



THE GREATER GLASGOW

**Training** CONSORTIUM

*Gender Violence: Changing Attitudes, Challenging Perceptions*

# *Good Practice Guidelines*

FOR WORKERS WHO ARE SUPPORTING WOMEN  
WHO ARE LIVING WITH ABUSIVE PARTNERS

*Gender Violence: Changing Attitudes, Challenging Perceptions*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It can often be difficult for workers to know how they can best support a woman who is not yet ready to leave an abusive partner. This document has been put together to highlight why it can be difficult for women to leave an abusive partner and give practical advice to workers on how they can be a powerful source of information and support for women. It draws on available material and agency expertise and is commended as a useful tool to increase workers' awareness and knowledge, and ultimately to improve how we respond to women.

The guidelines were initially developed by the Improving Practice Working Group of the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership and the contribution from that working group is acknowledged. Particular thanks to Isabelle Kerr who wrote the guidelines on behalf of the group; in addition a range of partners in Glasgow have given agreement to including their materials.

These include:

**Glasgow Women's Aid**  
**Rape Crisis Centre in Glasgow**  
**Glasgow City Council**  
**Women's Support Project**

And for the contribution made by:

**Scottish Women's Aid**  
**Rape Crisis Scotland**  
**Leeds Interagency Project**  
**Legal Services Agency**  
**Scottish Refugee Council**

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## INTRODUCTION

This Good Practice Guideline was developed by the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership and the Greater Glasgow Training Consortium as part of their work on improving service responses to women who are living with domestic abuse.

This document is aimed at workers who are engaged in providing direct services to women or who may be supporting women who are living with an abusive partner. We recognise that working with women when abuse is ongoing often presents a challenge for workers and that most literature emphasises intervention directed at women leaving her abuser. But we also need to be aware that leaving an abusive partner is a process that can take women years to achieve and as workers we can have an important part to play in offering women choices, information, support and access to a range of services.

Current Scottish Executive figures for Scotland show that 1 in 5 women in this country will experience domestic abuse at some time in their lives. Police recorded domestic violence incidents in 2004 were 43,678 of which 88% were male perpetrators of violence against women. Fifty two per cent (20,436) of these incidents were repeat offences.<sup>1</sup>

The Scottish Women's Aid Annual Report 2003/2004 records 83,226 requests for information and support, compared to 72,029 in 2002/03. Only a small percentage of the women who requested refuge space could be accommodated, meaning that they had to return to the perpetrator, stay with relatives or seek homeless accommodation.<sup>2</sup> Figures also show that a woman will experience abuse an average of 35 times before seeking help. She will also try to leave an abuser an average of 7 times before she finally manages to leave for good.<sup>3</sup>

This clearly shows that at some time in our professional or personal lives, we may be supporting a woman who is living with an abusive partner. That abuse may be physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial – or very likely a combination of these.

In all the work we do we must ensure that the safety of women and children is at the core of all responses and must remember that in most cases, where children are at risk, the best form of child protection is often protecting the woman and increasing her capacity to keep her children safe. We also need to be sure of our own attitudes to this issue and to be sure that the message we are communicating to women is that it is not their fault – no matter what the circumstances, no-one deserves to be abused.

We also need to be aware that it is often the case that domestic abuse will not be the presenting issue – it is vital that we keep this in mind and be open to all indicators.

Women from marginalised groups may find it even more difficult to access services or to leave an abusive partner. There may be a wide range of reasons for this and it is important that we are aware of the multiple disadvantages that women from minority groups face when living with abuse.

*\* Throughout this booklet the terms domestic abuse and domestic violence are interchangeable.*

# DOMESTIC ABUSE AND GENDER

Violence against women is a universal problem occurring in every culture and social group. It is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women and women are more at risk from men they know – husbands, fathers etc – than from strangers. It is both a consequence and a cause of gender inequality.

In the past 20 years the issue of gender violence has moved up the agendas of governments and agencies across the world but it is still having a significant effect on the lives of women and girls. In 2002 the World Health Organization reported that up to 70 per cent of female murder victims are killed by their male partners.<sup>4</sup>

Domestic abuse can also affect men, but there is a significant gender gap between women and men in terms of quantity of violence and severity of injury and the dynamics of violence between men and women also differ with men often seeking to exert dominance, power and control over women whereas women who physically abuse husbands have often been abused themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Professor Rebecca Dobash PhD, Professor of Social Research in the Department of Applied Social Science at Manchester University and co-author of a number of research papers and books on gender violence states that:

*“There are only a few, if any, cases of women who systematically and severely assault and intimidate male partners over a sustained period of time while the men remain trapped and terrorised within the relationship; the obverse is commonplace.”<sup>6</sup>*

Violence against women has a far deeper impact than the immediate harm caused. It can have devastating consequences for the women who experience it, and a traumatic effect on those who witness it, particularly children.

## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Certain forms of abuse are predominantly used against women or affect women in a manner which is different from men. These are gender specific forms of abuse and include:

- sexual violence
- societal and legal discrimination
- forced prostitution
- trafficking
- refusal of access to contraception
- bride burning
- forced marriage
- forced sterilisation
- forced abortion
- forced female genital mutilation
- enforced nakedness/sexual humiliation.

All of these forms of gender violence are associated with power inequalities between women and men.

In 1995 'eliminating all kinds of violence against women' was one of the key objectives of the Platform of Action adopted by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. No less than three of the twelve strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action (Violence Against Women, Women and Armed Conflict, The Girl Child) are directly related to the elimination of violence against women and girls.<sup>7</sup>

**Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation and is perhaps the most pervasive.**

**Kofi Annan – UN General Secretary**



In 1993 the United Nations offered the first official gendered definition of such abuse when the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and in 1995 the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing acknowledged that:

*“Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women ...”* and that *“Violence against women is*

*one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.”*<sup>8</sup>

And in a commentary in 2002, in the medical journal *‘The Lancet’* asked:

*“Why does violence against women, a massive cause of morbidity and mortality, remain overlooked by governments?”*<sup>9</sup>

In 2004 Amnesty reported that:

*“Violence against women is characteristically under-reported for a number of reasons, including feelings of shame, fear of scepticism, disbelief or further violence. In addition, definitions of the forms of violence vary widely in different countries, making comparisons difficult. Many states lack good reporting systems to determine the prevalence of violence against women. The failure to investigate and expose the true extent of violence allows governments, families and communities to ignore their responsibilities.”*<sup>10</sup>

## NATIONAL

In 2000 the Scottish Executive launched its National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland and identified domestic abuse as *‘one aspect of a range of forms of violence against women’*, recognised that it must be linked to *‘broader gender inequalities’* and *‘understood in its historical context, whereby societies have given greater status, wealth, influence, control and power to men’*.<sup>11</sup>

The Strategy also recognised that domestic abuse is *‘part of a range of behaviours constituting male abuse of this power’* and linked it other forms of male violence against women.

