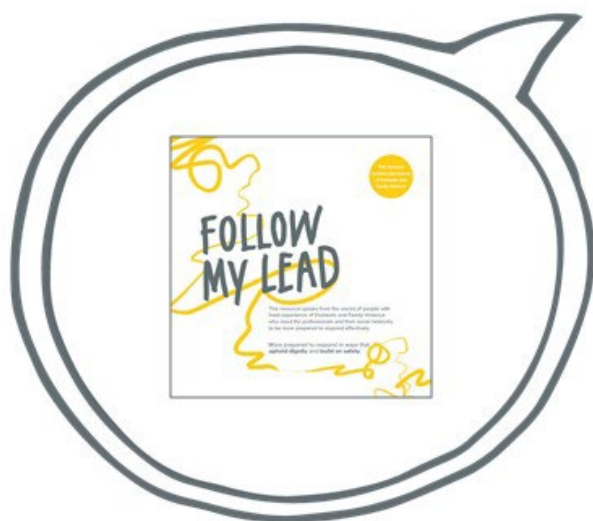


Summary of feedback about prototype version of Follow My Lead - May 2018

# FOLLOW MY LEAD FEEDBACK REPORT



**INSIGHT EXCHANGE**

[www.insightexchange.net](http://www.insightexchange.net)

# Background:

**Follow My Lead** is a resource (in prototype) that echoes the voice of people with lived experience of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) who wish the professionals and their social networks were more prepared to respond effectively. More prepared to respond in ways that uphold dignity and build on safety.

## Who is this resource for?

Any person who may at some point be listening to and responding to their friends, family members, colleagues, peers or to the people who use their service, who are experiencing DFV.

The resource may also have benefits for people who are:

- thinking about their own relationships, safety and their experience of DFV
- seeking support about their own lived (or live) experience of DFV
- working as a service responder to people experiencing DFV.

## Background Rationale:

Being safe is no simple or single decision, or task. When we (any person responding to someone experiencing DFV) are 'aware' of DFV but don't have an understanding of it our responses can be unhelpful and worse, harmful.

Many publications and resources speak about DFV and about the people who experience it. Few publications and resources speak from the first person voice of people with lived experience, outlining what being safe to talk to means, and how significant responses are.

