

Evaluation of Bsafe project: June 2009

Preamble:

I would like to acknowledge and thank all respondents. It is their preparedness to share their experiences that have given us important information about the impact of Bsafe, the challenges it faces and the important role Bsafe plays in the safety network of the women involved.+

All women, agencies and police respondents were positive about participating in the Evaluation and very supportive of the Bsafe project.

Questionnaires were distributed to Women, Agencies & Police involved in Bsafe. Introductory and follow up phone calls were conducted to maximise responses. Phone Interviews were conducted where appropriate. Others completed the written evaluation and returned evaluation forms.

Gathering the perspectives of all stakeholders gave a clear picture of different facets of the Bsafe project. A near complete picture was gained with each perspective contributing to a rich understanding of what is working well and considerations for improvement. Women that were unable to be contacted were one gap to this picture. Agencies & Police that did not respond were another. I would note that the responses are a reflection of the cohort of Women who were able to participate in the evaluation and that the 9 women who could not be contacted would offer different experiences and considerations.

It is important to note that the 4 primary stakeholders of the Bsafe project come from different perspectives/focus. These are: Women, Police and Support Services & Women's Health Goulburn North East as the coordinating service. This creates diversity in the opinions coming forward but also means that it is important that there is strong education and awareness about the core aims, referral criteria & undertakings of Bsafe.

The Bsafe Database was not ready in time to utilise it for this evaluation. Corrections to contact details, the evaluation responses and a more thorough contact list of women, agencies and police will be able to be established once this database is up and going. The evaluation responses were analysed manually (flicking through, reading & collating responses, and listing responses) to form this report.

This evaluation is drawn from the responses received in the timeframe allowed (the evaluation was conducted over a 1 month period). It is anticipated that a couple more responses will come in over the coming weeks. Given the small numbers of respondents involved in the evaluation it would be important to include these responses in further analysis that could be conducted once evaluation data is entered into the Bsafe database.

It is important to note that for this evaluation data has been compared across the different stages of the Evaluation process (i.e. Women at 3mths have been compared alongside 6mth & Exit). With a larger response rate, or if seeking specific information about a stage of the Bsafe project the responses, once in the Bsafe database, would suit reanalysis.

Any specific operational issues (kit faults, questions regarding exiting the project etc) that you may read about during the report have largely been resolved as part of the Evaluation. The researcher passed on details to Bsafe project coordinator and these were resolved to the best of everyone's abilities.

Key Findings: Women Respondents

27 questionnaires were distributed to Women involved with Bsafe. All received introductory & follow-up phone calls to maximise responses (between 2-6 calls depending on contact rate). 7 completed the questionnaire via a phone interview. 5 completed & returned the questionnaire. 9 women were unable to be contacted. A total of 14 responses were received and form the basis of this section of the report (note on the discrepancy in response numbers: 2 respondents completed both the 6 month & Exit evaluation forms).

Notes were also made by the researcher during phone calls with women. A couple of these have been included; despite the women not returning the evaluation forms, as they had particular relevance to the evaluation focus questions.

The Bsafe Kit:

12 out of 14 women found the kit easy to use overall.

3 out of 14 women experienced difficulties in using the kit. 2 of these were faults within the kit and difficulties in organising repairs.

"The mobile companion never worked from installation..." Mitch04/08

"I had a fault. Which was reported and followed up but it didn't fix the kit. After that there was no follow up. So in my case this was okay because I was out of crisis, but someone in crisis would have been at risk" cdvs03/08.

One respondent description indicates the difficulties lay in initial comprehension/orientation to the kit:

"It was a bit confusing for me. Didn't take it all in initially, couldn't remember numbers. Got stressed by it – felt like I couldn't do it (get it right) if situation was bad. Would rather just have used mobile phone. Worried if I pressed the wrong number the Police would come when it wasn't bad/wasn't needed". gvchs01/08

Overall, the Bsafe kit was easy to use. However respondents described inconvenience of testing the kit, forgetting to take the mobile companion, and the stigma (1 respondent) of having the kit as challenges.

Repair issues were reported by 3 respondents. The common theme was the difficulties in fixing the kit. In all three cases the fault was reported. In 2 cases the repair did not fix the kit. In 1 case it was difficult to make phone contact due to the women's work. She expressed frustration that her mobile number was not called to respond to her query, only her home number and the fault went unattended.

