

Interdisciplinary Domestic Violence Conference

Working Together: Challenges for Community and Legal Professionals

Sponsored by the Social Policy Association and Hart Publishers

De Montfort University Leicester
Leicester De Montfort Law School / Faculty of Health & Life Sciences
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Conference Report

The Interdisciplinary Domestic Violence Conference was a joint enterprise hosted between the Faculties of Business and Law, and Health and Life Sciences at De Montfort University, Leicester. Its aims were to explore the challenges of securing prevention and protection for domestic violence victims in the legal arena, and to explore legal and community inter-agency relationships. It provided a forum which brought together community professionals, legal practitioners and academics in order to develop a co-operative network to improve communication links between these key stakeholders.

Conference Organisers

Vanessa Bettinson



Vanessa has worked at DMU since 2004 teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Her current teaching covers criminal law, human rights law and immigration and refugee law to undergraduates. Vanessa's current research interests are concerned with legal responses to domestic violence both within international and European human rights legal frameworks and domestically. Her other current research interest is concerned with the human rights implications for risk based sentences, an issue that she is exploring with Professor Gavin Dingwall. Vanessa has several publications in a variety of esteemed journals that span matters of criminal justice, asylum law, domestic violence in the criminal justice system and human rights.

Sarah Hilder

Sarah is a Senior lecturer/Researcher in Criminology and Criminal Justice. Her research and teaching interests include Multi Agency working, Working with Victims, Domestic Abuse, issues of Social Justice, Restorative Justice, Sex Offender supervision and surveillance. Previously she worked for the National Probation Service, as both a main grade and then Senior Probation Officer in various capacities from 1993-2004, where her work included the management of a Victim Liaison Unit, perpetrator programmes for domestic abuse, work with high risk violent and sexual offenders. Sarah has published work on multi-agency working with black and minority ethnic offenders, desistance work and sexual offending. From 2010-2012 Sarah was a partner in the EU Daphne II Funded project, Protect II, culminating in the production of a learning pack and training seminars for NGO, Legal and Criminal Justice practitioners in risk assessment and safety planning in situations of domestic abuse, disseminated across the EU community. She teaches modules on Victimology, Domestic Abuse and Restorative Justice at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and to police officer trainee groups.

Overview of the Event

Number of attendees

The conference was well attended with a total of 70 participants. This included legal professionals, staff from a range of NGO agencies specialising in the support of women, young people and victims of domestic abuse, housing association staff, academics engaged in social science and socio-legal research from a range of institutions across the UK, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying social science and legal studies.

Welcome Address by Estella Baker

The conference was opened by a welcome address by Estella Baker, Professor in European Criminal Law and Justice at De Montfort University.

Key Note Speakers

The morning session saw presentations by three key note speakers of acclaim who spoke from legal, criminal justice and non-government organisation perspectives

Rosa Logar Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)

The Importance Of A Victim Centered Approach In Multi-Agency Work To Prevent Domestic Violence. Experiences From The European DAPHNE Project PROTECT

Rosa Logar is Executive Director of the Domestic Violence Intervention Program Vienna, a victim/survivor service established with the Domestic Violence Act (1997); co-founder of the first women's shelter in Austria (1978) and of the European Network WAVE (Women Against Violence Europe, 1994); lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences/Department of Social Work. A selection of her international activities include: member of the EU research project Coordination Action on Human Rights Violations CAHRV (2004-2006); member of the UN Expert Group Meeting *Good practices in legislation on violence against women* (2008); member of the Council of Europe *Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence* (2006-2008) and the *Ad Hoc Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (2008 – 2010), which drafted the new Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011).

Rosa discussed her work in the EU highlighting domestic abuse as a human right violation. She also discussed the need for the ratification of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention to establish standard levels of provision across the EU community to support women and children experiencing domestic violence and abuse. She spoke of the importance of multi-agency working in risk assessment and safety management in cases of domestic abuse. She also referred to the EU funded project work which had been undertaken in partnership with De Montfort University in relation to the development of learning materials and training seminars which had been delivered to NGO and Criminal Justice workers across the EU Community.