This strategy was supported by the Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund which was launched by the Scottish Executive to provide funding for multi agency initiatives across Scotland that would improve service responses to women and their children.

In 2004 the Scottish Executive launched its National Training Strategy which has resulted in the setting up of 15 Training Consortia across Scotland.

## LOCAL

The Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP) is a gender specific organisation and recognises that gender violence is rooted in the power inequality between women and men. The Partnership works towards ending male violence against women and children by working with partner agencies to bring about improvements in the services which women use and this work is underpinned by the three key themes identified by the Scottish Executive in its National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland – Prevention, Protection and Provision. The GVAWP has a small Support Unit to help drive forward its work.

GVAWP recognises that male violence against women is a serious concern and that women and children are abused regardless of disability, sexuality, class, age or race. Similarly perpetrators can be of any class, age or race. Male violence involves a range of behaviours which can lead to serious and long term adverse effects.

We also acknowledge that women are concerned, not only for their own safety, but also for the safety of others within their community and their family, especially their children. Research, and day to day experience of working with communities, has consistently found that women report high levels of fear of violence by strangers thus restricting their freedom and their ability to take up social, educational and employment opportunities. However, in relation to many types of violence, women are most at risk from men that they know.

Members of the GVAWP are:

**Glasgow City Council**

**Glasgow Homelessness Partnership**

**Jobcentre Plus**

**NHS Greater Glasgow**

**Procurator Fiscal Service**

**Strathclyde Police**

**Women's Voluntary Sector Network Standing Group on Violence Against Women**

The Greater Glasgow Training Consortium is a multi agency group who have responsibility for realising the aims of the National Training Strategy on Domestic Abuse and through training and information, improving agency responses to women experiencing male violence.

PART ONE

# UNDERSTANDING ABUSE



# WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

The National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland 2000 states that:

*“Domestic abuse (as gender based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family or friends).<sup>12</sup>*

Within the context of domestic abuse, many women experience more than one form of abuse and experience abusive acts on more than one occasion. Research has also shown that domestic abuse can begin or escalate during pregnancy.<sup>13</sup>

Domestic abuse can be:

## **Physical abuse:**

- › Being hit with a fist, kicked, dragged, choked, burned
- › Being assaulted with or threatened with a weapon
- › Being denied food, clothing or personal items
- › Restricting movements/locking up

## **Emotional abuse**

- › Being insulted or made to feel bad about oneself
- › Being humiliated in front of others
- › Being intimidated or scared on purpose
- › Being threatened directly
- › Threats being made against children/other family members/pets
- › Isolating from friends and family
- › Being stalked

## **Sexual abuse**

- › Rape
- › Sexual assault
- › Sexual assault with weapons
- › Being prostituted
- › Being made to watch or participate in pornography

Domestic abuse is **NOT**:

Elder abuse, family violence between siblings etc, neighbour disputes, or violence experienced as a result of a burglary or theft inside or outside of the home

### **FACT:**

**In the UK a domestic abuse incident occurs every 20 seconds.**

**BCS Snapshot 2000**

## THE NATURE AND IMPACT OF ABUSE

All forms of abuse are unacceptable, and the impact of any form of abuse on women should never be underestimated. Whether women have experienced emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse and/or physical abuse, their feelings will have been affected and will take time to heal. The longer women have been subjected to abuse the weaker they will feel, and believe themselves to be.

It is therefore important to recognise the cumulative impact of emotional and psychological abuse.

**FACT:**

**In the UK a woman is murdered by her partner or ex-partner every three days.**

**British Crime Survey 2002**

A significant number of women also experience sexual violence from a partner. Research has shown that 1 in 7 women will experience rape in marriage<sup>14</sup> but often a woman won't speak about the sexual violence she is experiencing from her partner because of the shame she is feeling, or perhaps it may be difficult for her to admit that she is being raped by a person who is supposed to love her.

The following categories of abuse show some of the experiences that women have and how it leads to distortion and confusion about their ability to leave the abuser.

### ***Isolation***

Women feel isolated because of the abuse they are experiencing. This isolation may involve making it so awkward for the woman to be in the company of other people that she avoids social situations or locking her in when her abuser goes out.

Some of the feelings that women experience may add to this sense of isolation and may prevent them from telling other people what is happening. For example a woman may feel afraid of what her abuser would do to her if she told others about the abuse, fear that no-one would believe her because he behaves differently with others or fear that the children may be taken from her, a common threat that abusers use.

When women are isolated they are denied the contact with other people and services who could offer them support, comfort and a different perspective to the one the man is forcing upon her.

### ***Disability and Exhaustion***

Abuse disables and exhausts women. This can include experiences of being deprived of sleep or verbal or sexual abuse, being told they are stupid/ugly/mad/bad/a bad mother, or changing demands or expectations. What was acceptable yesterday is not acceptable today.

Some of the coping mechanisms may make women even more exhausted. A woman may go to her doctor and end up even more disabled by taking prescription drugs or she may stop eating to try to please his image of what she 'should' look like. The more disabled and exhausted a woman feels the harder it is to imagine that there is anything she can do to change the situation she is in.

### ***Degradation and Humiliation***

Suffering abuse is degrading to all women who are not free to exercise control over their own feelings. Whether we have experienced domestic abuse or not, we can recognise the impact of the manner in which an abusive man treats a woman, for example publicly humiliating or insulting her by the way he talks to her, not letting her have basic personal items, or forcing her to participate in degrading sexual acts for his pleasure.

Some of the things a woman has to do to cope with the situation may add to her feelings of degradation, for example having to sell her belongings or borrow money, having to tell someone what he has been doing to her or putting on the clothes he has said are stimulating to him and being ridiculed. The more a woman is degraded the more difficult it is for her to get in touch with her sense of self esteem.

### ***Threats***

Abusive men use threats to increase their control over women. Often they get a sense of power when they see the fear the woman feels as a result of their threats which may include telling her that no matter where she goes he will find her, that no one will ever believe her or that if she leaves him he will kill her/kill the children/kill himself/kill the family pet or anyone that helps her or takes her in. She may cut herself off from potential sources of support because she is afraid that he will carry out some of these threats against her if she tries to get help, or to leave him.

### ***Displays of Total Power***

The point at which an abusive man really has total power is when he kills the woman. However, when women are being abused they do feel as if the man has total power. Women who are subjected to abuse do try to gain some control even while feeling so acutely powerless by being raped, experiencing threats to sexually abuse the children or another family member or forcing her into prostitution.

