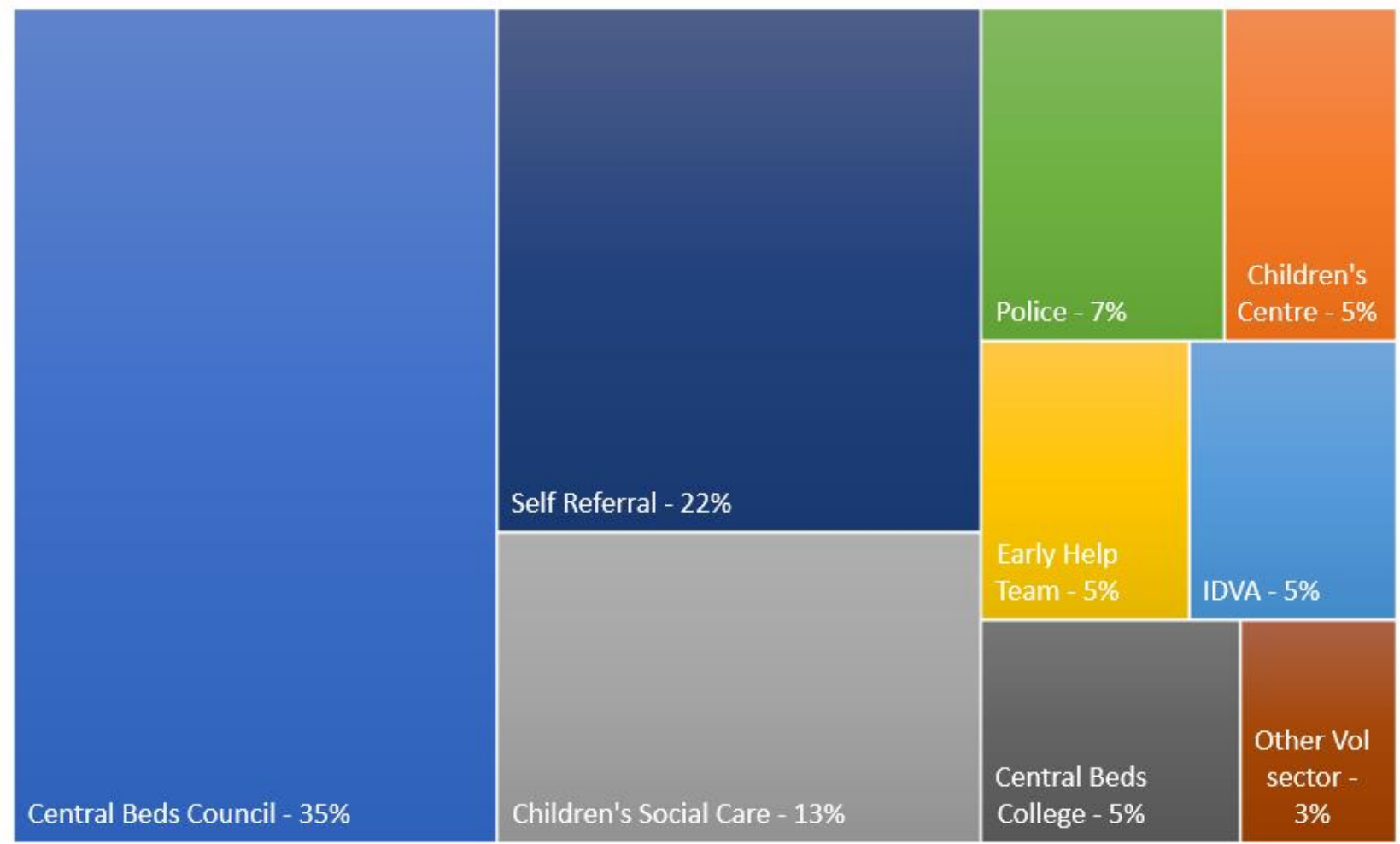
- **Dunstable** (*MASH team, Watling House*)
- **Dunstable** (*Central Beds College*)
- **Houghton Regis** (*Children's Centre*)
- **Leighton Buzzard** (*Library*)
- **Ivel** (*Ivel Valley Medical Centre*)
- **Biggleswade** (*Central Beds offices*)
- **Sandy** (*Helping Hands*)
- **Stotfold** (*The Need Project*)
- **Flitwick** (*The Rufus Centre*)





Source of Referrals

400 Referrals received since September 2017



Just under half of referrals (48%) come from Central Bedfordshire Council or Children's Social Care.

