

ADOLESCENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Invisible Victims



UK Government definition of domestic violence

"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." This includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as so called 'honour killings'.

(Home Office 2006)

The Government defines an adult as any person aged 18 years or over. Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related, in laws or stepfamily.

The National Plan

- *reducing the prevalence of domestic violence*
- *increasing the rate that domestic violence is reported*
- *increasing the rate of domestic violence offences that are brought to justice*
- *ensuring victims of domestic violence are adequately protected and supported nationwide*
- *Reducing the number of domestic violence related homicides.*

Adolescent Domestic Abuse

- Long history of policy and practice in the US which has initiated a range of programmes similar to those delivered in the UK for adults
- Includes
 - Perpetrators Programmes
 - Specialist Courts
 - Support Programmes

Adolescent / Teenage Domestic Abuse

“Dating violence is controlling, abusive, and aggressive behavior in a romantic relationship. It occurs in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships and can include verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, combination of these”

Office for the Prevention Domestic Violence USA

The Current UK situation

- No real recognition of domestic abuse that occurs between partners who are NOT adults
 - Although recent research has identified this
 - Practitioners becoming aware and labelling it
- Still no definition of what teenage domestic abuse is
- No policy or practice for addressing and dealing with teenage domestic abuse

Sugar and NSPCC (2005)

- Experiences of young women who have experienced abusive and violent relationships
- Most comprehensive study ever of teenagers and domestic abuse
- Involved over 2,000 teenagers across 10 TV regions
- Respondents aged between 13 to 19 with an average age of 15

Findings

- Cycle of violence- victims in the home before becoming victims if attacks by boyfriends
- 43% of those surveyed believed it was acceptable for a boyfriend to get aggressive in certain circumstances
- One in six of those surveyed said they had been hit by their boyfriends, of which 4% of them stated that this was a regular occurrence
- Another 15% of those surveyed had been pushed by their boyfriends on a number of occasions.
- Two-thirds of them said they had stayed with the boyfriend after being hit or pushed.

Findings continued

- More than 40% of girls said they would consider giving a boy a second chance if he hit them.
- Six per cent simply said it was acceptable for a boy to hit his girlfriend
- 2% of the groups said that they could "understand" a boy forcing his girlfriend to have sex in certain circumstances.
- About a third of girls hit regularly by their boyfriends said they had seen their parents hit one another
- A third of the young women who had been hit by their parents went on to be hit by boyfriends.

Scottish National Health Service (2005)

- 10 Scottish secondary schools.
- Attitudes that young people held in relation to violence they encountered from partners.
- Included both boys and girls
- 51% of boys and 40% of girls had been yelled at by their boyfriend or girlfriend.
- 2% of boys and 32% of girls said that they had been humiliated or put down by their boyfriend or girlfriend.

Findings continued

- 25% of boys and 16% of girls said that they had been pushed or grabbed by the boyfriend or girlfriend and in terms of
- 6% of boys and 11% of girls had been hit with an instrument of some kind
- 8% of boys and 10% of girls said that their partners had tried to force them into having sex
- 6% of boys and 3% of girls had actually been forced to have sex by their boyfriend or girlfriend.

Southwark (2006)

- Based on NSPCC Research but focused on Southwark
- distributed to young people aged 16 to 24.
- 135 responses
- Used to enable service provision to be developed

Follow up to NSPCC Research

- focussed on young women's experience of being pressurised into unwanted sexual contact.
- Self reporting survey - 674 responses
- 45% of the young women had been groped against their will of which 43% knew the boy
- 1 in 3 said that the person groping them was a boyfriend of their own age group
- 14% said it was family member
- 13% by a group of boys
- 10% a boyfriend who was much older than them
- 4% by a teacher

Reporting

- In terms of telling someone about this, 38% did not tell anyone, as they just wanted to forget. 11% of the young women said that they did not know whom to tell. The NSPCC used this information as part of their 'Don't hide it' campaign'. They said,

“Young women that have been pressurised into unwanted sexual acts highlight factors such as peer pressure and pressure from boyfriends, and express that these factors contribute to making it difficult for them to say ‘no’.”

(NSPCC 2006).

