

Silence is not always golden

TACKLING **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**



Introduction

Domestic violence is often referred to as an 'invisible crime'. For the families of the two women killed each week by their partners or ex-partners, however, it is far from invisible. As the first guidance for schools on domestic violence issued by the National Union of Teachers, this document has great significance.

The consequences of domestic violence are often devastating and long term, affecting the physical health and mental well being of women and girls. At the same time, its ripple effects compromise the social development of children in the household; the family as a unit; the communities in which they live; and, society as a whole.

The NUT is committed to working for equality in schools and within education more broadly. This guidance sets out the support that NUT school representatives and division secretaries can give NUT members and how the issue of domestic violence can be raised in the workplace.

Domestic violence may occur behind closed doors but everyone has a part to play in its eradication. This document gives guidance on how the curriculum can be used to raise the importance of the issue and demonstrate to young people that violence should not be tolerated.

Steve Sinnott
General Secretary

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of abusive or controlling behaviour and is widespread. It is rarely a one-off event; it tends over time to increase in frequency and severity. Domestic violence occurs irrespective of background and circumstance, race or ethnicity, sexuality, age, or disability and the overwhelming majority of victims are female and abusers male.

The Government definition of domestic violence is, "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 definition replaces the various definitions used by Government departments and agencies. The definition is supported by an explanatory text that makes it clear that domestic violence includes female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so-called 'honour crimes'.

The Crown Prosecution Service recognises that 'domestic violence' is a general term to describe a range of behaviour often used by one person to control and dominate another with whom they have, or have had, a close or family relationship. The CPS Policy on Domestic Violence applies when dealing with criminal offences that occur in a domestic context involving victims and abusers whatever their age, because of the importance of victim's and children's safety and defendant accountability.¹

Different forms of violence against women

These guidelines focus on domestic violence. Violence against women in the United Kingdom, however, includes rape and sexual assault from strangers, sexual harassment, so-called 'honour' crimes, female genital mutilation, trafficking, forced prostitution and forced marriage. Victims may experience several forms of abuse at the same time; for example, forced marriage is a form of domestic violence that may involve sexual assault or rape and the threat of 'honour killing'.

Reunite International estimates that 1000 British Asian girls are forced into marriage against their will each year. Police in London receive 2 calls per week from women and girls reporting so called 'honour crimes', such as being forced into marriage or being threatened with murder by their families.

Forced marriages, i.e. marriages conducted without the full consent of both parties and under duress, are not part of any religion and should not be confused with arranged marriages. It should be remembered that this issue is not solely an issue, as is commonly perceived, for British Asian communities. In England and Wales, there are cases involving families with origins in East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. The DfES and the Home Office has published guidance for education professionals setting out the 'warning signs' of students forced in to marriage against their will.²

A video has been produced jointly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the DfES which gives school staff information on how to deal with forced marriage cases.

Why focus preventative work in schools?

Research on children and domestic violence has demonstrated not only that it is perfectly possible to talk to children and young people about interpersonal violence but also that there is a great need to do so.³

This is because young people are confused about the issue and want to learn more, and because those children who have lived with violence want to talk about it and make sense of their experiences.⁴ For all young people, whether or not they have lived with violence, peers emerge as an important source of support. Young people often find it easier to talk to their friends than to adults and discussing the issues together may be their favoured way of learning.

Research shows that prevention work in schools should start at or prior to the age 11, before attitudes begin to harden. Schools are perfect places to work with children and young people while they form their ideas about relationships. The aim should be to prevent violence from being a feature in their lives, rather than to intervene after the event.

The belief that children and young people who live with violence are themselves most likely to grow up to be violent is not substantiated by research. Indeed, children who have seen the impact of abuse are often strongly opposed to the repetition of such patterns in their own adult lives.⁵

Tackling domestic violence through the curriculum

Attitudes towards women and girls that regard them as inferior to men and boys lie at the heart of most domestic violence. Within a broader context of schools' work on respect and conflict resolution, work needs to focus on gender stereotypes, on mutual respect in intimate relationships, and on challenging the condoning of domestic violence. Work on school culture and the prevention of bullying can usefully incorporate work on homophobic and racist abuse, as well as sexist bullying. It should always retain a focus on the causes of domestic violence as an essential element.

Research recognises that violence perpetrated against women is one of the ways in which male power is used to control women. It is these underlying attitudes that can be challenged by schools as part of the whole school ethos. A study of educational programmes by the University of Warwick for *Womankind Worldwide* has shown that the issue should be addressed on a continuing basis otherwise the effect evaporates within a year. Tackling sexism and violence against women should therefore be part of the whole school culture and not a "one-off" exercise.