Just over 1 in 5 referrals (22%) are self referrals from victims out in the community.

Other referrals come from a variety of agencies including Police (7%), Children's Centres (5%), Early Help Teams (5%), IDVA's (5%), Central Bedfordshire College (5%), Voluntary Organisations / Charities (3%).

In September 2019 Rock Pool were commissioned by Stepping Stones to formally evaluate the Stepping Out Programme through conducting a series of interviews with service users who have been a part of the programme for at least one year.

The purpose of this qualitative evaluation is to understand the depth of the impact of the Stepping Out Programme on victims of domestic abuse, and understand what works well and what needs to improve.

Six service users were selected at random for telephone interviews and in December 2019 a 30 minute telephone interview was conducted with each of the six service users. This report details the results of those interviews.



THE STEPPING OUT PROGRAMME

QUALITATIVE STUDY RESULTS

We asked six service users how it came about that they started working with Stepping Stones on the Stepping Out programme and if they were given a clear overview of what the programme entailed before it started.

All six participants said they had a clear overview of the programme and what would be involved before they started. Service users were referred through a range of different pathways, including referrals from Social Services, Schools, Children Centres and a refuge. Service users said that referring agencies had a really clear understanding of the Stepping Out programme and helped build a picture of how the programme would benefit them, before they had a initial assessment with Stepping Stones. In most instances the service user said they then went on to have an initial assessment with a worker from Stepping Stones, which helped build an initial relationship before they decided to fully engaging with the service.

 **100%**

Of participants said the referring agency and / or Stepping Stones provided a clear overview before they started the Stepping Out Programme

Referral pathways for the 6 service users




Describing your key worker and how they made you feel

We asked the six service users if they had a key worker that delivered one-to-one sessions, and how they would describe the one-to-one sessions they had and how their key worker made them feel.

All six service users stated they have been having one-to-one sessions with a key worker over a period of between 1-2 years. Sessions were usually weekly (in some occasions twice a week) and after intensive periods of work, sometimes dropped down to one session per fortnight.

The description of the key workers and the work they carry out was overwhelmingly positive across all six service users. Key workers were described as being a 'rock,' 'guardian angel,' and 'saving my life.' They were also described as flexible, calming, understanding and reassuring.

Visit frequency



What the 6 service users said:

- ✓ In constant contact
- ✓ Working together for over a year
- ✓ Meeting every week
- ✓ Meeting once a week
- ✓ Meeting every week
- ✓ Meeting every Monday



Service user 1

"She saved my life"

"Fantastic and understanding"



Service user 2

"Positive impact, empathetic"

"Provided support and confidence building"



Service user 3

"She's my rock, she's incredible"

"Very flexible"



Service user 4

"Don't know what I'd do without her"

"Listens and advises"



Service user 5

"Reassuring and understanding"

"Positive and calming influence"



Service user 6

"My guardian angel"

"Would not have got through the last 2 years without her"

Self-esteem and confidence: Did the programme have a positive impact?



Participants were asked if the programme has had a positive impact on their mental health, particularly their self-esteem and confidence, and importantly have these improvements been sustained over time.

All six service users answered clearly that 'yes' the programme had improved their confidence and self-esteem. 'Absolutely,' 'definitely improved,' 'in a better place now,' were some of the answers provided.

Participants alluded to the fact that confidence wasn't built overnight, and it took time, but once achieved they were able to sustain it. Participants frequently mentioned that even though the intervention may have finished (or reduced in intensity) it helped to know Stepping Stones were only a phone call away, thus giving them the reassurance to move forward without fear of their situation regressing.

