

## Hidden Domestic Violence: Background Information



### Introduction

4NW has organised the seminar on Hidden Domestic Violence, in partnership with the other regional agencies, to support the North West Equality and Diversity Strategy. The seminar also supports the Government's National Indicator target to reduce repeat incidents of domestic violence, which has been prioritised within more than half of the region's Local Area Agreements.

The Government defines domestic violence as "*Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.*" Despite this wide definition much domestic violence is "hidden", for example issues of concern to ethnic minority communities such as so called 'honour based violence', female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Although much attention has been given to improving responses to domestic violence by statutory agencies through better co-ordination, the needs of some groups are still not well understood or supported. The seminar will therefore bring together policy makers and practitioners from statutory and voluntary sector agencies to share knowledge and understanding about domestic violence as it affects older people, people with disabilities, same sex relationships, ethnic minorities and male victims.

### Domestic Violence and Regional Equality & Diversity Strategy

Reducing hate crime and domestic violence is one of the three top priorities in the Regional Equality and Diversity Strategy, which was launched in 2006 after consultation with stakeholders across the North West region. Delivery of this priority is led by Government Office North West.

The revised Equality and Diversity Regional Strategy (launched in September 2008) includes a specific objective to ensure that all services for vulnerable people who experience domestic violence and hate crime are inclusive - in relation to their gender, culture, religion, language, sexuality or disability. Another objective within the E&D Regional Strategy is to build capacity within the domestic violence sector to provide effective advice and support to victims, ensuring the region employs people with the expertise and knowledge to meet specific needs of the diverse community of the North West.

However a recent survey of support services for women who are victims of violence (including rape and other sexual violence), highlighted the North West as one of five regions which are “significantly underserved”, although Liverpool and Manchester were found to have a good range of provision. The survey also found seven specialist services for ethnic minority women in the North West.<sup>1</sup>

### **National statistics**

- There were a total of 342,000 domestic violence incidents in 2007/8 in England and Wales - almost 1,000 a day<sup>2</sup>
- Less than 40% of these incidents were reported to the police<sup>3</sup>
- Domestic violence accounts for nearly 16% of all violent crime
- One in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime
- 89% of those suffering four or more incidents are women
- In 2006/7, there were 57,361 prosecutions for domestic violence, of which 65% were successful<sup>4</sup>. The success rate for prosecutions rose to 71% in April 2008<sup>5</sup>
- The British Crime Survey shows a reduction in domestic violence since 1995, but in 2006-7 domestic violence still claimed 104 lives - 83 women and 21 men<sup>6</sup>
- Three of the most prominent charities helping to tackle domestic violence, Refuge, Women’s Aid Federation of England and Eaves Housing for Women, have a combined income of just £17m. In contrast, the Donkey Sanctuary’s income for 2006 was £20m<sup>7</sup>

### **Gaps in data**

There are currently no regional statistics to compare the incidence of, and conviction rates for, domestic violence in the North West with other regions. However individual police forces publish figures - so for example we know that in Merseyside alone there were 27,000 reported incidents in 2007 equivalent to three every single hour of every single day - but these have not been aggregated on a regional basis.

Work is currently underway to increase the reporting of incidents and reliability of recorded data, but these changes will take time to work through the official recording and reporting systems. The Home Office will collect, collate and audit these statistics from April 2009 and will publish them annually in accordance with the national crime statistics publication timetable.

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<sup>1</sup> Map of the Gaps: the postcode lottery of violence against women support services, End Violence against women and Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Home office statistical bulletin: Crime in England and Wales 2007/8

<sup>3</sup> Home office statistical bulletin: Crime in England and Wales 2007/8

<sup>4</sup> Crown Prosecution Service Violence Against Women Strategy, April 2008

<sup>5</sup> Women’s Changing Lives: priorities for the Ministers for Women One year on progress report, Government Equalities Office, July 2008

<sup>6</sup> Government Equalities Office website, September 2008.

[http://www.equalities.gov.uk/domestic\\_violence/index.htm](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/domestic_violence/index.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Hard knock life, New Philanthropy Capital, April 2008

Meanwhile the National Crime Statistics are published on an annual basis, currently in July, and they cover statistics for the previous April - March period.

There are also gaps in the data about the incidence of domestic violence for different groups, although some progress has been made in recent years. Historically, the Crown Prosecution Service collected data by gender and ethnicity. Disability and religion or belief have been recorded since April 2007; domestic violence cases involving same sex relationships since November 2007 and age has been monitored since April 2008.

## **National and local government context**

Domestic violence has risen up the political agenda over the last decade. In the North West, 12 out of 22 Local Strategic Partnerships have picked a target to reduce repeat incidents of domestic violence as one of their Local Area Agreement targets.