Learning can spread far beyond Personal Social and Health Education into specific subject areas such as Drama and English and potentially to every area of the curriculum. It is highly relevant to Citizenship education, for example in relation to valuing people equally, respecting the law, and being a good citizen. There are also obvious links with equal opportunities policies in individual schools.

Teachers and governors need preparation and training before such work is undertaken. Targeted work by schools could lead to an increase in disclosures. Schools should establish close working links with agencies in the domestic violence field; some local Women's Aid Organisations work with schools to provide domestic violence training and support for children in schools and many local authorities have domestic violence support officers for schools.

The Children Act 2004 established a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation between agencies in order to improve children's well-being. 'Well-being' is defined by the Government in its *Every Child Matters* policies by reference to five outcomes: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being. This new duty will commence on 1 April 2005. More details on these changes can be found at: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.

Citizenship, Sex and Relationships Education and Personal Social and Health Education and specific subject areas provide opportunities for teachers to raise awareness of domestic violence and to encourage discussion and debate. Through the wider curriculum and particularly through Citizenship and Personal Social and Health Education, schools can seek to:

- consider concepts of power within relationships and how these can lead to violence in the home;
- address the gender stereotypes that continue to exist surrounding 'male' and 'female' behaviour, characteristics, and skills;
- challenge the attitudes that can lead to violent behaviour;
- inform pupils about the reasons why women can be forced to stay with violent partners such as financial insecurity, threats against their children or family or depression and mental health problems;
- discuss ways of making relationships work effectively such as the need for communication and listening;
- inform pupils about the legal consequences of domestic violence and that it is against the law and that domestic violence is against the law;
- provide information on the fact that there are a range of organisations and agencies who can assist the victims of domestic violence;
- use the packs, resources, and lesson plans listed in Appendix 1; and
- organise events to celebrate the White Ribbon Campaign, which runs through November, leading up to the 25th, which is White Ribbon Day (International Day Against Violence Against Women).

What can schools do to challenge gender stereotypes?

It is important that schools consistently play an active role in challenging prejudice, gender stereotyping and discrimination against women.

Sexist language and playground banter that seeks to legitimise violence against women should be challenged. Schools should consider the following challenges:

- how they can enlist the help of parents/carers in questioning stereotypes;
- the role of pupils and students in taking forward gender issues;
- to what extent gender issues are included in policy planning and development;
- how behaviour policies impact on girls and boys;
- whether they are doing everything possible to make classrooms and teaching spaces welcoming to both sexes and to use resources that are free from gender bias;
- how the ethos takes account of female and male pupils, students and teachers;
- how they may challenge traditional attitudes to career routes and work placements for boys and girls; and
- their response to instances of sexist bullying and name calling and whether gender violence is covered in policies on bullying.⁶

Violence against women often means violence against families

Statistics confirm the strong link between domestic violence and child abuse. One in three child protection cases shows a history of domestic violence to the mother. Children living with domestic violence are three to nine times more likely to be injured and abused, either directly or while trying to protect a parent.

In a significant number of cases women and their children are abused by the same adult male perpetrator in the family. There are, however, other patterns of child abuse, some of which include women as abusers.

In some cases of domestic violence the perpetrator may use children as a way of controlling and manipulating the mother and to stop her from seeking help and support. Women often do not report domestic violence because they fear that they may lose their children.

Impact on children

Children can be affected in many ways by living with domestic violence. There is no set pattern of signs or symptoms. It is widely accepted that there are dramatic and serious effects of children witnessing domestic violence, which can result in behavioural problems, absenteeism, ill health, bullying, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm and psychosocial impacts. The extent to which even very young children can be aware of violence and of the long term damaging effects on a child's health, educational attainment and emotional well-being, is frequently underestimated.

Moving from former family homes to new accommodation may mean changes of school. Change of school can be a difficult time for a family but the particular circumstances associated with escape from domestic violence can make it an even more difficult, particularly if there is a delay before a school place can be found. If a mother changes her address often or enters a refuge to escape her violent partner, social isolation and loss of friends add to the insecurity of children.

Responsibilities on schools to safeguard children

- LEAs and schools have responsibilities to ensure that child protection policies are in place and that procedures are well established and accessible.
- Governing bodies should ensure that schools have senior members of the leadership team designated to take lead responsibility for dealing with all child protection matters, including domestic violence.