### ***Enforcing Trivial Demands***

In reality there is nothing trivial at all about any aspect of the abuse women experience. However, while they are still living with an abusive man there are things that he demands that may seem less important than the more dangerous attacks on women's mental and physical health. He may tell her what clothes to wear, expect her to provide meals for him when he wants them or expect her to keep the children quiet for him to have peace. Often a woman will try to please the man to avoid more extreme forms of abuse. However, the price she pays may be that she loses control over the smaller aspects of her life.

### ***Occasional Indulgences***

No man who abuses is always abusive. Sometimes he will behave as he did when the relationship was more positive. These indulgences may happen when the man becomes afraid that he has gone too far with his controlling behaviour or be fearful that the woman will leave him. He may take her for a night out, tell her he loves her or promise never to hurt her again. This may remind the woman of the past when the relationship was good and can be very powerful as it has the effect of emotionally confusing the woman and giving her a false sense of security.

### **Distorted/Confused Reality**

This is a result of having experienced some of the things listed under the other headings. Women show the abuse experienced by the way they think and feel. They end up with distorted or confused views about themselves, their future and of the nature of relationships in general and men in particular. Some abused women experience feelings of being a weak person or believe that the abuse isn't that bad. A woman may also believe that he really loves her and that she needs him or couldn't live without him. Most commonly she believes that the abuse is her fault.

Thousands of women each year have very similar feelings and are full of self doubt and self blame. This is a direct result of the abuse women have experienced. Women have not had control over their own lives yet have been held responsible for just about everything that happens to them.<sup>15</sup>

PART TWO

# SUPPORTING WOMEN AND SAFETY PLANNING

# 2

## IF SHE'S NOT READY TO LEAVE

For women who have been living with domestic abuse, leaving an abusive partner is seldom a one off event. It's a process which can take years to achieve and for workers who are supporting women who are going through this process, it can be very challenging and difficult, particularly when a woman is not able to think about leaving the abuser. Concerns about women staying in, or returning to the partner can be brought into perspective by the evidence that shows that many do leave for good.

There are four key stages in the leaving process, which are:

### **Stage 1**

**Failing to limit/control the abuse by different strategies** – a woman may feel that the abuse is escalating/increasing in frequency and that the danger to herself and her children is increasing. A woman may also be experiencing more than one form of abuse and the cumulative effect of employing a range of coping strategies may become overwhelming.

Pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic violence to begin or intensify, and injuries are particularly likely to be the breasts, chest and abdomen. Both the woman and her unborn child are at risk from such violence.

**Domestic Violence: A Resource Manual for Health Care Professionals: Department of Health 2001**

### **Stage 2**

**Defining what is being experienced as 'abuse'** – defining her partner's behaviour as abuse can be particularly difficult for a woman if she has not been experiencing physical abuse. Psychological, emotional, sexual and financial abuse can all be more 'hidden' forms of abuse and can be difficult for women to define. Advertising campaigns in recent years have been successful in highlighting and naming different forms of abuse.

### **Stage 3**

**Allocating responsibility appropriately** – a woman may have been told again and again that her 'failings' are responsible for the abuse she is experiencing, that alcohol, drugs or unemployment is to blame. It may be very difficult for her to recognise that the responsibility for the abuse lies solely with the perpetrator.

### **Stage 4**

**Questioning and re-evaluating the relationship** – ongoing support can be invaluable to a woman through all these stages.

Appropriate safety planning can help a woman to move on to a place of safety when she feels that the time is right for her.

Each agency intervention is part of the process which the woman must go through before she feels strong enough and supported enough to make that break. It must be stressed that a professional's apparently unsuccessful interaction with a woman may be more successful than supposed and that perceived lack of success is not a good reason to withhold support from that woman should she seek help again later.

It should never be assumed that some other agency will be taking action and agencies should be aware that inaction might lead to harm.

On average it takes a woman 7 attempts before she finally manages to leave her abuser for good.<sup>16</sup> Some may have had bad experiences of services, bed and breakfast accommodation, moving to areas where they have no support network and where they are just as isolated as when they were with the abuser.

Women have nothing to be ashamed of if they have been abused. They should be encouraged to talk about what has happened and supported through the complex and difficult decisions they have to take.

It is important that women know that they can access support, advice, information and counselling when they are still living with their abusive partner and some women's organisations will offer this ongoing support by phone, in person or by mail in some cases. You can let women know about these organisations and how to access them but remember that it may be unsafe for women to have written information that the abuser may find.

**Always remember that the safety of the woman and her children, if any, should be at the centre of any work you do or any interventions you take.**



## HOW TO RAISE THE SUBJECT – AND WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT ...

There are many reasons why a woman may be reluctant to raise the issue of domestic abuse with a worker. She may be concerned about the reaction she will get, she may have been told by her abusive partner that he will take her children or that they will be taken from her by social work services (a common threat used by abusers), she may have difficulty naming the abuse or she may be ashamed about her experiences.

Raising the subject of domestic abuse can be very challenging for workers. Some of the reasons workers are reluctant to do so have been stated .....

- ▶ 'I'm not an expert ...'
- ▶ 'It's not in my job remit ...'
- ▶ 'I'd probably do more harm than good ....'
- ▶ 'I might say something wrong ....'
- ▶ 'We don't have the time to give a woman long term support ....'
- ▶ 'She probably wouldn't want to discuss it – it's private ....'

The reality is that women have consistently said that they don't mind being asked, that it gives them 'permission' to speak about their experiences, to be listened to, believed and not judged. If there is a policy of routine enquiry in your agency, this can provide the space for women to disclose in safety.

Other points to remember are ....

### *Have up to date and relevant publicity available*

It is helpful to have information from support organisations on public display so women know that this is a subject they can discuss with you. Relevant addresses and phone numbers should be made

available to enable women to get help with or without your support or knowledge. Be aware that it might not be safe for a woman to have information leaflets or cards in her possession so let her know where she can access the info safely.

### *Be aware*

Be alert to the possibility of domestic abuse if a woman is visibly injured, depressed, nervous etc. No matter what the circumstances or your own prejudices, don't dismiss the possibility.

### *Be approachable*

Be approachable and make listening a priority. Ask open ended non-threatening questions like 'are you having any difficulties at home?' or 'is everything OK at home?' so that she has a choice about whether or not to speak about it.

**Women who suffer domestic abuse are likely to under-report incidents of abuse. In one study, 2 out of 3 women who had defined themselves as victims of domestic violence said that they had not told family, friends or agencies about the abuse.**

**Dominy & Radford (1996) Domestic Violence in Surrey, Surrey Social Services/Roehampton Institute – England**



### ***Reassure her that she is not alone***

Say that this is a problem you have come across before and that is why you are asking. This lets people know they are not the only ones to suffer from domestic abuse.