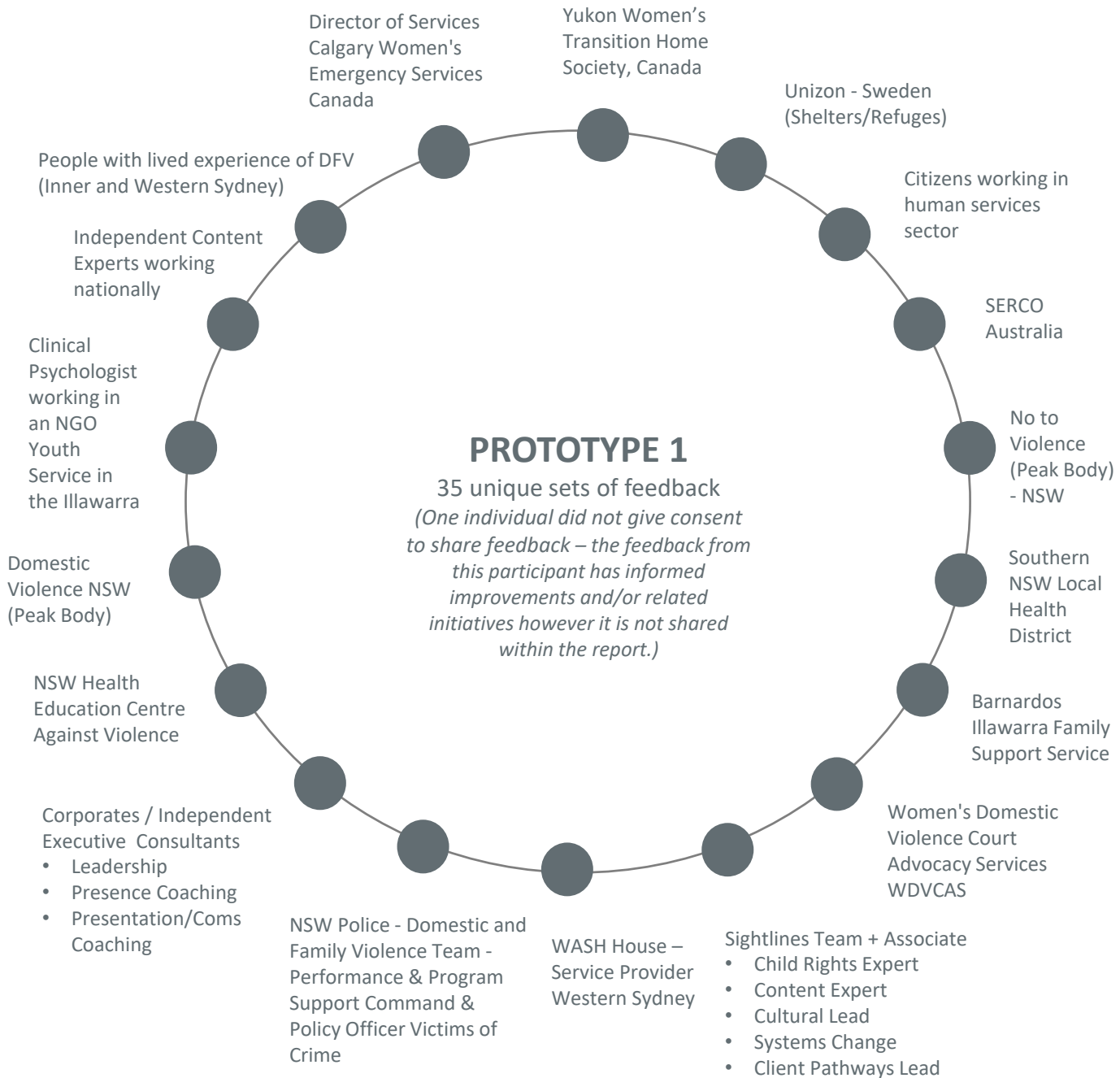
[Domestic Violence Service Management \(DVSM\)](#) is a registered charity whose purpose is to build individual and community safety and wellbeing. DVSM has been listening to and learning from the lived experience of the people it supports, and from others who have chosen to share their experience, and through a project undertaken to understand 'Concepts of Safety'. In addition to these learnings DVSM has been able to draw on insights from literature and from collaborators to develop this resource in an informed way.

DVSM designed *Follow My Lead* to not only build on awareness of what DFV is, it is also designed to build on understanding of lived experience. We hope that *Follow My Lead* will contribute to more positive social and service responses to people experiencing DFV.

## What questions were asked in the feedback process?

1. What do you think of this resource?
2. Who do you wish (if any) had access to this resource? Why?
3. Have you seen a resource like this before (in first person voice, recognising complexity, context, responses and resistance to violence and where the person is leading the responder)?
4. Does anything in this resource worry you as doing harm?
5. From your perspective, is there something important that is missing or could be said better?
6. Anything else?

## Who gave feedback?



- It's really powerful. It's a toolkit that's meant to be read slowly. Having a small number of words on each page helps it to be read slowly. It's a dialogue with the reader. An offering to the reader, an invitation to enhance understanding. As such, the words come from a space of strength but also of risk, of the narrator taking a risk that the words will be read with sensitivity, care, and with self-reflection on behalf of the reader.
- I think it is beautiful, dense, challenging and respectful.
- Thank you so much for this! It is incredible! I felt like it was written for me!
- Excellent resource, innovative and focused.
- I think it is brilliant. I very much appreciate that it emphasizes the complexity of victims' circumstances, the expertise that victims already have, and gets completely away from the simplistic and patronizing ways we have sometimes done "safety planning" with victims in our sector. I am wondering if it would be okay to send this out to my team of managers, to get their feedback? I would pass their feedback to you. Congratulations on this piece of work.
- First of all – thanks for letting me read this. What an incredible text. Really feels like written in first person. And so filled with dignity. Love this – especially the last part "these responses inform how, or if, I reach out to others".
- It's very important and useful for building peoples understanding of the complexities of safety for people who experience DFV. It's a great way to build empathy and improve people's responses to DFV.
- I like the resource.
- I like the first person approach as it helps build understanding between the person experiencing the violence and those supporting them. It values the uniqueness of each person but names the common factors presents in DFV.
- Its great. its good to see something that shows the strength of people with lived experience and is also accessible for bystanders and workers alike.
- This is a valuable resource for women as it is written from a non academic view. From people with a lived experience.
- It was written for middle class white women with an education.
- Great resource to provide to survivors of violence to read in their own time and at their own pace. Great to start a conversation about DV and it isn't invasive and direct to the domestic violence which focussing on their present and future journeys.
- Comprehensive, insightful, honest. It opens up perspectives that I have not seen explored in other material.
- I like how it starts with the concepts of rights, choices, responsibilities. I also like how it builds gradually to convey the complexity of living with DFV and conveys that succinctly.
- It is a great way to convey the complexity of the problem - for the victim and for society.
- Intention and purpose are worthwhile.