At national level, policy on domestic violence is led by an inter-ministerial group which is chaired by Home Office Minister Baroness Scotland, QC. This group oversees a National Domestic Violence Action plan with five main objectives:

1. To reduce the number of domestic violence-related homicides
2. To reduce the prevalence of domestic violence
3. To increase the rate of reporting for domestic violence
4. To increase the rate of reported domestic violence offences that are brought to justice
5. To ensure that victims of domestic violence are adequately protected and supported nationwide.

As well as having the highest rate of repeat victimisation of any offence, domestic violence often escalates in both seriousness and frequency. Early intervention with high-risk individuals is therefore vital to achieving overall reductions in the most serious forms of violence. This is the strategy behind recent developments such as:

- **Multi agency risk assessment centres (or MARACs)**, which will be established in all areas by 2011. The Local Area Agreement target mentioned above will be based on the percentage reduction in repeat victimisation for those domestic violence cases being managed by a MARAC. Repeat victimisation is defined as within 12 months of the original incident being reported to the MARAC
- **Specialist Domestic Violence Courts** which bring together police, social services, housing, Crown Prosecution Service, probation service, primary care trusts and hospital Accident and Emergency departments along with an **Independent Domestic Violence Adviser**. There are now 20 Specialist Domestic Violence Courts in the North West Region, with a target to cover the whole region by 2010.

## Call for integrated strategy

The End Violence Against Women campaign, supported by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, is calling for an integrated strategy to address rape, forced marriage, stalking, sexual exploitation and trafficking, female genital mutilation and so called “honour” crimes alongside domestic violence. There are connections between these forms of violence, all of which predominantly affect women and are usually committed by men known to the victim.<sup>8</sup>

## The law

The **Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004** (DVCVA 2004) is the first dedicated piece of domestic violence legislation for 30 years. Key provisions include making the breach of a non-molestation order a criminal offence, granting courts the power to impose restraining orders for any offence, on conviction or acquittal and introducing a new offence of 'familial homicide'.

**Review of law on murder:** The Government proposes to abolish the provocation defence, replacing it with two new defences including one for those who kill out of fear of serious violence. The proposed change comes in response to concerns that current law impacts differently on men & women, being too generous to those who kill out of anger and too hard on those who kill out of fear of serious violence. The consultation closes on 20 October. For further information go to <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/cp1908.htm>

**The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007**, which will provide courts with measures to prevent or pre-empt a forced marriage from occurring, will come into force this autumn. Courts will be able to issue Forced Marriage Protection Orders and will have wide discretion in the type of injunction they will be able to make so they can respond effectively to the unique circumstances of the case.

## Issues for specific groups

### *Ethnic minority communities*

Domestic violence can take different forms in different communities and the victims often face additional barriers to accessing support services.

- Within some Asian communities, women are expected to uphold the honour of the family, which may mean putting up with domestic abuse rather than leaving the family home. In extreme cases so-called ‘honour crimes’ can take place, either in the form of assault or killings
- Domestic abuse can occur within a forced marriage, where duress, whether physical or mental, is used to force a marriage to take place (and continue) without the free and valid consent of one or both parties
- Some ethnic minority women are wary of involving the police or other services, because of actual or perceived racism.

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<sup>8</sup> Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations – a template for an integrated strategy on violence against women in the UK, 2008. [www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)

- Migrant women might fear losing the right to stay in this country if they separate from an abusive partner. Their partner might use this threat as part of the abuse.
- Overseas spouses or partners of UK nationals or those with settlement rights in the UK are required to remain in a relationship for a probationary period of two years before they are eligible for indefinite/permanent leave. During the probationary period, women have no recourse to public funds and are not entitled to welfare benefits, council housing or to use publicly funded facilities. Asian women's groups have led campaigns to raise awareness of the needs of domestic violence victims with "no recourse to public funds". Earlier this year, the Government announced a new scheme to provide assistance with housing costs for women in this position

### ***Older women***

It has been estimated that as many as half a million older people are victims of domestic abuse in the UK, although only a minority of such cases will be recorded. There are five main forms of elder abuse; physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial or material abuse and neglect and abandonment.<sup>9</sup> Confusion over the distinction between 'domestic violence' and 'elder abuse' means that the needs of this group are often overlooked.

- Older women might find it difficult to reveal their abuse to a young person.
- Some older women might be embarrassed that they have put up with the abuse for so long, and they might 'talk down' the extent of their experiences.
- Older women might experience abuse from a partner who is also their carer. They might be afraid of losing their home, support and independence – especially if institutional care is the only option.

### ***Disabled people***

Disabled people can experience the same forms of domestic violence as other people but may be more vulnerable. Abuse specific to disabled people includes: the abuser withholding care or undertaking it neglectfully or abusively; removing mobility or sensory devices that are needed for independence and using an impairment to taunt or degrade the individual.

- Disabled women have three times greater odds of experiencing domestic abuse than non-disabled women and for disabled men the odds are two times greater<sup>10</sup>
- If their home has been adapted to meet their care needs, a disabled person may be very reluctant to leave. They may also be physically dependant on the person abusing them.