Mandy Burton University of Leicester

Legal Response to Domestic Violence – Policing

Mandy is Professor of Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Leicester. Her research lies in the fields of criminal law, criminal justice and family law, with a particular focus on *Legal Responses to Domestic Violence* (the title of her book published by Routledge in 2008). She has been involved in numerous empirical research projects evaluating both the civil and criminal justice responses to domestic violence. Much of this research has been commissioned by UK government departments and other public bodies and designed to influence policy. Achieving impact beyond academia is a key component of Mandy's research. She has contributed to the development of practitioner responses to domestic violence at both local and national level as a member of several advisory and project implementation groups.

Mandy's presentation explored the following developments: The police response to domestic violence has historically been much criticised, and there continue to be well publicised failings in individual cases, such the murder of Rachael Slack and her young son by her former partner, the boy's father. It is now well recognised that under Human Rights law the State has positive obligations in domestic violence cases. The failure to protect a victim of domestic violence can be in breach of those obligations. Yet in many cases the research suggests that police often feel that they are powerless to intervene, particularly when the victim does not want a prosecution. In this context it is useful to consider the range of powers that are available to the police and how they can work with other agencies to support victim empowerment and safety planning. The government has recently piloted domestic violence prevention notices (DVPNs) and domestic violence prevention orders (DVPOs) in three regions. These orders, which are loosely modelled on barring orders in other European jurisdictions, enable the police to exclude perpetrators of domestic abuse from shared home for a short time and then apply to the courts for a longer period of exclusion, even if the victim does not consent. How useful are such powers and do they offer a positive way forward for agencies to work together in tackling domestic violence?

Siobhan Blake CPS Wales

Working Together To Support Victims

Siobhan is Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor (DCCP) of Cymru / Wales Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). She took up the appointment in 2012. Siobhan qualified as a solicitor having studied law at Southampton and joined the CPS in 1994 as a trainee solicitor. After qualification Siobhan worked in private practice for a period before returning to the CPS. Siobhan is an experienced prosecutor who has advised upon and prosecuted many high profile cases, becoming a specialist in the prosecution of rape and serious sexual offences. She obtained her Higher Rights of Audience in 2004 and became a frontline manager in 2005. Siobhan has been at the forefront of the work undertaken by the CPS to tackle Violence Against Women (VAWG) (domestic violence, rape and other violent offences in which the victims are predominantly women). She is now the deputy national lead for the CPS on this issue.

Siobhan's input focussed on developments within the Crown Prosecution Service aimed at addressing domestic violence and abuse and in particular the Strategy to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls. This included an exploration of victim engagement, staff training and partnership working.

Workshop Sessions

The afternoon was split into two option sessions each of 1 hour's duration. The options available to participants included a series of practitioner based workshops and also paired sessions which included a selection of academic papers exploring a diverse range of related topics.

Dr Rebecca Barnes | Professor Catherine Donovan & Dr Catherine Nixon
University of Leicester | University of Sunderland

Practitioners' Perspectives On Developing Responses To Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender (LGBT) Perpetrators Of Domestic Abuse: Deliberating Sameness And Difference

Rebecca's paper drew upon data from interviews conducted with practitioners who work with perpetrators of domestic abuse, as part of a wider ESRC-funded project examining the relationship practices and expectations of abusive partners in same-sex, bisexual and/or transgender relationships. Practitioners' understandings of domestic violence and abuse in same-sex, bisexual and/or transgender relationships were explored, with a particular focus upon how they either provide services for, or would envisage extending their services to, perpetrators of domestic abuse in these relationships. Whilst practitioners all demonstrated the desire to be inclusive, they differed in relation to how they conceptualised inclusion. This paper examined how practitioners' understandings of violence and abuse in LGBT relationships, and their perceptions of the theoretical and practical basis of interventions for perpetrators, were oriented around notions of sameness and difference. For example, whilst for some practitioners a feminist model of patriarchal entitlement and control seemed largely redundant in the context of LGBT perpetrators, others considered these concepts transferable to all intimate relationships. Final reflections highlighted the barriers to developing services for LGBT perpetrators and critically probed the implications of viewing domestic abuse in same-sex, bisexual and/or transgender relationships exclusively through the lens of sameness or difference.