- I think the use of first person and the language is good. It evokes a soft caring response in me and is a reminder of the importance of avoiding stereotyping people and to walk along side rather than "educate" them. The middle section is excellent as it made me check myself and my practice in a deeper and more personal way than I tend to do despite having worked in the DFV field for many years.
- I think this resource is a thorough way of helping others to understand that a person experiencing DFV has an overwhelming amount of factors and issues to manage and balance. I appreciate the first person voice.
- It is a such a respectful resource, it speaks for the many victims (women, young people and children) that I have worked with over many years. I love the focus on the dignity and expertise of victims and how important it is that we listen, truly listen and support in a way that is safe, useful and deeply respecting.
- Very timely and needed!
- The 'through their eyes' concept is great. I think it does rely on some pre-existing knowledge of the concepts of resistance and responses and this might make it hard for readers newer to this approach to 'catch on' to what that looks like in real life.
- I think the resource is of utmost value and importance for our community, and in particular for service providers who will often be the first responders to a person who discloses DFV. Outside of specialist DV services, the knowledge and practice of responding to disclosures of DFV varies greatly in appropriateness and efficacy.

This resource can go some way in developing the skills of responders within the Community Services Sector, Government services (including Police, DSS, NDIS, Human Services, FACS etc.) and the broader community as a whole. Whilst the knowledge and understanding of what DFV has increased greatly through our society, we have not yet spoken broadly about how we respond to disclosures of DFV. It is time that the conversation shifts towards developing our roles as responders.

Whilst the whole of society needs to be skilled in responding, the gaps that exist in the community services sector (often the first responders to DFV) must be identified and closed as a first step, so that we can be assured that this response is appropriate no matter where a person experiencing DFV turns.

The way that Child Protection is enmeshed into the responses from Community and Government Services, often blinds responders to the small acts of living and resisting that a victim of DFV takes to ensure her safety and the safety of her children. She is therefore often held accountable for the impact of the violence on her children, and is often made to feel complicit in the harm she and her children have experienced.