### ***Dealing with defensiveness***

Don't assume that the woman will be hostile or offended by your questions. She may well be relieved to have someone to confide in. If she is angry and hostile that does not mean you shouldn't have mentioned it. She may come back later and want to discuss it when she is more able to do so.

### ***Collusion***

Statements like those above collude with the abuser. Don't allow yourself to encourage violence through such beliefs or statements. We all have a responsibility to stand against violence. Telling a woman about support available is introducing a choice into her life and allowing her the freedom to make decisions and exercise choice. A woman may minimise the effects of the abuse or be in denial that she is living with abuse and you may only discover a little about her experiences while she gauges your reactions and how much trust she can invest in you.

### ***Look for causes and effects***

If a woman is under stress or injured there have to be reasons for this. Don't settle for the superficial explanation e.g. that someone is nervy, highly strung, moody, defensive etc. People are made, not born this way. Give the woman the opportunity to talk about herself and her feelings in a supportive atmosphere.

## **..... AND HOW TO HELP**

### ***Believe her***

Believe what you are being told. Don't blame the woman for being in this position. Tell her you believe her, that she doesn't have to continue in this situation and that you want to help her.

### ***Don't undermine her***

Don't make her feel inadequate for not having sought assistance sooner. She may have sought help and have been rebuffed before. Leaving may mean a complete change in her life at a time when she is at a low ebb so allow her to go at her own pace and congratulate her on every step she takes.

### ***Control***

Women whose lives have been controlled by abusive men need the space to take control of their own lives. Support her, give her information and allow her to decide what to do.

### ***Confidence building***

Stress the strength she has shown in enduring the abuse and the courage she has shown in coming to you. Let her know you want to help and give her a realistic idea of what support/help you can offer if, and when, she is ready to take it. The confidence an abused woman needs to regain control over her own life will take time to build.

### ***The risks***

Seeking help can be dangerous and very difficult so accept the woman's evaluation of the danger of her situation. Don't impose your subjective evaluation of the situation – you have no way of knowing what she has gone through. Many survivors reveal only a tiny proportion of the abuse they have suffered. The woman may well not trust you with the full details and she may need to feel in control in order to make her own decisions.

### ***Recording***

Make a note of all incidents of domestic abuse when you are informed of them, unless the woman objects. This will be invaluable if the woman later needs it for legal protection etc. Let the woman know why you are recording and the benefits of having this information on record.

### ***Working together***

You can, as a worker, seek advice and support from specialist organisations. Make contact with local groups working on violence against women. Don't feel that you are letting the woman down by not having all the answers. On the contrary, it may inspire confidence in the woman to *jointly* seek information and support.

# RISK ASSESSMENT AND SAFETY PLANNING

## *Safety*

As workers we can be in a position to help a woman protect herself from escalating domestic abuse, even if she is not ready to leave her abusive partner. Developing a safety plan with a woman can help her in several ways:

- ▶ Help the woman and her children to escape the abuser when she feels ready
- ▶ Help the woman and her children to safely visit organisations for advice and support
- ▶ Empower the woman with the knowledge that she is taking back control of her life

The woman's own appraisal of her immediate danger is key to assessing her level of risk and her future safety needs. Any kind of risk assessment must be conducted with the immediate and long term safety of the woman and her children at its centre. It is also important to bear in mind that the woman's level of safety may change and that the safety plan should be revisited to ensure that it is still valid.

It is useful to explore some of the following with women to identify the level of risk they are facing:

- ▶ The nature of the abuse: mental, emotional, physical, sexual, financial
- ▶ How long the abuse has been going on
- ▶ How frightened she is
- ▶ If she has any injuries
- ▶ If she is pregnant
- ▶ If the violence is escalating in terms of severity, recency, frequency
- ▶ How she copes
- ▶ How at risk she thinks she is from violence in the future
- ▶ How at risk she thinks her children are from violence in the future
- ▶ His other violent behaviour, or if he has threatened to kill her
- ▶ If he has access to weapons
- ▶ Previous abuse she may have lived with
- ▶ If she has tried to leave in the past
- ▶ If the perpetrator has mental health issues
- ▶ If the perpetrator is misusing alcohol or drugs
- ▶ If he has abused in previous relationships
- ▶ If he is controlling of others
- ▶ Where the perpetrator is in the Criminal Justice System

## *Confidentiality*

It is also crucial to reassure the woman you are working with about your commitment to confidentiality, assuring her that you will not discuss anything she tells you with her partner, or other members of her family. At the same time however, you should let her know that you cannot maintain that confidentiality if she or her children are in danger or if there are child protection issues.

### **Advocacy**

When women are living with domestic abuse their confidence and self esteem may have been systematically worn down by their experiences and they may feel they want to leave their partner but are unable to cope on their own, that they and their children will be in danger, or that no-one can help them. They may have been told this over and over again by their partner, so it is vital at this time that anything you do to support or advocate for a woman is done with her and not for her. She will have been controlled by her abuser so it is important not to swap one method of control for another.

Some women will have tried to leave on previous occasions and may have knowledge of services or have been in a Women's Aid refuge. For those who do not have this knowledge it may not be appropriate to give women leaflets or lists of contact numbers for support. It may also be useful to work with the woman to plan for her leaving if she or her children are in danger.

Useful advocacy that could be part of the safety planning could include:

- Ensuring she has important documents e.g. bank account details, NI number, passport, birth certificates
- Working with her local Community Casework Team to ensure that when she is ready to leave she has adequate and appropriate accommodation in place
- Helping her to create a support system of friends, family and advocacy workers
- Talking to her about how she can save money if this is possible
- Advising her to keep keys, clothes, children's toys with trusted friends or family members
- Helping her arrange a safe place to go if the situation gets so bad she needs to leave immediately – Women's Aid, a friend's house, a family member
- Talking about a safe time to leave when she decides the time is right, about leaving when he is out, not telling him she is leaving
- Providing her with important telephone numbers
- Talking to her about her children, making sure that, while knowing how to summon help if it is safe to do so, it is not safe, nor their responsibility to intervene
- Ensuring that she knows about legal protection that she can apply for such as Interdicts with Powers of Arrest, Exclusion Orders etc.
- Making her aware of the implications of criminal justice decision e.g. applications for special bail condition or probation orders.

## **Respect**

Respect is an essential element in providing support services for women who have experienced domestic abuse if workers are to establish a trusting and empowering relationship with the woman.