1. Intervention Orders:

100% of women respondents had a current intervention order. The upcoming lapsing/reinstating of the intervention order was issue for one respondent.

3 women had the Intervention Order breached in past 3 months.

2 women respondents had experienced a breach to the intervention order in past 12months.

100% reported a decrease if the number of breaches.

Respondents attribute the decrease in breaches to several factors:

- Impact of Intervention Order, Court Appearance, Good behaviour Bonds etc.

“Jail & rehabilitation periods contributed to decreases in the breaches” Uhchs01/08

“He has gone to court & been convicted. So is serving a good behaviour bond. This and during court kept the issues down coz he knew it would be bad for him in court. My current concern is that incidents may increase if new one (intervention order) is not issued in time. I wonder what will happen after the good behaviour bond expires” Mitch04/08

- Improvement/Stabilisation of situation.

“Son has settled down. Less need to use it” Gvchs07/09.

“I hear good things about ex-husband from mutual friends; like he is in counselling and that. And he’s been good in our recent contacts – asking about the kids, no real pressure”. Cdvs06/09.

- Moved geographical location.
- The impact of the Bsafe kit

100% of respondents felt the Bsafe kit acted as a deterrent. *“Once aware of the kit, not knowing what it is but that I have something, he keeps away” Whgne01/08 Norman*

Each factor identified above plays a role in decreased breaches to Intervention orders. Most respondents mentioned more than one factor. Perhaps the combination of a number of important factors builds a safety network. The Bsafe would seem to be the important conduit to this network.

2. Bsafe kit activations:

8 respondents did not have to activate the Bsafe kit.

1 respondent activated the kit in the last 3 months.

4 respondents activated the kit in the last 12 months. Of these two were accidental activations.

The Police arrived in 4 out of the 5 activations.

"They entered the unit and took him away" Gvchs09/09.

"I accidentally pressed wrong number when they asked me to test it. The Police came. They were good – understanding – but I felt stupid..." gvchs01/08

The Police did not arrive for 1 activation.

"I rang Bsafe, police didn't arrive, I rang them again, still not police, I rang em a third time. But to this day they still haven't come. I've put the kit away. Never turn it back on. What's the use of ringing when the police don't come. I was that upset when it happened. I'm not upset about you lot up in Qld (Vital Call base in Qld), the response in [town name] let me down'. gvchs07/09

4 respondents could have activated the kit, but chose not to.

"I could have...should have maybe?... activated it with the intervention order breach, but I didn't feel threatened" cdvs06/09

"After several phone contacts, noise outside & a 2am contact. For me, its the Grey area around when to use the button. Didn't want to be the girl who cried wolf. Didn't want to look like I was abusing it. I chose to ring & talk to Police instead. It was 1.20min delay until they did a drive by" uhchs01/08

Activation of the Bsafe kits and the responses to the activations was an important learning area. Women reported feeling a need to explain themselves to Police officers who were not familiar with Bsafe. At the same time Women credited Bsafe with improving the relationship between themselves and local police; noting that they did not have to repeat their stories and that having the Bsafe kit proved it was serious.

A sentiment echoed by many of the women respondents was they did not want to be the girl who 'cried wolf' They were concerned that they would be seen to be abusing the Bsafe system. Making sure a situation is serious enough before 'pushing the button' was a concern expressed.

3. Safety:

5 respondents feel Very Safe.

7 respondents feel Safe.

1 respondent has mixed feelings.

1 respondent feels unsafe.

No respondents reported feeling very unsafe.

For the 3 women who responded to the 3mth survey and were asked to think back to their sense of safety before the Bsafe kit:

Gvchs09/09: Very Unsafe before kit. Safe after kit installation.

Svdp01/09 : Very Unsafe before kit. Mixed Feelings after kit installation.

Cdvs06/09: Unsafe before kit. Very Safe after kit installation.

"It makes me feel safer than before" Gvchs09/09.

"Sense of safety. Its not bulletproof but better than nothing. I live isolated – out of town – good to have Bsafe"
Mitch04/08.

Whilst the majority of women reported feeling Safe they still described being wary in certain circumstances and having to adapt/modify their life in some ways. This was demonstrated in responses to the questions exploring a range of aspects of their life; Safety, Housing, Social Networks & Service support.