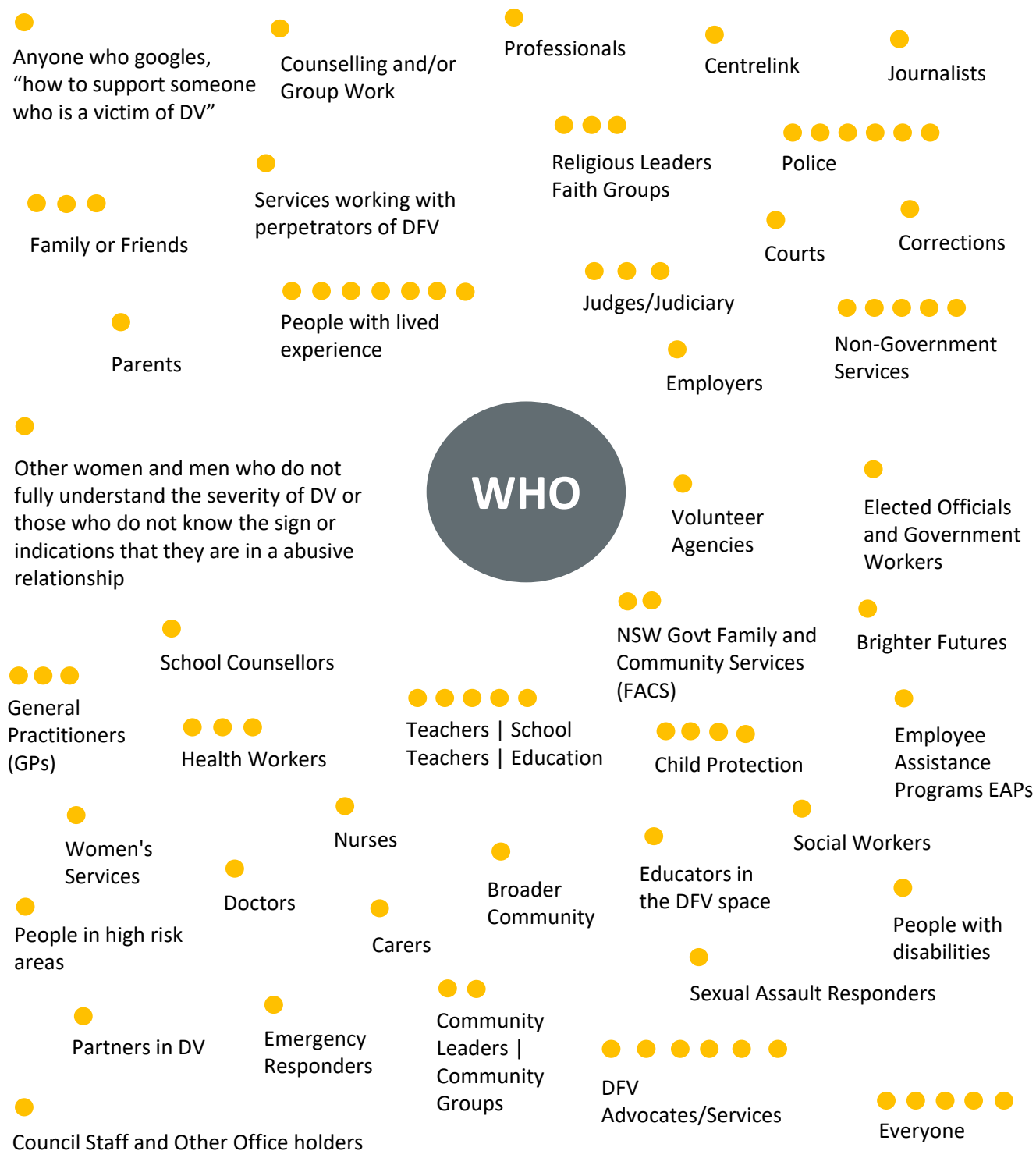
Many non-DFV specialist services exacerbate this by not only ignoring her responses, but demanding she demonstrate 'insight into her decisions' under the guise of encouraging a woman to heal by 'taking responsibility for her part in the violence.' The damage done by ignoring (or not having the capability to identify) the resistance and responses that a victim of DFV further harms the person and does nothing to support her to regain the dignity lost in the unilateral acts of violence she has experienced.

- I think it is well constructed, authentic, meaningful and essential for our society. I particularly like the emphasis on "follow my lead" rather than tell me what to do, which I imagine is the approach most untrained respondents would take.
- I really appreciate what the resource is trying to do by improving people's understanding of the lived experiences of someone experiencing violence in simple terms.
- Love it.

- I think it's great, a really valuable resource that sees the world from the perspective of people experience of violence. It does a great job of explaining the complexity and the many layers of people's lives. It encourages people not just to see the situation from the perspective of lived experience, but also their own responses.
- I think it's great.
- Follow My lead, is helpful in understanding first hand how domestic violence impacts the individual who has experienced it, as well as the family who are involved.
- I think it fills a gap we may not have been aware existed. There are many reports and resources that quote women and children to illustrate key points, and many women's own stories, but I've not seen one which marries the survivor voice with author concept in this way – where the voice leads the concept rather than vice versa.
- Generally good - with few reservations.
- Crucial. Innovative.

