The Experience of Domestic Abuse for People with Care and Support Needs
Disbelief: A project led by Jane Bethall of LIAP – now Safer Leeds Domestic Violence Team. Produced by VeraMedia
“People pity him because he is taking care of you and so noble. So people are reluctant to criticise this saint or to think he could be doing these terrible things. And possibly as well as that there’s a sort of I think an idea … people don’t really ‘see’ disabled women. And people don’t easily see a disabled woman as a wife, partner, and mother. So I think for some people it’s hard to think well this might be a woman who’s being sexually or physically abused by her partner,… because disabled women don’t have sex, do they?”
Disbelief

- Gordon – 89 – was not arrested when he attempted to kill Joan
- Barbara’s perpetrator received an 18 month conditional sentence.
Falling Between the Gaps: National Review of Sexual Violence Services

- What emerges is that many services that provide support to women who report domestic abuse are not always responding appropriately to women with a physical or sensory impairment, learning difficulty or mental health condition. This may vary from access to a refuge, personal assistance, communication support or information provided in appropriate formats.

- Similarly, many services that provide support to disabled women are not always identifying domestic abuse victims and therefore not able to signpost to appropriate domestic abuse services.

Rhian Bowen-Davies (National Adviser for Violence against Women Wales)

Falling Between the Gaps in the Pathways

- 78-year-old Margaret Panting (died July 2001)
- Found at home of her former son in law
- 5 weeks after he had removed her from sheltered housing accommodation to look after his three children
- More than 100 injuries on Margaret's body
- No one confessed or told the police what happened so no charges
- Domestic Violence Crimes & Victims Act 2004 Section 5: causing or allowing the death of a child or “vulnerable adult”.
Service Responses to Domestic Abuse Amongst Older People

- Domestic violence as a ‘largely hidden phenomenon’ comprising of multiple forms of harm or abuse by people who are or have been intimate partners
- A lack of conceptual clarity between domestic violence and elder abuse
- The complexity of family dynamics and abusive relationships
- Deficit in dedicated service recognition and provision.

McGarry et al (2014)
Domestic Abuse Can Create Care and Support Needs: Physical Health

Physical impact includes disability, chronic pain, gastro-intestinal, and gynaecological signs including sexually-transmitted diseases.


He was extremely abusive and he put me into the hospital quite few times. The consequences on my health now [. . .] I have had a major bone problems, and I had to have an operation on my spine, and I am questioning whether that was to do with the beatings. I’ve got arthritis and I had a lots of broken bones when he was doing this, so whether that impacted [. . .] I’m sure that this possibly did impact up on me now [. . .] Like now I can hardly walk, and I have to go in a wheel chair to go about (Participant 1: 63 years).

I’m waiting for a hearing aid and now [. . .] I got severely bashed on my ear, and I’m told that I can’t hear at all in this ear, and I’ve been told that it is perforated eardrum (Participant 8: 76 years).

Domestic Abuse Can Create Care and Support Needs: Mental Health

People who experience poor mental health are more likely to have experienced domestic abuse (Trevillion et al 2012)

- 70% per cent of female psychiatric inpatients and 80% of those in secure settings have histories of physical or sexual abuse
- Abused women are at least three times more likely to experience depression or anxiety disorders than other women
- A third of all female suicide attempts and half of those by ethnic minority women can be attributed to past or current experiences of domestic abuse.
Domestic Abuse Can Create Care and Support Needs: Mental Health

Proportion of each violence and abuse group with a common mental disorder

- Little violence/abuse: 11%
- Physical from partner: 27%
- Extensive physical/coercion, partner: 37%
- Sexual, only as child: 23%
- Sexual, as adult, sometimes child: 32%
- Extensive physical, sexual as child/adult: 53%

McManus et al
http://natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/responding-effectively-to-long-term-consequences-of-violence-and-abuse-(reva)/
Disabled People

- Women who have disabilities are at significant and higher risk of domestic abuse (Rich, 2014)
- More than 50% of disabled women in the UK may have experienced domestic abuse (Magowan, P. 2004)
- More disabled men experience domestic abuse than other men, with the risk to a disabled man being similar to that to women in general (PHE 2015).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Disabled women</th>
<th>Non-disabled women</th>
<th>Disabled men</th>
<th>Non-disabled men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced any domestic abuse in last year</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced non-sexual partner abuse in last year</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced non-sexual family abuse in last year</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced sexual assault in last year</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced stalking in last year</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Losing out on both counts', Disabled women and domestic violence (2016) Dr. Ravi K. Thiara. Centre for the study of safety and well-being, University of Warwick

Supporting people with social care needs who are experiencing coercive control. Evidence Scope. Ruth Ingram, RiPfA Associate December 2016. [http://coercivecontrol.ripfa.org.uk](http://coercivecontrol.ripfa.org.uk)
Disabled People: Forced Marriage

- 12% (141 cases) of cases reported to the Forced Marriage Unit in 2015 involved people who had a physical or learning disability
- 62% of whom were men and 38% women
- For non-disabled people only 20% of referrals are for male victims.
Women with Learning Disabilities

Two small scale studies that interviewed women survivors of domestic abuse in England found that the levels of physical violence they had experienced were particularly high and of high risk (e.g. use of weapons, threats to kill).


McCarthy, M., Hunt, S. and Milne-Skillman, K., 2015. ‘I Know it was Every Week, but I Can't be Sure if it was Every Day: Domestic Violence and Women with Learning Disabilities. Journal of applied research in intellectual disabilities.
Older Women

31% (39/126) of UK women killed during 2015 were over 50

National Prevalence Study of Elder Abuse 2007

- 2.6% people over 66 self-reported that they had experienced abuse in their own home in the past 12 months from friends/family or care workers.
- Women were more likely to say that they had experienced mistreatment than men (3.8% of women and 1.1% of men).
- Interpersonal (physical, sexual and psychological) abuse was largely carried out by partners (57%) or other family members (37%).
- 75% of perpetrators of interpersonal abuse were aged 65-74 and 80% of them were men.
- The perpetrator lived in the same household in two-thirds of the cases, and in two-fifths of cases the older person was providing care for them.
Domestic Abuse and Dementia

Small scale study of 22 case records  Knight & Hester (2014)

They found that:

- The onset of dementia was likely to lead to an escalation in the severity of the abuse, regardless of whether dementia developed in the victim or perpetrator.

- The most dangerous people in their study were men with a history of being domestic violence perpetrators who had developed dementia and who had been physically abusive at some point in the past. In all of these cases, domestic abuse escalated to severe injurious from physical abuse.’ (p12)
Supporting Good Outcomes for People at Risk from Domestic Abuse