Women should be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity. They should never be blamed for the abuse perpetrated upon them, nor judged by workers. It is vital to remember:

- ▶ Women should get a sympathetic, accepting and non-judgemental service
- ▶ The woman is never to blame for the abuse
- ▶ The woman's experiences are acknowledged and validated
- ▶ Women are treated as individuals and are not stereotyped according to their cultural backgrounds, sexual preferences, religious beliefs or disability, whether they have mental health issues, have been in prison, have addictions or have been working in prostitution.
- ▶ Women should receive a culturally appropriate service
- ▶ Women should receive a good service no matter how many times they have presented themselves to the organisation, or returned to the abuser.

Never underestimate how valuable it can be for women to be listened to, shown respect and feel supported.

## **Support for Workers**

With the statistics shown in this booklet it's clear that some of the workers who are supporting women living with domestic abuse will also be experiencing abuse or will have experienced abuse in the past. If this happens it is important that a worker protects herself and makes sure that there is also support for her.

All workers can access support from agencies such as Women's Aid or Rape Crisis when they are supporting women, and this is also the case if a worker herself needs additional support because of past experiences of abuse. Some of the things to remember are:

- ▶ It's OK to have feelings relating to the abuse you have experienced, but be sure to access support for yourself
- ▶ You may feel powerless but be reassured that the support you are giving the woman is extremely important
- ▶ There are organisations you can speak to if you experience flashbacks – look in the Resources section of these guidelines
- ▶ Try to develop a support system for yourself – you are important so look after yourself.

## WORKING WITH WOMEN FROM MINORITY OR VULNERABLE GROUPS<sup>17</sup>

Domestic abuse as part of a range of abusive behaviours and of the continuum of violence experienced by women throws up many of the same issues for women as rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse and abuse through prostitution. Many women experience some or all of these forms of abuse from partners or ex-partners.

A woman may find it difficult to leave an abusive partner for a range of reasons, for example:

- Her confidence and self esteem may have been eroded so much that she believes she will not be able to cope without him
- He has told her that wherever she goes he will find her and kill her
- She doesn't want to leave him – she just wants the abuse to stop
- She is afraid of leaving her home, her family, her community
- He will not allow her to take the children
- She doesn't know about services that may be able to help her
- She may be reluctant to tell anyone about the abuse because she is ashamed of what has happened to her

Women experience all these feelings and many more; however for women from minority or vulnerable groups, these can be compounded by additional pressures such as discrimination etc.

Some points to consider when working with women from minority or vulnerable groups who are living with domestic abuse:

### Black Women

- Workers need to have an awareness of their own attitudes. We live in a racist culture and it is highly improbable that this does not impact upon our own attitudes and values.
- An awareness of issues facing black and minority ethnic women including racism in society which often acts to limit black women's access to various services.
- Language may prove a barrier in a number of ways and an interpreter may need to be used if women do not speak English.
- In cases of domestic abuse, black and minority ethnic women might feel that they have too much to lose by leaving. For instance, religious or cultural beliefs may forbid divorce. However, it is very unlikely that their community or religion supports violence or abuse.
- It is essential not to make assumptions based on workers' own personal views about non-white cultures. For example, it is wrong to assume that all Asian women have been forced into marriages and that all these marriages are therefore bad.

### *Immigration*

Many women who seek asylum in the UK do so as a result of having experienced gender related persecution. Others may have fled gender based violence in the context of political persecution or a country involved in civil war.

Rape is recognised as a war crime and a weapon of war. Women fearing rape or sexual violence in the context of war or civil war are therefore entitled to international protection if the state cannot guarantee protection.

Women are also vulnerable during their flight and often when they arrive in their country of asylum. Incidences of rape and sexual assault have been continuously reported in the last 10 years, even in UNHCR administered camps. Women in the UK dispersal areas often live in fear of violence and harassment.

The Home Office recently issued a revised policy bulletin (PB70 – available on [http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/applying/national\\_asylum\\_support/stakeholders/policy\\_bulletin/access\\_to\\_support.Maincontent.0008.file.tmp/Policy%20Bulletin%2070\[1\].pdf](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/applying/national_asylum_support/stakeholders/policy_bulletin/access_to_support.Maincontent.0008.file.tmp/Policy%20Bulletin%2070[1].pdf)) to give guidance in National Asylum Support Service (NASS) staff when they receive a report of domestic abuse in connection with a NASS accommodated asylum seeker. This bulletin gives guidance to NASS accommodation providers, one stop services and the voluntary sector regarding their policies and procedures relating to domestic abuse. Support services must be aware of their responsibilities and the procedures set out in PB70.

NASS receives a small number of reports of domestic abuse incidents involving asylum seekers and recognise that domestic abuse is generally under reported. However, the abuse may be reported to other support agencies and accommodation providers who all have a role in responding.

Women who are subject to immigration control will have the same fears about reporting abuse as all other women, for example not being believed, being judged or her partner finding out she has reported the abuse. However, there are additional barriers they face which prevent asylum seeking women from reporting abuse:

- ▶ Fear of homelessness or destitution
- ▶ Fear that she will be removed from the UK
- ▶ Uncertainty about the availability of services and her legal rights
- ▶ Uncertainty about her rights in relation to her children, fear that her children may be taken away by social services or her partner
- ▶ Fear that involving the authorities in her report of domestic abuse may go against her asylum claim

**FACT:**

**In 1993 the World Development Report of the World Bank estimated that “women aged 15 to 44 lose more Discounted Health Years of Life to rape and domestic abuse than to breast cancer, cervical cancer, obstructed labour, heart disease, AIDS, respiratory infections, motor vehicle accidents or war”.**

**World Bank Discussion Paper – The Hidden Health Burden:1993**

It is fundamental that the confidentiality of the woman who reports domestic abuse is protected. To have the confidence to report domestic abuse a woman needs to know:

- ▶ Who will find out what she has disclosed
- ▶ Information will not be passed on without her consent
- ▶ She will have choices about how to protect herself and her children

It is recognised that there will be occasions where a woman reports abuse but is not ready to leave the abuser. A woman may want information and assurance about how she would be treated and what accommodation would be offered to her if she decided to leave. Also, someone may leave and later return and this pattern may be repeated. It is important that a woman is told that if she leaves her partner she may be able to apply for asylum in her own right based on her experiences in her country of origin.

**FACT:**

During war and civil conflict women and girls are often targeted for special forms of violence by men as a way of attacking the enemy.

In Rwanda, systematic and planned rape was used as a weapon of war against women and their families ... almost every adolescent girl who survived the 1994 genocide had been raped.

In East Timor it has been estimated that at least 1,000 women were raped during the post referendum conflict of 1999.

This violence often rebounds doubly against women, first through the direct experience of the violence and its aftermath, and then through the reaction of their families, particularly men, to their status as survivors of sexual crime.

