**Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company (KSS CRC)**

**Research: Domestic Abuse Evidence Review**

**May 22, 2020**

**Executive Summary**

According to the Home Office (2013:2), domestic abuse is: Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members1 regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:• psychological • physical • sexual • financial • emotional

Domestic abuse in itself is a complex phenomenon which encompasses four broad categories: intimate terrorism; mutual violent control; situational couple violence; and violent resistance (Johnson, 2006). Intimate partner terrorism is the most documented in literature and this is abuse is agued to have its roots in power and control.

Evidence has shown that domestic abuse is a gendered crime although it is important to acknowledge that females can be perpetrators of domestic abuse although they are in the minority. Feminist literature theorizes that domestic abuse is rooted in patriarchy. There are theorists such as Steinmetz (1977) however who dispute such evidence and argue that women are just as abusive as men. There is more empirical and theoretical evidence to support the theory that men commit more acts of domestic abuse than women. Statistically, women are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse. In the year ending March 2019, an estimated 2.4 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year, of which 1.6 million were women and 786,000 were men (Office for National Statistics, 20179:2). Statistics show that women were more likely to be repeat victims of abuse and men are more likely to be repeat perpetrators (Walby et al, 2004). The literature also shows that the reasons that men and women commit abuse are different and the abuse committed by men is more likely to be a demonstration of power and control (Johnson, 2006).

Evidence shows us that we need to take an intersectional approach to working with marginalized victims such as those from BME and LGBT backgrounds (Crenshaw, 1999). There are other marginalized categories of victims such as disabled victims, the elderly and travelling communities. Many victims from marginalized backgrounds do not report abuse to authorities due to a fear of stigmatization; shame; insecure immigration status and for LGBT relationships fear that their sexuality will be used against them. Despite many similarities in domestic abuse in minority groups, minority groups are not a monolith and each case should be treated on a case by case basis with special consideration to their protected characteristics.

Evidence shows that children are not simply bystanders in abusive households but should be considered victims in their own right. Hester (2011)’s three planet model conceptualizes the way in which different agencies work with abused children. The research argues that there is an interconnectedness between domestic abuse and child abuse which should be considered by all agencies. Domestic abuse has been shown to lead to adverse childhood outcomes; increased risk taking; anxiety and in some cases death (Devaney, 2008).Most children in abusive households (91%) are harmed by the main perpetrator, in a minority of cases, the victim of the abuse can be neglectful or abusive to their children.

Victims of domestic abuse often face a host of challenges when attempting to leave an abusive relationship such as fear, isolation and practical barriers. The point of leaving is often the most dangerous time for a victim and evidence from Women’s aid (2019) reports that 55% of the women killed by their ex-partner or ex-spouse in 2017 were killed within the first month of separation and 87% in the first year.

In order to tackle domestic abuse, literature recommends proactive policies for service users and staff. For staff, the recommendations include paid ‘safe days’ for victims of domestic abuse to follow the example of New Zealand and South Ayrshire County council and a safe space outside of HR to talk about the abuse. For service users-multi-agency working; believing the victim, adequate risk assessments and training for professionals has been shown to keep victims of domestic abuse safe.

Literature highlights the importance of trusting the victim’s fear and shifting the responsibility for domestic abuse in the hands of the perpetrator

You can read the whole research report [here](https://www.ksscrc.co.uk/2020/05/22/research-domestic-abuse-evidence-review/#executivesummary)