Charlotte Bishop
University of Exeter

Some Critical Insights To Explain Why Legal Reforms Are Not Reducing The Prevalence Of 'Domestic Violence'

Charlotte's paper was based upon a larger piece of doctoral research examining the limitations of the legal responses to 'domestic violence' from the perspective of two central arguments. The first of these arguments was that domestic violence is a social problem, rather than one caused by the deviancy of particular individuals or relationships, and therefore individualised responses which ignore the root causes do not and cannot work. The second central claim was that legal and societal understandings display a misplaced focus on 'violence' as the defining feature of an abusive relationship, which does not capture the range of additional strategies – identified in work such as that of Evan Stark – used by men to entrap women in private life.

After expanding upon the above claims, the paper then moved on to argue that the legal system is inevitably limited in terms of its responses to domestic violence because it does not take these two elements fully into account and, therefore, fails to operate with an adequate understanding of the true social context and dynamics of domestic violence as a pattern of coercion that serves to undermine the victim's autonomy and sense of self. It was argued that the legal and societal response to this problem could be improved by the use of comparisons with capture crimes in common terminology pertaining to domestic violence, and through the harnessing of the obligations under Article 5 of the Women's Convention (the CEDAW) to eradicate gender stereotypes from public life, the media and the law.



Gudrun Burnet
Peabody Housing

Domestic Abuse.....Why Housing Providers Are The Missing Piece Of The Puzzle

Gudrun (Guddy) Burnet has worked in the field of Domestic Abuse for 8 years. She is a qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). Guddy started her career at Refuge, managing floating support services across London. In 2009 she joined Peabody as a Community Safety Team Leader and brought her extensive experience to the housing sector.

Guddy's input highlighted the essential nature of engaging housing providers in an understanding of issues of domestic abuse and the vital role that they have to play in its detection, protection and prevention. She spoke of the staff training she has provided to Peabody Housing and its positive impact. She provided case study examples and engaged participants in an exploration of risk assessment processes.

Jo Costello
Ending Victimisation & Blame

Internalised Messages And Victim Blaming

Jo Costello set up this organisation in order to challenge the victim blaming language used about those who have experienced domestic & sexual violence and abuse. The campaign aims to discuss language and how this influences the perception of survivors, alongside challenging myths. <http://everydayvictimblaming.com/>

Jo's workshop aimed to assist participants in understanding what victim-blaming is and why we do it. The objectives of the session were as follows:

- To Identify what victim blaming
- To Explore a personal frame of reference and how that shapes internalised victim blaming
- To Identify how to challenge and change victim-blaming.

**Dr Christopher Crowther-Dowey, Ms Terry Gillespie &
Ms Kristan Hopkins-Burke**
Nottingham Trent University

It's Their Relationship...If They Wanna Carry On Then It's Up To Them": The Challenges Of Preventing The Formation Of Abusive Relationships Amongst Children And Young People In Local Communities

This paper examined criminological debates surrounding the ongoing development of a so-called 'Firebreak Project', a locally based intervention in Nottinghamshire – designed to be introduced on a socially deprived housing estate where domestic abuse has been identified as a significant problem – to change young people's perceptions about healthy and abusive relationships. The aim of the 'Firebreak Project' is to prevent domestic

abuse by disrupting the transmission of unhealthy attitudes towards relationships from the older to younger generation.

The research reflects on growing concerns about the rise of domestic abuse among young people and recent changes to the government's definition of domestic abuse to include 16 -17 year-olds (Home Office, 2013). Responses to such behaviour have sensibly included a dual focus on addressing the needs of victims and targeting perpetrators, including initiatives in the areas of law enforcement and education. Whilst these responses to domestic abuse are of critical importance we know that perpetrators of such abusive behaviour are particularly resistant to change and bringing about desistance from offending is difficult for many individuals once such attitudes are embedded in their thinking and behaviour. On the basis of this assumption, the 'Firebreak Project' intends to prevent abusive attitudes and behaviour from forming in the first place through preventative action, starting with children and young people in local communities.

The presenters' research builds on an emerging body of criminological research, which concentrates on interventions targeting these age groups and their inter-personal relationships. Through an analysis of the factors influencing the lived realities of young people's understanding of appropriate relationships, relationship boundaries and what constitutes abusive behaviour in relationships. Three emergent themes were explored: (i) the diversity of views held by young people about what constitutes healthy relationships; (ii) young people's shared understandings of healthy relationships, especially the complex relationship between gender and age; and (iii) the sense of fatalism underpinning young people's view that it is difficult to bring about progressive and lasting change in relationships.