Unifem Gender Factsheet No. 5

**The Two Year Rule<sup>18</sup>**

Under current immigration rules, a woman who has travelled to the UK to enter into marriage or an unmarried relationship with a person settled in the UK can be granted 24 months to stay on the basis of this relationship. The person settled in the UK is called the sponsor and the 24 month period is called the probationary period. A woman can apply for settlement just before the end of the probationary period.

If a relationship breaks down due to domestic abuse during the probationary period the woman may apply for settlement if she meets the criteria for Indefinite Leave to Remain under the Domestic Violence Rule (paragraph 289 of the Immigration Rules). There is a long list of qualifications that apply such as proof that the domestic abuse took place by way of a report to police or pending court hearing.

It is important to note that where these are not available, other agencies can provide acceptable evidence by submitting a letter confirming that they have been involved in the abuse. For example:

- ▶ A letter from a hospital or GP confirming that the applicant has injuries consistent with domestic abuse
- ▶ A letter from social work confirming its involvement in connection with domestic abuse
- ▶ A letter of support or report from a women's refuge

During this 24 month period there is a 'no recourse to public funds' restriction on the leave to stay as a spouse or unmarried partner, meaning that the settled partner must financially support the person coming to the UK or



she must support herself by working. This can be extremely difficult if there are language barriers to getting paid employment.

Children also suffer by the ‘no recourse to public funds’ condition because it prevents women, if they leave, from accessing housing or welfare benefits.

It is important to contact a solicitor as soon as possible, as an interdict granted during the probationary period is the best evidence for the application for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

It is not possible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain and to apply for asylum at the same time.

## Gypsy/Traveller Women

The issues faced by women from gypsy/traveller communities are similar in many ways to those faced by black women living in a predominantly white society. These issues stem from the prejudices of the settled community at large, including agencies which are primarily geared to serve the settled community. Due to lack of awareness of gypsy/traveller culture, systematic discrimination and exclusion, gypsy/traveller women have limited access to much needed support services.

### *Do be aware*

- Ensure that you have information about services that may be able to offer the woman help – but always be aware that she may not be able to read the materials, and that it may be unsafe for her to have written information in her possession.
- Women from the gypsy/traveller community may also have difficulty contacting agencies and may not know that support agencies exist.
- Be aware of the difficulties that the woman who leaves may experience because of attitudes from workers and other people outside her community – she may have tried to leave before and returned because of this.
- Remember that within the gypsy/traveller community marriage is generally viewed as being for life – a woman may feel that she cannot leave her husband.

### *Do make her safety and the safety of her children the top priority*

- Seeking help may be dangerous for a woman and her children so accept the woman’s evaluation of the danger of her situation.
- Women from the gypsy/traveller community may be reluctant to stay in a Women’s Aid refuge because of prejudice from other residents (generally refuges in Scotland have communal living), if she has a large family there may be limited space for her children and there may be difficulty maintaining traditional/ritual standards of cleanliness.
- Record as much as possible and explain why you are recording the information

### *Do believe her*

You may be the first person she has spoken to who is listening to her and taking her fears seriously.

### *Don’t judge her*

- Women from the gypsy/traveller community may be caught between the abusive behaviour they experience from their partners and the experiences of racism they share with them.

## Lesbians

Abuse within a relationship can be a traumatic experience for anyone, but for lesbians or bisexual women there are additional issues which can increase their isolation and make it difficult to leave the relationship.

It has taken a long time and a lot of work, mainly within the women's movement, for society to adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to domestic abuse. We understand the issue is about male power and a male dominated society endorsing aggressive and controlling behaviour from men in relationships. However, if this is the cause of domestic abuse, then why are we hearing about lesbians who have been abused by their partners, and what do we do about it?

Lesbians' sexuality impacts on their experience of abuse. Lesbians can face the same level of abuse as heterosexual women, but have additional issues related to their sexuality. For example:

- ▶ The abusive partner may threaten to 'out' her to family, friends or within the workplace in order to prevent her from leaving, or to make her completely compliant to any demands.
- ▶ Sometimes the abuser will turn the situation around and claim she is the one being abused, confusing the support networks the abused partner may have.
- ▶ Accessing services may either mean lying or hiding the gender of the abusive partner to perceived as a heterosexual, or it can mean 'coming out' which is a major life decision. Lesbians may fear that this could lead to losing their jobs, their children etc.

As a result of homophobia and criticism of their relationships from wider society, lesbians are reluctant to accept that abuse happens within their community. This makes it difficult for women to admit they are being abused and to seek support in helping them end their relationship. It may not be an option to confide in family if they don't acknowledge or know about the relationship. Similarly, within the workplace, if the woman needs to take time off due to physical injuries or mental health issues as a result of the abuse, it can be difficult to admit that her female partner is abusing her.

## Disabled Women

### ***Barriers to Getting Help***

In both the disabled and non-disabled communities, most abuse is perpetrated by a person known to the woman. A disabled woman may depend on her abuser for care and assistance in her everyday life; her abuser may be in total control of her money, access to other people and access to medical care. She may not have access to information about existing support services for women who have experienced violence and may feel that she can't leave her situation to seek refuge because of lack of accessible transport.

Some of the reasons why women with disabilities may not get help include:

- ▶ Family members are often relied upon to take care of someone who is disabled, which is disastrous if the carer is also the abuser.
- ▶ If the abuser is also the caregiver, the woman may be denied information and access to help services.
- ▶ Workers in organisations that offer support to women experiencing domestic abuse may not be trained on issues facing disabled women, and workers in organisations that offer services to disabled people may not be trained on issues around domestic abuse.

While an impairment can make it more difficult for a woman to escape or report abuse, social attitudes towards disabled women are probably a bigger factor in her increased vulnerability to violence. The way in which society views disabled women restricts their options in many ways:

- ▶ Disabled women may be viewed and treated as children, as lacking intelligence
- ▶ Disabled women may be trained to be compliant and are sometimes punished for assertiveness or for challenging authority figures. This is in direct contrast to the street-proofing taught to many children in schools.
- ▶ Disabled women are considered to be non-sexual and are often not given sex education, which can result in an inability to distinguish between abusive behaviour and normal or necessary forms of touching.
- ▶ Disabled women may be considered incompetent witnesses by police and the courts, particularly if they have difficulty or require assistance in communicating; and when they do report abuse they may not be believed.

### ***Violence can cause disability***

Physical violence can result in disability and can cause permanent physical damage. Violence can cause loss of vision, loss of mobility, damage to limbs and loss of hearing. All forms of abuse are emotionally traumatic and can leave psychological scars, from which a woman may take a long time to recover.

Disabled women are vulnerable at all stages in their lives because they are women and because they are disabled. Growing old increases the likelihood of becoming disabled, which can increase the likelihood of abuse.