Young Women and Abuse

- 2005 -2006 almost 5,000 young people under the age of 16 (BCS)
- *“Of the 8637 calls the help line received in 2004/2005 concerning sexual abuse, 4414 callers reported to have been raped. Of these 842 callers reported to have been raped by their father and 285 by their boyfriend “*
- *(NSPCC 2006).*

Forced Marriage

- Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 25 years.
- The Government however has widely accepted that forced marriage on the whole involves women who are under 21, they have dealt with cases that involved children aged 13, 14 and 15. The Government has also recognised that violence and domestic abuse play a significant part in the lives of young women who have been forced into marriage.

Lack of Awareness

- Policy and practice defines domestic violence as women being battered and abused by their husbands. This is then portrayed in the media, which clearly defines any recognition for young people that this same violence can be applied to their own adolescent relationships, because it excludes any relationship that may exist between those under the age of 18.

Lack of Awareness cont.

- Limited knowledge on a national level about the relationships of young people and the context in which these are developed. The need to raise awareness with young people and professionals is imperative as it is clear that young people themselves are unaware that the type of abuse they may be experiencing fits within the context of domestic violence.

What do we have

- Every Child Matters and the 2004 Children Act have set out the vision for children's services for the next decade. Safety and Justice and the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, offer positive improvement in responses to domestic violence across Government Departments.
- “A Vision for Services for Children and Young People affected by Domestic Violence” offers a pathway for services for children experiencing domestic violence

What we are saying

- The guidance for local commissioners of children's services says that *“Domestic violence is a children's issue and it is widespread. Research clearly evidences the key relationship between children's experience of domestic violence and our challenge to improve the five outcomes for all children”*.

However !!!

- In all 40 pages of the guidance the safety of children is discussed admirably and the experiences of domestic violence is highlighted as a key issues. The document fails anywhere however to recognises adolescent domestic violence, the abuse that takes place between young people involved in intimate relations. The guidance is based on adults over the age of 18 having abusive relationships and its effect on children.

What we Need to Do

- The need to raise awareness of adolescent domestic violence in the UK has clearly emerged as a priority from this research. In order to do this adolescent domestic violence campaigns must be a core part of raising awareness so that the issue can be highlighted in an attempt to define it and then provide service provisions. This should be done through educational, training and publicity

Education

- Education for young people that looks at relationships and outlines what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The education needs to also be about services that can provide help, support and advice.

Training

- Training for professional staff, preferably through multi agency partnership models that ensure that staff are all receiving consistent, coherent training that enables them to identify signs of being in a violent relationship carry out risk assessments and enabling and empowering young people to make informed choices about their situation. Training that already builds onto existing multi agency domestic violence training or similar, ensuring that adolescent domestic violence is an integrated element of the training

Publicity

- Publicity that raises awareness of adolescent domestic violence in the public arena within the context of domestic violence on national level

Holistic Approach

- Supporting the three strands outlined, there is a need for the development of service provisions. This will ensure that there is local and national will to put in place sensitive services that deal with this particular strand of domestic violence and enable young people to receive the support, help and advice that they are signposted to through education.

Core Principles

- *“The most predominant recommendation given by the service providers was that young people need to be better informed about healthy and unhealthy relationships so they will not accept abusive behaviour and perceive it as normal and a sign of love”.*

Focus of Work

- There was also the mention that young people be trained in negotiation and communication skills. Skills they can use when solving conflicts within relationships, so that violence and emotional abuse would not become an option.

Why

- **The need to address the issue of adolescent domestic violence needs to be high on the agenda of professionals. Clearly evidence already highlights that the outcome of addressing this is that in the short term we are dealing with the impact of their experiences, but also ensuring that through intervention and engagement they do not move into abusive and violent relationships in adult life.**

How

- Finally the inclusion of young people in the process of designing and evaluating prevention programmes must be integral. Young people should be encouraged to be partners in the planning of service and promotion and publicity material. Young people should have the opportunities to provide clear, concise, creative and innovative ideas to difficult solutions. Research based consultation with young people needs to be meaningful and can evidence willingness to young people, though their ongoing engagement through the planning, to implementation and evaluation phases evolving and developing initiatives.

The Safer Luton Partnership

- Work with Young Women
 - Advice
 - One to One Work
 - Group Activities
- Work with Young Men
 - Offenders and those at Risk
 - One to One work
 - Perpetuating life experiences
 - Anger Management