## Who do you wish (if any) had access to this resource? Why?

Key: ● Count of item occurring within feedback



- It is very unique, and is such a needed resource. I think it should be read by everyone! (well, almost everyone).
- People in high risk areas.
- Partners for DV.
- Anyone who googles, “how to support someone who is a victim of DV”.
- Anyone who works in services because we want to 'help' and we never listen enough.
- If only this was a tool that everyone engaging with those experiencing DFV had access to.
- Service Providers, in government (e.g. police, courts, corrections) and non-government context.
- Educators in the DFV space.
- It is critical service providers understand the world of victim/survivors so as provide the best service. This involves understanding why victim/survivors act or don't act in the way they do. Often responders feel they have to make the decisions on their knowledge which can allow wrong responses. Being led by the person living the experience can provide richness to how the responder needs or wants to respond.
- I think all persons working with people should have access to this resource. It is so filled with information how violence affect a person's life. Still so it is so basic and easy to read. Which for me is only so positive. If I need to select some groups in the society I would say: social workers, the police, teachers, nurses, doctors and care takers among many.
- Community Leaders, Emergency Responders, DFV advocates, School Teachers, Academics, Health Services, Women's services and organisations, FACS.
- Child protection, police, judges as they have a lot of power in women's lives and some are ill informed.
- Professionals, family/friends. Useful as a resource in counselling or group work.
- Workers in the broader community, parents, judiciary, GPs.
- Everyone.
- I doubt I would give to any one in my purview.
- Yes, to empower survivors of family and domestic violence.
- Everyone needs to understand the complexities and subtleties of Domestic and Family Violence.
- Victims - to help empower them.
- All police, health and education to help them understand the complexity of victims lives.
- Everyone, spread the word.
- I would wish that Health Workers learning to respond well to DFV would have access to this resource. Also the Health Workers who are currently responding to DFV this resource could be a go to resource to reconnect workers with what DFV is actually like to experience and to remind workers to follow the lead of the people they are working with.



- Religious-based Community Services, in particularly those that run father's and men's programs that do not engage with DV Specialist services.
- Police in particular General Duties (front desk) officers who are often a first responder but do not demonstrate the awareness and understanding of DFV that most DVLOs do.
- Child Protection Workers (FACS, Brighter Futures etc.) so that they can use a different language to understand the behaviours and responses of a person who has experienced DFV.
- GPs, Religious Leaders, Teachers, School Counsellors, Council Staffers and other office holders that may also become unwitting first responders to disclosures of DFV.
- Everyone, from clients across the human service system; specialist domestic, family violence and sexual assault services, child protection, the justice system, health, education, elected officials, government workers. Love to see this distributed widely as it raises the voice of those most impacted by coercive controlling, abusive and violence behaviours.
- Community groups: they can benefit from both understanding the context and extension of the issue within their community.
- Faith groups: they do provide counselling and other resources to the victims so it's vital that they listen and understand their stories, concerns and priorities.
- Service providers: to provide contextualised and relevant service to then be able to be effective and efficient.
- Direct service providers to victims or persons who are experiencing DFV and support services.
- Friends and colleagues.
- Human Services practitioners broadly would benefit (including GP's, Police and child protection staff), volunteer agencies (including faith based).
- Domestic Violence Govt & NGO service providers.
- Everyone. Having attended the DVSM conversation forum last year I became attuned to the importance of social response and would like to see that available to everyone.
- I think this resource would be really helpful for people to 'step inside the shoes' and 'minds' of people who are experiencing violence and help people to understand the resistance, strength and capacities of women experiencing violence. This may promote greater respect for the agency and choices of women and discourage people from being judgmental of their decisions.
- This resource should be accessible to people with disabilities and inclusive of their experiences (which I think it tries to be) - particularly in view of the high rates of DFV.
- People who work with people experiencing violence, whose positions are not directly DFV related. E.g. Centrelink, other services.
- People who have friends, family or others who are experiencing violence.
- Myself 8 years ago, because it's more low key and no pressure.
- Other women and men who do not fully understand the severity of DV or those who do not know the sign or indications that they are in a abusive relationship.