## **Good Practice in Working with Women in Prostitution**

Part of the process of responding to violence against women is the ongoing identification and naming of forms of violence and the need to review and redefine what should be included within 'male violence against women'. Women who are involved in prostitution are often working to support their own drug habit and possibly their partner's drug habit too. There are combinations of factors which lead to women's involvement in prostitution – drug addiction, homelessness, poverty, trauma from previous sexual abuse and domestic abuse. Women may experience abuse from a partner then go on to experience further abuse through involvement in prostitution.

Some additional issues for women involved in prostitution include:

- Increased barriers for women involved in prostitution, particularly in accessing mainstream services
- Likelihood of previous trauma from abuse
- Drug taking
- Experience of domestic abuse or being prostituted by her partner to feed his drug habit
- Being judged by others in her community or by workers

## Young Women

Young women often experience abuse in dating relationships and a recent study carried out by NHS Health Scotland revealed that 12% of teenagers had reported being physically hurt or frightened during a fight or argument with a partner.

**A study of female drug users in Glasgow found that '71% of women reported lifetime experience of emotional abuse, 65% had at some time been physically abused and 50% reported a history of sexual abuse.'**

**Psychiatric Morbidity among Female Drug Users in Glasgow: Gilchrist, 2002**

Domestic abuse among young women may remain hidden because young women are often inexperienced in relationships and may have a very 'romantic' view of love, particularly in relation to the behaviour of the partner. Young women may experience:

- Jealousy and possessiveness that may be mistaken for love
- Being coerced into unwanted sexual acts – this could involve sex with other men, including prostitution
- Physical violence
- Being isolated from friends
- Threats of violence if she leaves him
- Controlling behaviour
- Being constantly contacted by mobile phone
- Stalking

Lack of experience in relationships may mean that young women will find it difficult to name the abuse and may fear that there will be repercussions from friends and family. Young women may also find it difficult to access services and may not believe that services such as Women's Aid will be able to help.

## Older Women

There are particular issues faced by older women who are experiencing domestic abuse. It is often seen as a problem that affects younger women but women over the age of 50 may have been living with the abuse for a very long time and may be suffering from long term trauma and may find it even more difficult to access services.

Older women may experience a number of barriers to accessing support.

They may:

- ▶ Be unable to name the abuse – particularly in case of psychological or sexual abuse
- ▶ Experience a greater sense of shame about the abuse
- ▶ Have grown up with a culture of silence and acceptance of domestic abuse
- ▶ Feel that it has been going on too long to report it
- ▶ No awareness of services or if they have believe that they are only for women with children
- ▶ Have been disabled by the abuse/the abuser may also be their carer
- ▶ Be economically dependent on the abuser

A briefing paper produced by Health Scotland in 2003 showed that women over 40 made up 22% of the cases of domestic abuse reported to police in Scotland in 2001. They considered this an underestimate of the actual figures as it has been well documented that domestic abuse is the most underreported crime.

It may be extremely difficult for older women to disclose domestic abuse, particularly if they are still living with the abuser. Creating an atmosphere of support, having relevant information and asking direct questions about the woman's life at home may encourage her to access support, or make her feel able to return at a later time to speak about her experiences.<sup>19</sup>

## Additional Guidance for Working with Women from Minority and Vulnerable Groups

### *Working with Interpreters*

For women whose first language is not English, you may require to use an interpreter. An interpreting service should always be offered unless you share the same first language as the woman, or are fluent in her language. Talking about such a sensitive and emotional issue as domestic abuse is very difficult to do in a second language. Below are some of the guidelines to help you select and use an interpreter.

- ▶ Always use a professional interpreter who will be bound by their employer's code of conduct or interpreting standards.
- ▶ Before you begin, ensure that language and dialect match between the woman and interpreter
- ▶ During the session, allow time for introductions, pause frequently, don't use any jargon, use short sentences and be aware that some concepts or technical terms may not translate easily
- ▶ Ensure that you maintain eye contact with the woman and not the interpreter.
- ▶ Ensure that the interpreter has some training around the issue of violence against women. Her training should have covered culturally sensitive awareness, being non judgemental and confidentiality issues.
- ▶ Bear in mind that some women may have good English that enables them to get by in everyday life but may not have the fluency to cope with specific terminology about domestic abuse.
- ▶ Make sure the interpreter understands their role is to interpret, not to advise, censor or summarise what either you or the woman is saying.

- Whenever possible, use a female interpreter. If for any reason a female is not available, do not push the woman to talk about issues which she may feel uncomfortable talking about in front of a man. Try to arrange another time when a female is available and let the woman know that this is not the only time you can speak to her.
- **NEVER** use a child as an interpreter
- Try not to use an interpreter from the woman's local area or with any community associations, either through herself or her family or friends. If you are not sure, ask.

### ***Signing and Loops***

It is important to remember that not all deaf people communicate in BSL (British Sign Language). This will depend on whether the person became deaf as well as other factors such as education, family etc. If the woman is deaf and is proficient in BSL, a BSL interpreter may be required, in which case a lot of the above information on working with interpreters will apply. If the woman is not proficient in BSL it may be that she communicates in sign supported English, finger spelling or a mixture of all. It is important that the interpreter is able to communicate with the woman and extra time may need to be built in to make sure of this. The provision of an induction loop system will be beneficial for women with hearing aids. It is useful therefore if this is provided in at least one room.

PART THREE

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

# 3

## CHILD PROTECTION

### *Understanding the Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children*

Children may become involved in and affected by domestic abuse in a variety of ways including directly observing or overhearing it. However, it is often not appreciated how aware children are of the violence. The majority of children can describe assaults in detail<sup>20</sup> and studies asking where children are during attacks on their mothers have found that the child is in the same or next room in 90% of cases.<sup>21</sup>

Where children have not witnessed the abuse, they may nevertheless experience the effects of fear and intimidation of their mother. The abuser may directly involve the children in the abuse by, for example, forcing them to watch or join in. One third of children try to intervene during attacks on their mothers.<sup>22</sup>

Living with domestic abuse is a form of emotional abuse of children. However, children may also be directly abused in the context of the abuse of their mother. Perpetrators of domestic abuse have been shown to physically abuse their children too. In the context of domestic abuse 40 to 60 per cent of children and young people are also physically assaulted by the perpetrator.<sup>23</sup>

Domestic abuse often commences and/or intensifies during pregnancy and can have a serious effect on the unborn child. A fifth of women in a Home Office study reported violence directed at the unborn child and over a quarter related negative health consequences including miscarriage and birth complications. Women who experience violence had a 50 per cent higher incidence of miscarriage.<sup>24</sup>

A small number of studies have pointed to sexual abuse of children in the context of domestic abuse. Thirty per cent of women living in refuges in the Republic of Ireland had concerns about confirmed or suspected sexual abuse of their children by former partners.<sup>25</sup>

**In 40% - 60% of cases of domestic abuse child abuse is also occurring.**

**Stark & Flitcraft 1998**

In 1992 the Women's Support Project in Glasgow undertook a piece of research on the links between child sexual abuse and domestic abuse. They discovered that of the twenty women who were interviewed whose children had been abused by the father or father figure, all had suffered some form of domestic abuse.<sup>26</sup>

Living with domestic abuse and leaving it affects individual children and young people differently. Young people have described feelings of guilt, fear, anxiety, confusion, anger and helplessness. These feelings in turn manifest themselves in many ways including, for example, bedwetting, sleep disturbances, stress related illnesses such as asthma and eczema, depression, low self esteem, self harm, aggression and withdrawal. These are understandable reactions to emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse as well as possible changes in material circumstances at home or school.