Once participant showed a small degree of concern on what would happen when the intervention finished completely; *"Nothing else she could do, can't fault her, slightly worried about closing but she said I can call, text or go see her whenever."*

YES

Service User 1

"Mentally in a better place now"

YES

Service User 2

"Confidence definitely improved, emotionally in a better place."

YES

Service User 3

"For sure. Emotionally its definitely helped. Currently building my confidence so I can go into town."

YES

Service User 4

"Yes it has, but done in the right way. Not overpowering."

YES

Service User 5

"Totally. Absolutely. More confident to do things and learning to deal with it. Working on myself."

YES

Service User 6

"Given me confidence to do different course. Has encouraged me."

Practical Support: Did the programme offer practice support?



Service user 1



Paperwork & Safety Plan



Court Visits



Freedom Programme application



Police Station visits

Service user 3



Letter writing



Court Visits



Police Station visits



Making phone calls

Service user 6



Attending meetings



Attending Police appointments



Letter writing



Filing in forms

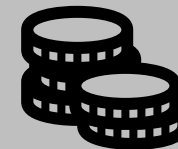
Service user 5



Legal advice & support



Court visits



Finances

Service user 2



Attending meetings

Service user 4



Police visits and paperwork

Service users were asked if the Stepping Out programme offered them any practical support. Rather than being provided with a list of options, participants were asked to express their answers freely in their own words. As demonstrated in the image, service users described a range of answers whereby the programme had helped with the completion and assistance of practical skills and tasks. This commonly included:

- Completing paperwork, filling in forms and letter writing;
- Completing and attending court, meetings and Police station visits;
- Making phone calls and getting legal advice and support.

Useful skills: What have you learnt that you will continue to use?



	Breathing Techniques	Dealing with anxiety techniques	Understanding warning signs	Reflection	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
Service User 1	✓	✓	✓		
Service User 2		✓		✓	
Service User 3	✓				✓
Service User 4				✓	
Service User 5			✓		
Service User 6		✓			

Participants were asked to say what, if any, skills they had learnt through the Stepping Out programme, that they would continue to use in the future. Rather than being provided with a list of options, participants were asked to express their answers freely in their own words. Their answers are summarised in the table above. 3 participants said they had learnt techniques (or similar wording) on how to deal with their anxiety. 2 participants said breathing techniques, 2 participants said understanding warning signs, 2 participants said they had learnt how to reflect, and 1 participant said skills involving Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Participants were asked what they thought about the Stepping Out programme as a whole and if they were glad they worked with Stepping Stones on the Stepping Out programme. All six participants said that the programme made a difference to their lives and they were clearly in a better place mentally and practically since they embarked on the programme.

Participants demonstrated a range of overwhelmingly positive things to say about Stepping Stones and the programme, themes included:

- their **overall approach** (welcoming and understanding, the building is welcoming, they made me feel normal);
- **Consistency and quality** of support and key workers;
- **Confidentiality and trust** – being able to open up.

 **100%**

Of participants said they were glad that they worked with Stepping Stones on the Stepping Out programme and that it made a difference to their lives.



Service user 1

“So welcoming. The building is so welcoming, they make you feel normal. Make you feel at home. They make the time for you and build a relationship with you.”



Service user 2

“For me it’s been the consistency of having the same person and that support network so when you’re in a bad place having someone that can empathise, without her I wouldn’t be where I am today.”



Service user 3

“There was times when I thought it was just me being silly. (Stepping Stones) showed how he was manipulating me and made me realise I was being emotionally blacked mailed. I can see it for what it is now.”



Service user 4

“Where I was to where I am now – I’ve come a long way. Its encouraging. They’ve been brilliant all the way through since the word go. I needed to see someone and they’ve been there. Couldn’t have done it without them.”



Service user 5

“I like the fact its confidential. Can open up. Felt the service was for me. The trust is great. Normally its very hard to build trust with organisations. Can have honest conversations with them. Trustworthy organisation”



Service user 6

“Been amazing, nothing to change, they’ve been my saving grace.”

