

The Nature, Extent and Impact of Abuse Against Older Women

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Older Women, Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse

- Ageism
- Sexism
- Families and care
- Hidden Problem
- Patterns of Abuse
- Gender Issues
- Triple Jeopardy
- Survivors

Similarities

- Adults
- Shared living arrangements
- Causative factors
- Power and control
- Citizenship and empowerment
- Legal remedies
- Interventions
- issues of safety and protection

Differences

- Different causes
- Demographic factors
- Historical factors
- Timescales
- Societal views
- Nature of abuse
- Public responses
- Different origins (as a social problem)

What is to be Done?

- Prevention
- Protection
- Justice
- Provision
- Partnership working
- Empowerment

Triple Jeopardy

- Marginalisation, exclusion, violence and older women
- To be old is to be marginalised (single)
- To be old and female is to be marginalised (double)
- To be old and female and abused is to be marginalised (triple)
- Other forms of disadvantage and disempowerment (could be 5 – or more forms)
- Bruises on the Soul

INPEA – Missing Voices

- Early study – 8 countries (2 from Europe)
- Perceptions of older people about Elder Abuse
- Neglect – isolation, abandonment, social exclusion
- Violation – human, legal and medical rights
- Deprivation – of choices, decisions, status, finances and respect
- Ageism – identified discrimination on basis of age
- Key factors: Gender and socio-economic status

Definitions

- Abuse is a violation of an individual's human or civil rights by any other person or persons
 - No Secrets (2000)
- No formal definition in Care Act 2014
- Not just Elder Abuse but Adult Protection/Adult Safeguarding (in UK)
- Gender blind or gender neutral?

What is Abuse?

- Definitional issues
- Hidden from public gaze
- Private issue or public concern?
- Issues of terminology
- Changing attitudes, historical perspectives
- Risk, vulnerability and protection
- Different models of abuse and protection

The Importance of Naming

- Silence about the topic
- Comparative lack of recognition
- Under-developed, under-researched concept
- Naming is essential: What is being named?
- Primacy of the individual and personal
- Importance of professional identification (as with child abuse, but not VAW); this has shaped development of policy and responses

Key points

- Social construction of abuse and violence
- Gender and power relations crucial
- Not just family and interpersonal relationships: institutional settings an important context
- Not just about frailty, vulnerability, dependence
- Personal, cultural and structural levels at which abuse and violence occur
- Ageism as a master category, abuse a consequence
- Citizenship and rights-based perspectives important

Critical factors

- Abuse and older women
- Poverty and older women
- Discrimination – ageism, sexism, employment status
- Social and cultural contexts are important
- Gender discrimination across the lifespan
- Violence, abuse and neglect across the lifespan
- Attention paid to older women by (ageing) feminists

Older women and Abuse

- Rarely considered as a separate group
- VAW work often does not include older women or women with disabilities
- Elder abuse/safeguarding often does not reflect experiences or needs of older women
- Needs of older women not fully considered, or explored, especially relating to domestic or intimate partner violence
- DAPHNE Programme initiatives (esp. DAPHNE 111)

Nature of Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological and emotional
- Financial abuse and exploitation
- Neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse

Nature of Abuse

- Recent additions (Care Act 2014)
- Domestic Violence
 - Psychological, emotional, physical, sexual
 - Honour-based violence
- Modern Slavery
 - Human trafficking
 - Forced Labour
 - Domestic servitude
- Self Neglect

Features of Abuse

- Sexual assault
- Physical assault
- Deprivation and Neglect
- Inappropriate medication
- Involuntary isolation, confinement or abandonment
- Exploitation / Financial abuse
- Psychological abuse (emotional / verbal)
- Poly-victimisation

Extent of Abuse

- Very few specific prevalence studies
- Prevalence rates vary greatly (5-10%)
- UK study (O'Keeffe et al 2007)
 - 2.6% overall (past year); 4% (broader range)
 - Neglect (1.1%)
 - Financial (0.7%)
 - Psychological / Physical (0.4%)
 - Sexual (0.2%)
 - Women more than men (3.8% vs. 1.1%)
 - 85+ years: Women – neglect; men – financial