Connections between domestic abuse and forms of both physical and learning disability clearly show the impact of the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of young people living with domestic abuse. Support is a vital factor in influencing how children survive and cope with abuse.

Many instances of child abuse and neglect result from contact with fathers after separation.<sup>27</sup> Reports of enquiries into child killings in the UK indicate a context of domestic abuse in a large proportion of cases in which children have died as a result of physical abuse.<sup>28</sup>



Research carried out in 2001 showed children and young people have a high awareness of incidences of domestic abuse and are often present and involved when this is taking place. It clearly shows the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.<sup>29</sup>

**Awareness:**

The study found, as have other studies, that the children were aware of what was happening in their households. Some children were able to reflect on their limited awareness when they were younger, and their gradual realisation of what was actually happening. The range of awareness from knowing that something was wrong to full understanding, as you would expect was linked to age and to what they actually saw. This finding is important because so often mothers believe that they have hidden what is happening from their children.

**Safety:**

A major impact of living with domestic violence was on these children's sense of safety and the actions they took to protect themselves from what was happening. Some locked themselves in their bedrooms or hid under bedclothes, some left the house. Where they could not get away, they attempted to shut out what was happening, and importantly - a demonstration of the fear these children lived with - they kept very still so as not to draw attention to themselves.

**Fear:**

Some of the children reported effects which we would expect to find in those living with fear on a daily basis - what some have referred to as living with domestic terrorism - sleeplessness, bedwetting and nightmares. For some, these effects were long lasting and required some level of professional intervention. Where the children no longer had any contact with the perpetrator they felt safe and freedom from fear. The opportunity to form a better relationship with their mothers were notable gains for many. However, where contact was ongoing the level of fear, although reduced, was still present and the children reported feelings of insecurity and of not being safe.

**Loss:**

The sense of displacement and loss that fleeing from violence produces should not be underestimated. Children hugely resent having to leave their home, possessions, pets, friends - literally everything that gave their daily lives structure, meaning and consistency - in order to be safe. This entirely justified resentment (children rightly ask why should they have to leave everything when they have done nothing wrong), expanded into anger and rage when the relative safety they had found. The limited comfort of reconstructed daily routines was disrupted yet again by the abusive man's actions through his on-going attempts at contact during post-separation contact or where the family had reunited.

These are the some of the main effects of domestic violence on children found in earlier research:

Internalised distress:      depression; withdrawal; anxiety/fear;

Externalised distress:      aggression; difficult behaviour;

Stress indicators:          problems with sleeping; problems with eating; problems with toileting;  
lower achievement at school; truanting; drug/alcohol abuse.

All of these effects were found in the sample of children in the study. Mothers tended to emphasise the psychological impacts that have been reported elsewhere in the literature<sup>30</sup>: becoming withdrawn; fearfulness and anxiety; nightmares and disturbed sleep; becoming overly compliant or aggressive (both seen by mothers as applying equally to boys and girls). The accounts of developmental delays and withdrawal were most noticeable when mothers discussed younger children, especially those whose early childhood involved extensive violence and/or periods when they were depressed and hopeless, and so unable to mitigate distress and anxiety.

The study demonstrates the negative impacts of living with domestic violence and the disruption in children's lives by trying to end it. The emotional and psychological effects, as well as physical

symptoms were all described by children in their own words. However, children could also describe the way they coped, employing a wide range of coping strategies and what they wanted was to be involved in the process of ending the violence. The study also found that children perceived professionals, including court welfare officers and social workers, as either ignoring or disbelieving their wishes and understandings of their situations.

**Children of abused women will not necessarily grow up to be abusers or victims of domestic abuse themselves. No conclusive evidence exists to support the 'intergenerational transmission of violence' thesis or to show that there is a 'cycle of violence'.**

**Mullender & Morley, 1994**

PART FOUR

# ACCESSING FURTHER RESOURCES ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

# 4

## AGENCIES

A list of agencies that provide direct services to women experiencing gender violence entitled '**Women – Where to Go for Advice, Support and Information in the Glasgow Area**' is available from the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership.

Strathclyde Police Family Protection Units can be contacted at:

'A' Division: Stewart Street Police Office  
Stewart Street  
Glasgow  
G4 0HY  
0141 532 3014

'C' Division: Saracen Police Office  
22 Barloch Street  
Glasgow  
G22 5BY  
0141 532 3714

'E' Division: Baird Street Police Office  
2 – 6 Baird Street  
Glasgow  
G4 0EZ  
0141 532 4214

'G' Division: Aikenhead Road Police Office  
744 Aikenhead Road  
Glasgow  
G42 0NL  
0141 532 4914

'K' Division: Renfrew Police Office  
Inchinnan Road  
Renfrew  
PA4 8ND  
0141 532 6120

## OTHER RESOURCES

The **Women's Support Project** in Glasgow has an extensive library of resources providing materials to survivors of abuse, their supporters, community groups, professionals and researchers. Library includes resources such as information on:

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Rape and Sexual Assault
- Self Harm
- Women whose children have been sexually abused
- Prostitution and Pornography
- Violence against disabled women and children
- Sexual abuse of men and boys

The project also produces a quarterly **Scottish Newsletter** and a **Directory of Services for Scotland on Violence and Abuse**.

The project does not offer a drop in service – phone for appointment on 0141 552 2221.

The **Sandyford Initiative** houses a public lending library working in partnership with Glasgow City Libraries and NHS Libraries. It provides a wide range of information and resources for women and men (including violence and abuse) plus FREE internet access. Further information about services within the Sandyford Initiative are included in the 'Women Where to Go for Support and Information in the Glasgow Area' leaflet.

An up to date list of contacts for Glasgow, East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire, plus a list of useful internet sites will be attached as an insert into this booklet.

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