- I've just run coercive control workshops and the concepts of resistance, strategizing and dignity were well received, hit a chord, but not previously well understood. I concluded with 2 Venn diagrams – safety/dignity/freedom and belief/knowledge/ capabilities – i.e. what do you need to believe, know and be able to do to promote safety, uphold dignity and support increased freedom/space for action in Liz Kelly's terms. This resource would have been a great addition. For survivors, we know the cycle of violence and Duluth wheels can be catalysts, demonstrating to women that what seems like only her experience is actually a common one and igniting/reinforcing her awareness of her own resistance and dignity.

I think it would need some adaptation to speak directly to survivors. On the same lines, useful for perpetrators, journalists, employers, EAPS, the general public.

Start Today Again is being designed as a flexible resource that can be tailored for different audiences – I wonder about that model for Follow My Lead e.g. Follow My Lead for MBC program leaders, Follow My Lead for EAP providers, Follow My Lead for Health services.

*This participant gave feedback in two parts. The 2<sup>nd</sup> set of feedback included a change in their view/ideas:*

I was suggesting adaptations for each of those groups. But actually I don't think that's right - I wonder if a single version with the same core messages for everyone with 'how to use' advice for the different groups would be better. If we can use it at our services I'd do implications for your practice with clients, your partnership work & your life as a citizen.

## Have you seen a resource like this before?

(in first person voice, recognising complexity, context, responses and resistance to violence and where the person is leading the responder)

Q3



### No - 25

Related Comments:

- I have been in my career for over 25 years and have not seen a resource similar to this.
- No definitely not - this is a unique resource.
- I am familiar with these concepts but have not seen a resource like this.
- No, it is unique and catches your attention!
- I have but not totally focused on what this resource is trying to achieve.
- No, the closest information that I can think of is some of the work around intersectionality/whole of person responses for people that experience DFV, however, these sources don't incorporate resistance to violence and dignity as this one does.



### In part - 4

Related Comments:

- I have used a similar approach overseas when working on a book of stories from those experiencing violence and professionals playing a role in the field. (Nightingale Songs by Kendra)
- No - but that does not mean that it does not exist. These issues could have been part of formal training in social work or similar professional fields.
- I have held workshops/round tables with many women and men with lived experience of domestic/family violence. I have heard much of this in first person however have not stumbled across a resource that captures it all so effectively.



### Yes - 1

Related Comments:

Victorian resource where women can add their stories to the website.

Does anything in this resource worry you as doing harm?  
From your perspective, is there something important that is missing or could be said better?

Q4

Q5

**Overwhelmingly the feedback from people in the service system, wider ecosystem and from people with lived experienced of Domestic and Family Violence (in their previous or current context) was that the resource would not do harm.**

## Practical Improvements – Themes

Practical suggestions were provided to heighten care around the experience and messaging of the resource for the reader. These have been grouped under the following themes and an explanation provided about what action has been taken between the prototype and the live version:

**Theme:** Make the aesthetics clearer and more accessible.

**Action:** The prototype is being re-designed by a creative content development agency with improved fonts, resolution of graphics and print size, and adjustment of the content flow/architecture in order to be clearer up front on who the resource is for and whose 'voice' is represented in the text.

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**Theme:** Provide a warning/indicator to readers about the content contained.

**Action:** The revised copy will more clearly state who the resource is for from the outset i.e. on the cover, along with a support line to speak to included in the National Contacts.

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**Theme:** Be clearer that sometimes the duty of care of the professional might be at odds with the wishes of the person experiencing violence.

**Action:** The revised copy introduces a minimum duty of care about immediate danger, and offers national contact numbers that are available 24/7 so that:

- Responders are more aware of helplines for their own questions and/or for signposting others
- A reader with lived experience of DFV is able to access the national contacts without having to ask/search.

Follow My Lead can support but not prescribe how practitioners balance duty of care and a person's consent/choice/agency any further than the messages already contained in the text.

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**Theme:** Examples would help readers to understand the concepts more and to know experiences are varied.

**Action:** The revised copy emphasises further in the existing text that no experience is representative of all experiences.

Follow My Lead is one resource within Insight Exchange and operates as a conceptual framework that underpins the individual stories collated, produced and shared in the Insight Exchange concept. When Insight Exchange is live, future iterations of Follow My Lead can signpost to these 'lived' experience stories as examples that have been collected in a safe, ethical and supported way using the principles of response based practice in upholding dignity and acts of resistance and response to violence.