UK Study

- Perpetrators – 51% partners; 49% - family; 13% - professional; 5% - close friend
- Interpersonal abuse – 80% men; 20% women
- Financial abuse – 56% men; 44% women
- Broader definition: 33% neighbours / acquaintances; comparable to partners (35%) + family (33%)
- Abuse since age 65 years: financial (1.2%); physical (0.8%); sexual (0.3)
- Problems with prevalence studies due to definitions, research methods etc.

EU Programme (specific)

- DAPHNE Programme (Violence Against Women and Children)
- Mainly NGO projects, shaping policy
- Awareness raising (public)
- Training for professionals: health, social care and criminal justice
- Some recent research studies and projects concerning older women

DAPHNE Programme

- DAPHNE I
 - 3 country study looking at recognition, prevention & treatment
 - UK, Ireland, Italy 1998 - 2000 (co-ordinated by UK)
- DAPHNE II
 - Trans-national action on Elder Abuse (financial abuse of older women)
 - 4 Countries: France, Italy, Spain, Belgium
 - Co-ordinated by France (FIAPA); completed (2006-09)

DAPHNE Projects

- DAPHNE II
- Breaking the Taboo: 2006-2008
- 4 countries: Austria, Finland, Portugal, Poland + 4 others co-ordinated by Red Cross, Austria
 - Explored professionals' understandings of abuse
 - Second phase, within DAPHNE III: developing training tools for professionals (awareness-raising, working with situations): 2009-2011

DAPHNE Projects

- DAPHNE III (until 2013)
- 4 projects running 2008-2011
- Breaking the Taboo (second phase)
- AVOW
- EUSTaCEA
- IPVOW (follow-up: Mind the Gap)

DAPHNE Projects

- Abuse and Violence against Older Women (AVOW):
June 2009-June 2011
- 5 country study: Finland (co-ordinator), Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Lithuania
- Prevalence study (cross-national survey design)
- Survey took place over summer 2010
- Not just IPV but domestic violence: in the domestic setting

AVOW Study Findings

- Overall: 28% prevalence (all types)
- Variation: Portugal 39%, Belgium 32%, Finland 25%, Austria 23%, Lithuania 22%
- Emotional abuse most prevalent: 24% (overall)
- Financial abuse next: 9% (except Austria: neglect)
- Sexual abuse: 3% and physical abuse: 2.5% lowest rates
- Nearly half sample were under 70 years old
- Perpetrators were mainly spouses/partners except for neglect (mostly adult children); financial (less difference)

DAPHNE Projects

- European Strategy and Charter on Elder Abuse (EUSTaCEA): Dec 2008-Dec 2010
- Trans-national action: Rights of older women
- Mixed-methods (not prevalence)
- Co-ordinated by AGE Platform (European NGO, based in Brussels)
 - 12 countries involved
- BUT: Not just about elder abuse or violence, charter of rights in more general sense
- Not just about women

DAPHNE Projects

- Intimate Partner Violence and Older Women (IPVoW): 2009 - 2010
- 6 country study: Germany (co-ordinator), Austria, Poland, Hungary, Portugal, UK
- What help do women seek and receive?
- 3 phases:
 - Data collection (what is being collected)
 - Survey of professionals and interviews
 - Interviews with older women (10 per country)

IPVoW: possible impacts (professional views)

- Psychological impacts
 - shame, guilt
 - distress, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - anxiety, depression
- Social impacts
 - isolation
 - loss of family and friends, work
- Physical impacts
 - injuries due to violence
 - illnesses exacerbated by lack of care