Caroline Freeman & Shem Williams
FreeVA - The Jenkins Centre



Co-ordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence: The Perpetrator Programme Perspective

FreeVA - Free from Violence and Abuse (formerly DVIRP) is a local Leicester charity that provides a range of domestic and sexual violence services to victims and perpetrators. www.freeva.org.uk. In 2012, FreeVA in partnership with Respect (www.respect.uk.net) developed the Jenkins Centre. The Jenkins Centre works with both men and women who want to change their violent and abusive behaviour towards their intimate partner, through individual and group interventions and provides a specialised Partner Support Service. The centre, also delivers a Dad's Programme, Community Capacity building and training to professionals on working with perpetrators of Domestic Violence.

Caroline Freeman has over 15 years experience of working within the voluntary sector as a project manager, practitioner, trainer and researcher both in Newcastle and Leicester and overseas in India and Sri Lanka. She has direct experience of working with women around SGBV (Sexual Gender Based Violence) issues in conflict affected communities. Caroline joined FreeVA in 2011 working within Domestic Violence Victim services and then becoming service manager for the Jenkins Centre in 2012.

Shem Williams began his career in the domestic violence sector in 2008, working with victims and perpetrators in community based services in Queensland, Australia. Since returning to the UK, Shem has worked at the London based Domestic Violence Intervention Project, as lead practitioner for a project that worked with young people who used violence against their parents and intimate partners. Since 2012, Shem has developed and delivered individual work and group programmes for FreeVa for perpetrators of domestic violence.

Caroline and Shem's input explored the nature of their work with perpetrators of domestic abuse as part of a coordinated community response model. Also where this fits with Multi agency responses and risk management.

Sofia Graça
University of Kent

The Experiences Of Portuguese Women's Access To Services To Address Domestic Violence

This paper discussed the use that Portuguese women make and are likely to make of support services in situations of domestic violence in England. The discussion is based on socio-legal research conducted on the Portuguese community in England. Research on the relationship of Portuguese women with service providers in England is scarce; it tends to focus on needs assessments in terms of health, housing provisions or work but not on domestic violence. The research conducted consisted of in-depth interviews with Portuguese immigrants in London, Reading and Norfolk between 2011 and 2013. The paper used the data gathered to discuss Portuguese immigrants' perception of domestic violence, the course of action most likely adopted in such situations and women's perception of domestic violence services.

Professor Jo Little & Dr Fae Garland
University of Exeter

Dealing With The Impact Of Domestic Violence On Children And Carers: What Do Family Intervention Workers Have To Offer?

A growing body of evidence is revealing the impact of Domestic Violence on children. Research has demonstrated that child witnesses of domestic abuse are 'profoundly affected' by such events and may experience a wide range of adverse behavioural and emotional problems (including post-traumatic stress disorder) as a result. Despite this body of research, services tend to be victim-centred and there is an acknowledged lack of attention devoted to the development of tangible services in the UK to help these children. In response to this gap, some Domestic Violence services are introducing Family Intervention Workers (FIWs) who use a child-centric approach that focuses specifically on the care of children and the relationship between children and their carers (generally mothers) where the carer has been a victim of Domestic Violence. Furthermore, FIWs use an intense, multi-agency approach to: work with and support these families; uncover and address behaviours, attitudes and any hidden problems within the family; and to ensure that families receive support tailored to their specific needs from both the FIW and other necessary services including IDVAs, Schools, Social Services, Police and Lawyers.

The paper explored how effectively FIWs support such children and carers. To do so, this paper drew upon findings from a small-scale qualitative project that sought to evaluate an FIW programme based in the South-West of England. Drawing upon case files and interviews with the FIW, service users and other services that have liaised with the FIW, this paper considered the practical realities of implementing this community based intervention. The paper seeks to place the role in broader policy and academic discussions surrounding the background to and need for FIWs. The paper also developed tentative conclusions in a call for further academic and policy based research on the role and approach of the FIW.