**Theme:** Consider greater detail and guidance around what experiences of responses need to be.

**Action:** In an effort to deliberately avoid prescriptive guidance void of context and situation we have not included guidance of this kind in the resource. We are weighing up the pursuit of a complimentary resource, for people with lived (including current experience of Domestic and Family Violence).

The resource would be designed to support individuals in their own way and own time as they reflect on their experiences and steps in a dignified way.

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**Theme:** Provide additional comprehensive training and resources.

**Action:** Not all social responders will have the interest or opportunity to engage in the ‘awareness and training’ experiences offered to service responders in the service system. Whilst DVSM Sightlines is committed to and continues to contribute to broader suites of materials it recognises that this will not be accessed as broadly or as deeply as the scale of readers who may pause to read and reflect on Follow My Lead as a citizen.

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Considerations that DVSM Sightlines has already commenced working toward are;

- (1) Designing resources/materials with **both service and social responders as end users.**
- (2) **Removing cost barriers** to accessing awareness raising, and knowledge building materials.
- (3) Continuing to initiative ***Creating Conversation Events*** that are designed without cost barriers for participants and are targeted to change agents across formal and informal communities. These opportunities to intersect with ideas and others are so that knowledge sharing is more fluid and fosters connections between people, contexts and ideas that hold the potential to redress violence and improve responses.
- (4) Pursue a **range of branding aesthetics for influence** from internal branding or external branding.
  - The message and concept visuals will be preserved, however organisations/communities can engage in alternative branding/aesthetics to act as the ‘messenger’ of the content if that is most useful in leading change with employees/members or constituents/clients/customers.
  - Where an external messenger is most useful the main Insight Exchange branding can be used.
- (5) Explore a **range of formats/modes** for this resource to widen accessibility e.g. audio, multimedia, other languages.

## Practical Improvements – Points

Practical suggestions were provided to heighten care around the experience and messaging of the resource for the reader. These have distilled with an explanation provided about what action has been taken between the prototype and the live version:

Point/s:	Action:
<p>One contributors feedback was contrasting to the majority of all other feedback however their feedback offers points for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was written for middle class white women with an education</li> <li>• I doubt I would give to any one in my purview.</li> </ul>	<p>Some efforts to widen accessibility and reach will be pursued through the aesthetic change, improvements of graphics for accessibility, language improvements informed by people contributing feedback.</p> <p>Our intention is to work with a range of communities/contexts to create versions in other language and branding – there will be insight to develop from this process.</p>
<p>Be clearer that following the lead of the person experiencing violence is not necessarily passive.</p>	<p>The revised copy redresses this assumption in the middle section of the resource.  <i>I may want your quiet support alongside me or I may want you to do something proactive, or a mix of these things.</i></p>
<p>Suggested text edit: <i>That you believe me.</i></p>	<p>Directly included.</p>
<p>Suggested text edit: <i>Whether you will give more weight to what the person abusing me says than what I say, or whether the person abusing me will be able to influence your thinking, make you think differently about me.</i></p>	<p>Directly included.</p>
<p>Acknowledging the readers desire to be helpful.</p>	<p>Inserted as additional text:  <i>As my colleague, peer, neighbour, friend or loved one you most likely want to help me.</i></p>
<p>Suggested text edit: <i>It is my choice whether I am in a relationship and whether I choose to leave it.</i></p>	<p>Directly included.</p>
<p>Making the victims expert experience of the perpetrator more overt and valued - the need to follow their lead in understanding the person or people who are causing her harm.</p>	<p>Inserted as additional text:  <i>I am experienced in anticipating the patterns and tactics that the person abusing me uses against me and the people I care about. I can see how they adjust their tactics to suppress my resistance and responses to their abuse.</i></p>