1. Range of aspects to life - Safety:

"Always wary – particularly down the street. It's a small town and I could run into him or his family"
Mitch04/08.

Gvchs09/09 generally felt safe going about her daily activities. But noted *'I feel unsafe most of the time' at night time.*

"Because Police respond very quickly" cdvs01/08

2. Range of aspects to life: Housing:

8 respondents have been able to remain in their own home and community.

3 respondents have relocated to a home of their own.

1 respondent was living with friends whilst trying to find suitable rental accommodation.

3. Range of aspects to life: Social Networks:

All women had been able to maintain relationships with family and friends.

“Restricted to some degree to avoid contact with perpetrator i.e.: down the street, out at night with friends” Cdvs03/08.

The three respondents that have relocated have moved out of town and the connection to that community has decreased.

4. Range of aspects to life: Access to Services:

Discussions with the women respondents and in the process of trying to contact women showed many women were no longer connected to support services. This was for a number of reasons including; voluntary choice, moving geographical location, current issues no longer relevant to service; feeling let down/not wishing to reengage.

“Reconnecting to agency after period of time not accessing service. Have felt fully supported. They are fantastic” Cdvs03/08

“Not Linked. Family Care ditched me when DHS picked me up. Then DHS ditched me. Don’t feel I could go back. The exit letter from them (Family Care) really upset me” Mitch04/08

“Local police are excellent. My main support at the moment” Mitch04/08.

Been able to access services, but have accessed some and not others. I’m independent. But also because there was no prosecution it sometimes feels though it never happened. Mitch01/08.

This area has been identified as a challenge for the coordination of the Bsafe project and is explored later in the report.

4. Children:

In general; respondents did not describe direct benefits for the children; either describing them as too young (under 2 years of age) to understand or use the kit. For older children (5-15) respondents said the children understood the kit; knew how to use it if the situation required, but had not had to use it. 1 respondent has adult children who felt she was ‘overreacting’ and she needed to tell them “not to set it off just for the hell of it”. Mitch01/08

5. Exiting the Bsafe program:

A number of respondents have exited the Bsafe project in the past 12 months. The consideration of their Exit Evaluations alongside the consideration of respondents contemplating ‘what would need to change for them to consider returning the kit’ gave the following answers:

‘What would need to change for them to consider returning the kit’

“I may return it after a sentence...” Svdp01/09.

“My ex-partner dies” Whgne01/08

Women that chose to exit the Bsafe program in the past 12 months shared the following reasons:

“Moved town, issues still ongoing but I’m away from them now. It was helpful at the start – just knowing someone was always there, but in the end I just wanted to get back to normal”. Mitch01/08

“At the time of recent move it fell into place...I felt safer after good interactions with ex-husband & there’s less abusive outbursts from him. Moved towns and feel stronger in myself” Cdvs06/09

“Felt that there may be other women who need it more than me. Wasn’t getting harassed as much in past. Decided I wanted to have a go and see how I went” Cdvs03/08.

Many respondents felt that there would be other women who would need the kit more than themselves. This was amongst the reasons for all respondents to return the kit. It also featured in the responses of women who had chosen to keep the kit, but would like to return it at some point if their situation changed.

For some women Bsafe was described as a safety net. They felt that they could return the kit in the current circumstance, but if things changed they worried they would regret returning the kit or not be able to re-access the kit

It is unknown how many of the 9 women not able to be contacted for the Evaluation still utilise the Bsafe kit. Several have moved locations so it is suspected they may no longer have an active kit.

18. General:

What difference has having Bsafe kit made to your life?

12 respondents described positive differences.

"Great service. No charge is important. I wouldn't be able to access it if there were costs". Mitch04/08

"Bsafe means I don't have to explain my situation/my story every time. I go straight through to local police and they know my story. It has made a huge difference to everyday tasks. It probably gave me my sanity back". (Uhchs01/08)

"We can sleep easier in our own home and we haven't had to move. The support we receive is wonderful. The Bsafe kit completes the picture and reminds us that we are never alone" Whgne01/08

"I feel stronger in myself. It has helped me make changes in my life" Cdvs06/09.

Two respondents described no differences:

"Not any really. Didn't really rely on it/Didn't really want it. I felt like a drama queen, felt silly, felt too much. But also that's me, coz somehow I've always accepted what's done to me..." Gvchs01/08.