Satya Minhas
Hindu Council UK*Domestic Abuse – Experiences and Responses Of The Hindu Community*

Satya Minhas is the current Chairperson of Hindu Council UK – an umbrella body representing the Hindu Community in the UK and addresses issues affecting them. He is also former Chairperson and current Deputy Chairperson/Welfare Lead of the Metropolitan Police Hindu Association (MPHA). Satya has offered professional and personal support to over a hundred people during his eleven year membership with the MPHA and he has been a major contributor to Hindu Faith Specific Policy Formation in the Metropolitan Police Service including vegetarian catering provision, dress codes and Police guidance for entry into Hindu places of worship. Until recently, he was an Audit manager in the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime overseeing policing systems and practices including the 2012 Olympics in London

This workshop looked at domestic abuse from a Hindu community perspective exploring concepts of individual dignity, family perceptions and responses to Domestic Abuse.

Religious Hindu view regarding Domestic Violence
(Mother Goddess, Ahimsa, Karma, dignity and respect for all human beings).

Utilising four case studies a group discussion was facilitated covering:
Potential reasons for avoiding to seek professional/ legal help and support.
Ways and means for encouraging engagement and reporting.
Hindu Response (victim, family, friends, community and law enforcement agencies)
Final Comments & Conclusions (audience & MPHA Chairperson Miss Varsha Mistry).

Mark Parish
Leicestershire and Rutland Police, Domestic Abuse Unit*Domestic Abuse, Police Working With Partners To Reduce The Impact On Victims*

Detective Inspector Mark Parish presented an overview of the work of the specialist Unit of Leicestershire and Rutland Police. He advised that that Leicestershire Police responds to approximately 18000 reports of domestic violence/verbal arguments each year. Officers attending incidents complete the DASH risk assessment with the victim which provides the force with an understanding of the risk that the victim may face from the offender. Reports are graded as either “High”, “Medium” or “Standard” risk of harm. The force Domestic Abuse Unit takes responsibility for the investigation of high risk cases and the safeguarding of the victims. The team work closely with the Multi Agency Risk assessment Conference (MARAC) process and the Domestic Support agencies that provide long term support to victims of domestic abuse. The unit take responsibility for all reports of Forced Marriage and honour based violence.

Joanne Payton
IKWRO / Cardiff University*Honour-Based Violence (HBV) And Risk Assessment*

Risk assessment is becoming the predominant strategy for addressing intimate partner violence and developing responses and protection plans, yet little is known about the feasibility of applying risk tools developed primarily for cases of IPV, to cases of so-called ‘honour-based’ violence. Current risk assessment tools tend to be based upon patterns

of violence derived from Western family forms. These fail to fully comprehend the nature of HBV, a form of violence for which we have comparatively little research to inform the development of risk assessment tools. This study used a case-file analysis of Middle Eastern women's contacts with an NGO to establish contrasts between clients' experiences of intimate partner violence, and violence which they related to family 'honour'. Findings indicated that HBV was strongly linked with agnatic perpetration, with a strong tendency for crimes to involve multiple assailants from the agnatic group. In contrast, IPV cases had a reduced potential for collective perpetration and tended to be less complex to address. Crimes related to 'honour' and those featuring collectivity tended to have higher levels both of risk and intervention. These findings were contextualised with a discussion of the British and Swedish approaches to HBV risk assessment.

This research suggested that addressing HBV through a risk management framework would work towards changing the framing from one which pathologises communities, to one which centres upon the individual experiences of the victim. Research on HBV must inform the development of risk assessment tools, so that first responders are able to make more accurate determinations when facing an issue which is complex and poorly understood and where effective initial responses are vital. An effective tool could avoid tragedies of misrecognition — as well as excessive and unnecessary interventions.

Plenary Session

The event closed with a summary of the diverse range of contributions that had been made during the day, with a further opportunity for participants to raise questions and comments with the speakers and workshop providers.

Next Steps

Feedback evaluations highlighted that the event had been very positively received and the opportunities for networking across a broad range of disciplines concerned with the issue of domestic violence and abuse greatly welcomed. The conference organisers are keen to build upon the enthusiasm experienced on the day and will be exploring a variety of further opportunities for partnerships developments in this arena including:

- A series of smaller practitioners/researcher seminar events examining key issues and developments in the support and protection of victims of domestic violence and abuse
- Work based research and evaluation opportunities
- Publications
- Practitioner input on undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes.

For further information please contact:

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