Interviews with Older women

- Methods
 - Access women through service providers
 - Difficulties
 - Few older women engaging with services
 - Staff unable to contact women e.g. resources
 - Women not ready to share experiences
 - Make direct contact with women
 - 50+ leaflets, article newspaper
 - Low response rate
 - Barriers – reluctance to talk about abuse, safety

IPVoW – life with violence

- Types of violence
 - all types of abuse – including physical
- Start of violence
 - early on in relationship
 - gradual onset or worsening/significant life events
- Characteristics of perpetrators
 - controlling and jealous
 - financial control
- (from survivors' perspectives on experiences)

Survivors' views on Impacts

- Women
 - Emotional: loss of confidence, low mood, suicidal thoughts, PTSD
 - Social: strained relationships, 'Jekyll and Hyde'
 - Physical: suffocation, broken bones, black eyes, injuries and physical health problems
- Children (effects of violence on them)
 - Witnessed abuse, 'heavy handed' in parenting
 - Future relationships?

Leaving the Violent Relationship

- Of the 10 women interviewed 8 had left their partner....
- Advantages of leaving:
 - 'Peace of mind' and no longer living in fear
 - improved relationships with children
- Difficulties experienced whilst or after leaving:
 - increase in violence, other types of 'control'
 - financial implications, loss of home
 - increased strain between family members
 - loneliness

Staying in the Relationship

- 2 woman interviewed were still in their relationships...
- Reasons for staying
 - Felt safe, situation changed
 - Stay in family home
 - Financial security
 - Put in perspective.....
- Disadvantages of staying
 - Unhappy relationship
 - Resentment

Needs of older women

- Continuity of support – one named worker
- Appropriate accommodation
 - Close to family and friends
 - Options and choice available
- Practical support - financial support if unable to access financial assets
- More information on the support available, raising awareness and broadening people's understanding of definition of 'abuse/violence'
- Early intervention
 - Education about domestic violence in schools

Mind the Gap Project

- Followed on from IPVoW: 2011- 2013
- Improving criminal justice and social support agency recognition and responses
- Analysis of 150 police case files
- Developing recommendations on guidance
- Developing recommendations on training
- Developing awareness raising material



MIND THE GAP!

IMPROVING INTERVENTION IN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN

Recommendations for Police and Crown Prosecution Service Guidance



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IMPROVING INTERVENTION IN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN

Information for Social Support Practitioners



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IMPROVING INTERVENTION IN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN

Guidance for Social Support Organisations



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IMPROVING INTERVENTION IN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN

Training Material for Police and the Crown Prosecution Service



Further considerations

- Cohort changes may result in additional issues
 - Some gains in rights for women
 - Some increase in labour-market participation
 - Some gender equality legislation
 - Some development of policy and legislation on violence against women
 - Some attitudinal and perceptual change – zero tolerance
- Will we see changes in levels of violence against older women?

Future possibilities

- Obtain older peoples' perspectives on abuse, on impacts and responses, especially older women
- Include individuals at all stages
- Working together on Safeguarding:
 - Adult social care; Housing and Health, NGOs
 - Domestic Violence forums and agencies
 - Police and criminal justice agencies
- Developing joined-up approaches, extending concept of multi-agency working
- Responding to individual's needs: individualised and personalised approaches

Other Developments

- Human Rights perspectives
- UN principles for older persons
- MIPAA commitment to rights
- Strengthening Older People's Rights
- Focus on ageism, age discrimination and violation of rights
- Includes right to freedom from violence
- UN Expert Working Group on Violence against Older Women
- OEWG – towards a UN convention of rights?

The Way Forward?

- Improve recognition, awareness, understanding of domestic violence, elder abuse and human rights
- Develop policies to prevent, protect and promote rights
- Promote education (including general awareness raising) and training
- Centrality of older women in processes and development of policy and practice
- Improve and extend partnerships to join up safeguarding, domestic violence and rights-based approaches

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Finally....

- Thanks for listening
- And thanks for being here today
- Thanks for your interest
- Thanks for your commitment to this issue
- Together we can make a difference....