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<sup>9</sup> Domestic abuse, BMA Board of Science, 2007

<sup>10</sup> Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: findings from the 2004/05 British Crime Survey. Home Office Online Report 12/06

- They might be afraid of being left alone at home or being put in institutional accommodation, but there are few alternative sources of support. Some refuges have adapted facilities, including full wheelchair access, and there is one refuge in London that caters for women with learning difficulties
- Women with learning disabilities might find it difficult to understand information about domestic abuse or to describe their experiences.

### ***Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues***

Partner abuse is as common and as prevalent among same-sex couples as among heterosexual couples and may take different forms.

- Those who have not 'come-out' can be emotionally abused with threats of outing them at work, or to family or friends.
- Violence between women brings up different issues than that between a man and a woman. For example, an abusive woman might not have the same status and power as an abusive man, but she might be more able to access women-only services to trace her partner.
- People are often reluctant to report that they have been experiencing abuse at the hands of a same sex partner, because of assumptions that domestic violence occurs only in heterosexual relationships, fear of not being believed or fear of discrimination.
- People may also experience domestic abuse perpetrated by family members on grounds of their sexual orientation
- If a trans woman were to turn up at a women's refuge, they would have no procedures in place to deal with her, or to be able to deal with other women's possible discomfort with her being there too<sup>11</sup>.

### ***Male victims***

According to the Crown Prosecution Service, men accounted for 95% of all those charged in domestic violence cases and just over 10% of the victims<sup>12</sup>. The same man may appear in the statistics as a victim and as a perpetrator.

- Men who experience abuse from female partners can feel angry, ashamed, depressed, humiliated, helpless, isolated and in some cases, fear<sup>13</sup>
- Male victims can obtain limited help and support from a wide range of agencies but there is a lack of specialist services
- Most men assume that existing domestic violence services are only available to women
- For men experiencing domestic abuse, their personal experience or perception does not equate to the general view and dynamics of domestic violence. Many men who call the Men's advice line describe being unable to make sense of their situation or to find others that have had similar experiences.

<sup>11</sup> Comment on Broken Rainbow website, September 2008

<sup>12</sup> Crown Prosecution Service Violence against women strategy equality impact assessment, April 2008

<sup>13</sup> Men's Advice Line, accessed online, August 2008

## Further information

- **Saving Lives, Reducing Harm, Protecting the Public:** an action plan for reducing violence, 2008-11. Home Office, February 2008
- **National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan:** Annual progress report 2006/7, Home Office, March 2007
- **Sexual violence and abuse action plan,** Home Office, April 2007
- **Tacking violence against women: a cross government narrative.** Government Equalities Office, 2008
- **Violence against women strategy and action plan,** Crown Prosecution Service, April 2008
- **Violence and Abuse action plan,** Department of Health
- **Domestic Violence, a Guide to Civil Remedies and Criminal Sanctions:** available in English, Welsh, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Somali, Chinese, Arabic, Gujarati and Polish. Ministry of Justice, March 2007 available at [www.family-justice-council.org.uk/600.htm](http://www.family-justice-council.org.uk/600.htm)
- **Realising rights, fulfilling obligations:** A template for an integrated strategy on violence against women for the UK, End Violence against Women, July 2008. [www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)
- **Domestic abuse, a handbook for health professionals.** Department of Health, June 2007
- **Violence against women: Hard knock life,** New Philanthropy Capital, April 2008 [www.philanthropycapital.org.uk](http://www.philanthropycapital.org.uk)
- **Map of the gaps: the postcode lottery of violence against women support services,** End Violence against Women, 2007
- **Older women and domestic violence,** Help the Aged, 2004
- **Older women and domestic violence, an overview,** Women's aid
- **Disabled Women and Domestic Violence: Making the Links, An Interim Report for the Women's Aid Federation of England.** Women's Aid, 2008
- **A matter of life and death – the loss of specialist services for Black and Minority Ethnic Women and children experiencing violence,** [www.imkaan.org.uk](http://www.imkaan.org.uk), September 2008
- **North West Regional Equality and Diversity Strategy and Implementation Plan** <http://www.nwrpb.org.uk/documents>

## Useful websites

[www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm](http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm) Home office mini-site with summary of figures on domestic violence and National delivery plan

[www.womensaid.org.uk/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/) Research on different groups can be found on this website, as well as contact details for refuges across the UK

[www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)

[www.caada.org.uk](http://www.caada.org.uk) Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse, a charity which provides accredited training for Independent Domestic Violence Advisers. Resource library online includes section on diversity.

[www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk) Support for lesbians, gay men, bisexual or transsexual people experiencing domestic violence

[www.colourmind.co.uk/](http://www.colourmind.co.uk/) Project developed by the Race Equality Mental Health team in Central Lancashire to raise awareness of domestic violence victims who have no recourse to public funds

[www.mensadviceline.org.uk/](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk/) Helpline 0808 801 0327



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