"None really. Police didn't respond" Gvchs07/09.

All respondents would recommend the Bsafe kit to other women.

Overall, the difference the Bsafe kit made to the Women's lives was significant. It gave women a stronger sense of safety. They felt safer & stronger in themselves. The ability to be able to simply 'push a button' and know help was coming was important.

What could be improved?

A range of improvements were noted. Improvements were suggested as a direct response to this question and also encountered throughout the responses to the other questions. Another source of suggestions were discussions between the Evaluation researcher and women to explore possible solutions to identified issues. The Evaluation process itself also gave experience of possible improvements.

Suggestions include:

- Education/Awareness at the point of installation and how to return the kit.
- Usability of the kit:

My power kept going off and on. The kit kept beeping/speaking. "I can't tell you how scary it was, power went off, I was all alone – I live remote, and all of a sudden there is this voice speaking out to me. Okay once I realised it was the kit, but..." Mitch01/08

"In the end I didn't see the point of having to take mobile & the Bsafe with me, would prefer to use mobile. Scared of pushing wrong buttons – I'd probably just run for the phone anyway. Gvchs01/08.

"Only covers Wangaratta, if I leave the area it wont help me, would like it to cover bigger area" cdvs01/08

- Updating Contacting Details/Communication

Being unable to contact 9 women as part of this evaluation is feedback to Bsafe. The contact details for these women did not work (either ringing out, mobile changed, home number disconnected. Many of the women were no longer connected to referring support agency. 1 woman's contact details were known by the agency but could not be shared with Bsafe (note this agency was not the referring agency). Perhaps women received messages but were unable to return phone calls. 16 women required updates to their contact details.

Two respondents described frustrations with the bureaucracy of contact

"The response to my queries. They never responded to the correct number". Mitch04/08

"That's the wrong address. You lot were supposed to change that ages ago. I've told you already" Gvchs07/09.

- Police response:

"Response time still inadequate – you could be dead by the time someone responds. But I guess you can't do much about that. Better response time with Bsafe than 000" Mitch01/08

"On one occasion the police were rude, stood there questioned me". Uhchs01/08

- Adapting the kit to unique circumstances:

Disabilities: Gvchs04/08 has hearing disability and is unable to hear the voices/instructions on the Bsafe. She has turned off the Bsafe and is currently not using it.

When the perpetrator isn't physically present: *"The threats were always just over the phone, or noises near the house, but he never stayed at the house. So I couldn't use the Bsafe, coz no-one would be there when police arrived. I felt like the issue didn't quite suit the system" Gvchs01/08.*

The stigma attached to having the kit: *“Like you need to cover it – say when I was trying to sell my house. My kids thought I was overreacting, going crazy. Just carrying it around a small town – everybody knowing you have one”*. Mitch01/08

Key Findings: Agency / Police Respondents

12 questionnaires were distributed to Bsafe Partnership Agencies & Police. A further 4 were distributed to agencies who had referred Women to Bsafe but whom sit outside the strategic Bsafe Partnership. All received introductory & follow-up phone calls to maximise responses (between 2-6 calls depending on contact rate). A total of 6 responses were received.

There was a range of responses from agencies and police. This perhaps reflected the varying levels of experience each professional had with Bsafe, as well as the specific focus of their support service.

Bsafe kit:

Agencies and Police had heard about Bsafe from a variety of sources; with 5 different sources noted. All respondents noted that the information supplied was sufficient.

Referrals:

The range of referrals varied from 0 referrals (2 respondent) – approx. 50 referrals (1 respondent). The majority of respondents (3) had referred between 2 -4 women to the Bsafe project.

Respondents described their experiences with the Bsafe Kit:

“2 clients described feeling safer, more confident, although still wary. 1 Client moved out of the state as part of long term safety & life planning” Age1.

“Gave victims a much more confident attitude in dealing with domestic violence” Pol1.

There was a certain consistency in the response when professionals were asked to list the criteria for referral. They described:

“Level of violence, persistence of offender” Age1.

“Client wants F/V to stop. Either has or in the process of applying for full intervention order. Previous incidents have been more than minor incidents of verbal disputes. This was the original and successful criteria”. Pol2.