Point/s:	Action:
More 'victim-survivors' children in the narratives + Making children more visible in the narrative and how sabotage of parenting relationship can occur.	Reference to children increased within existing text. Insert addition to existing sentence – <i>'and undermine my parenting.'</i>
Within Material Basics and Economic Wellbeing Extend the text to include within descriptions of coercion – 'or my ability to work or be financially independent.'	Inserted as <i>'or my ability to work or be financially independent'.</i>
I frequently hear and see that people who experience violence are also responding to the perpetrator's social situation/context and that this information also influences their choices.	Inserted as additional text below about the broader menu of decision making and the consideration of and compassion for others (individuals or communities) even under pressure. <i>The decisions I make and if/how I take steps is influenced by my context, situation and the coercive control I am experiencing. Despite this complexity, and even when under immense pressure, I also consider how my decisions to act or not act, may impact the experiences of people and communities I care about.</i>
Gaps and/or the need to be more explicit in the definition of DFV.	Additions to the DFV Definition include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>reproductive coercion</i></li> <li>• <i>threats of suicide</i></li> <li>• <i>(including children perpetrating violence against their siblings or parents).</i></li> </ul>
Defining 'Social Responder'.	Definition used in DVSM Concepts of Safety Report mirrored in Follow My Lead:  <i>The term 'Social Responder' refers to any individual who responds knowingly or unknowingly to a person experiencing violence or to those using violence (i.e., victims, perpetrators, children). It could include family members, friends or people within institutions or organisations (i.e. police, judges, domestic violence worker, bank clerks etc.)</i>

- You know that I would love to see a child's version (and maybe a young person's version). You might use a different format and process but I wonder what you could do with a perpetrator's voice to reflect their 'twist' on the world.
- Can I show my colleagues?
- Nice work! I like the step by step complexities.
- I think it will be a useful training tool. I believe it will help build rapport between client and worker and also excellent at drawing out strengths.
- The title is great. When I saw the initial email I wanted to read this document immediately. The call to action is front and centre as is the need for ownership.
- Keep up the good work!
- I am again reminded that we live in a society that puts time and money into good resources such as this but still continues to minimise, condone and promote male violence. No resource no matter how good, will stop the violence better than society saying a clear "no, this is unacceptable".
- On the whole, a really excellent resource that sits so well alongside the Insight Exchange resources developed by DVSM. I think that professional development workshops for 'Follow My Lead' would be most beneficial for workers, particularly those who might be challenged by this new way of considering our responses to disclosures of DFV.
- Thank you for the opportunity to feedback about this important resource.
- I love this so much, it speaks to all my years working with victims so eloquently and with such dignity. So much gratitude to you and your colleagues - amazing! This small booklet contains so much wisdom and clarity.
- Courageous work, good luck.
- If I could respectfully suggest a video of DV victims speaking about their experiences (female, children & men, people from group homes) combined with the concepts in the booklet and where they interact may have a better impact. Also, will this resource be available in other languages? If so can I suggest vodcasts, Auslan (captions and non captions) and a Plain English/Easy English version of the resource.
- Thank you to the team at DVSM for all that you do and the barriers you are dissolving.
- I particularly like pages 6, 8, 10, 20, 26 (emphasis on help vs harm), 27 (impact across different areas of life) and 28 ('listen to me and follow my lead. Let me decide what's needed and what's next').
- Great resource, and so fantastic to see its development!
- Great job! I pray many blessings on you all who have put this together.
- The resource is first step to raise awareness how to be actively and without prejudice listening and providing assistance.
- I really like the safety piece, I think people make the assumption that the victim don't know how to keep herself safe. I also like the emotional responses and that they are not a disorder.
- it's very thought provoking so I expect to go on having thoughts.



We would like to thank all contributors, critical friends and communities, who have engaged directly or indirectly with our *Concepts of Safety Project* and this *Follow My Lead* resource.

In particular, we would like to thank **Dr Linda Coates** and **Dr Allan Wade** and their colleagues at the **Centre for Response-Based Practice, Canada** for their visionary and pioneering work on social responses, resistance, language, and the upholding of dignity.

Wade. A. (1997) Small Acts Of Living: Everyday Resistance To Violence And Other Forms Of Oppression. Contemporary Family Therapy 19 (1) March 1997

*Most significantly, our thanks goes to all people with lived experience of domestic and family violence who have courageously shared their insights for the benefit of others.*

**INSIGHT EXCHANGE**  
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