“Look at most serious incidents, background of offender, how often it is occurring” Pol1.

Women’s Safety:

Respondents were asked to reflect on their client’s actual safety & sense of safety before & after receiving the kit.

Actual safety before receiving kit : Ratings of 6-9 (Unsafe – Very Unsafe)

Actual safety after receiving kit: Ratings of 3-4 (Safe)

Sense of safety before receiving kit: Ratings of 7-10 (Unsafe – Very unsafe)

Sense of safety after receiving kit: Ratings of 2-3 (Safe – Very safe)

What has been helpful?

“To know that it is another strategy to deal with persistent offenders, in obtaining actual evidence to have them charged” Pol1.

“Feelings of safety for clients who don’t want contact from the male offenders” Pol2.

“That an urgent response would be provided . Psychological. Additional tangible support for client” Agen1.

What has been Least helpful? Suggestions.

*Pol1 identified a need for updates regarding who still has the Bsafe kits. Respondent suggested **monthly**. Pol1 felt that more regular updates – the suggestion was monthly - (on who is active Bsafe Women) could build the profile of Bsafe and improve awareness within Police Ranks. Perhaps Bsafe could identify an existing Victoria Police communication/update system that would be appropriate to link in with.*

Discussions over whether to allow clients without an exclusion clause in their intervention order to have a B-safe kit. It was set in place from the start that an exclusion clause was necessary for the success of the program. Without an exclusion clause a Bsafe is a wasted resource”. Pol2.

“Nil” Age1.

Key Learning's Table:

Issue	Going well	Work On	Action
<p>Significant number of Women Contact details not current</p>	<p>Where Women are linked with proactive agency</p> <p>Where women are proactive in responding/initiating contact</p>	<p>Women in 'crisis' chaotic situations</p> <p>Women who have exited from the agency who has their contact details</p>	<p>Discussion at committee level re this situation.</p> <p>At referral stage – statement encouraging onus on all participants to update details</p> <p>Enact Bsafe Database. will provide effective format for Contact details.</p>
<p>Agency contact details not current. Changing workers in agency not being familiar with Bsafe.</p>	<p>Once new worker has had opportunity to be orientated to Bsafe</p> <p>Interactions with Bsafe coordinator</p> <p>Information provided about Bsafe had positive response from agency/police.</p>	<p>Situations where there is no hand-over of Bsafe information- leads to decreased applications</p>	<p>'orientation' pack for new workers</p>
<p>Awareness of Rank & File Police members</p>	<p>Some Women value bsafe as a system where they don't have to restate their stories over and over.</p> <p>Most women describe bsafe as improving their</p>	<p>Rank and file officers who do not know about bsafe.</p> <p>Women having to explain Bsafe & restate stories/experiences.</p>	<p>Video</p> <p>Suggestion of monthly updates to be distributed to Police. Increase</p>

	<p>relationship with Police.</p> <p>Key police officer in each station who has a relationship/focus on this program/area.</p>	<p>Due to past experiences/assumptions this area is one of challenge.</p>	<p>profile & maintain awareness.</p>
Police response	<p>Women reported a positive experience with Police response.</p>	<p>Police did not respond to call out. Significant implications to women involved and learning's for Bsafe.</p> <p>Differences in perspective in the criteria for referral; ongoing participation in Bsafe</p>	
Need for a active coordination role.		<p>Dated contact details.</p> <p>Women who have exited & women unable to b contacted are examples of the difficulties of maintaining correct information &</p>	
Women 'finishing up' with agencies (for variety of reasons). This poses challenges for the Coordination of the Bsafe project.	<p>Were Women's contact details remained the same – Bsafe could contact them direct.</p>	<p>Where the Women's contact details changed. Bsafe was unable to contact a significant proportion of women currently.</p>	<p>Emphasis of the role of 'keeping each other in the loop' in relation to address/phone change</p> <p>Agency to let Coordinating Service know when closing with women.</p> <p>Bsafe Database will improve accurate record keeping.</p>
Kit faults & repairs			

<p>Education & Orientation</p>		<p>For Women: At stage of installation and stage of exit.</p> <p>For Women; with specific comprehension/apprehension difficulties.</p>	<p>Referring agencies to Use Orientation Pack with Women.</p> <p>Consider need for on-site visits where appropriate.</p>
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