Child protection training

Staff who work with children, including teachers, should have access to basic child protection training that equips them to recognise and respond to child welfare concerns. The depth and detail of training needed will vary according to the nature of their role.

Teachers with designated lead responsibility for child protection should receive training in inter-agency procedures that enables them to work in partnership with other agencies, and which gives them the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil their responsibilities. Such staff should undertake refresher training at two-yearly intervals to maintain their knowledge and skills.

As a result of the changes being introduced by the Government following the Children Act 2004, Area Child Protection Committees are to be replaced by 2006 with Local Safeguarding Children Boards. These boards will have a legal duty to co-ordinate local preventative safeguarding strategies and to undertake child protection work, including on domestic violence.

What to do if you have concerns about a child's welfare

Teachers with concerns about the welfare of children should:

- listen positively and reassure the child or young person, but without guaranteeing complete confidentiality; and
- speak to the designated person for child protection within the school.

Designated persons will contact relevant specialist agencies where appropriate about particular needs of children experiencing domestic violence.

Women often seek help from relatives or from local voluntary organisations because their greatest fear is that their children will be taken into care.⁷ Abused women, therefore, tend to avoid social services as a first point of call and to seek help from friends and relatives, independent advice services and the other domestic violence organisations listed in Appendix 2.

Making an Impact, a training pack launched in 1998 by the Department of Health, clearly recommends that supporting the non-abusing parent is the most effective way of reducing risks to the child. Only the abuser is responsible for the violence. Although abused women often give their partners another chance "for the sake of the children", Women's Aid reports that it is the effects of domestic violence on the children which frequently spurs women into terminating the relationship.

Proper training and support should be provided for all relevant staff to ensure that the questioning of children or discussions about these issues with women is done in a way that supports the non-abusing parent. Questioning should not result in children and their mothers being re-victimised, for example by inappropriately removing children into care.

Domestic violence is a trade union issue

Domestic violence is a widespread but often invisible crime. It is an issue for trade unionists and for teachers. It can have devastating consequences. In many schools there will be staff who suffer domestic violence.

Domestic violence causes several kinds of mental disorder including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. Further, domestic violence is associated with attempted and completed suicide.

Domestic violence reduces a victim's capacities and capabilities in many ways, one of which is the ability to work. This may include:

- lost days of employment as a result of injuries, fear and anxiety;
- time spent seeking help and seeing doctors and lawyers;
- lost promotion as a result of working beneath potential as a result of injuries, fear and anxiety; and
- jobs lost as a result of poor work performance and the need to move locality in order to escape a violent partner.⁸

For many women suffering domestic violence, the workplace can be a haven. It may be only at work that those experiencing abuse at home can escape the fear of violence.

A recent report from the Women and Equality Unit said that:

“broken bones and black eyes are the most obvious signs of the damage being done by domestic violence, but the repercussions of those attacks go much deeper. Victims suffer on many levels. They live in a shadow of fear and lose the freedom to carry on their lives as they would choose. For many victims, escaping domestic violence means leaving their home, possessions and financial security. They have an impossible choice between freedom in poverty or staying in an abusive relationship”.

Who experiences domestic violence?

This guide refers in particular to women as experiencing domestic violence. Home Office research reveals that up to half of all UK women have experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives. Whilst nearly half of women and a quarter of men report being subject to an incident of interpersonal violence, when there are more than 4 incidents, 89 per cent of victims are women and *“the more frequent and severe the violence the greater the gender asymmetry”*.⁹ Domestic abuse remains the most common form of violence that women experience.¹⁰

Every week at least two women in the UK are killed by a current or former partner. Domestic violence accounts for almost one quarter of all reported violent crimes and there is one call per minute to the police about domestic violence.¹¹ These figures are not disaggregated by ethnicity and the extent of violence suffered by minority ethnic women, therefore, is not known. It is known, however, that a disproportionate 40 per cent of women in refuges are from minority ethnic communities.¹²

Domestic violence impacts on all women including teachers

Women of all different cultures, backgrounds, age and ethnicity suffer domestic violence. Domestic violence occurs within same sex couples and research indicates that disabled people face disproportionately high incidents of domestic violence.

Women from black and minority ethnic groups may face additional barriers to finding places of safety. They may be reluctant to approach the police. Organisations campaigning for black and minority ethnic women in relation to domestic violence, matrimonial rights and family problems are listed in Appendix 2.

A TUC Survey included evidence from a number of teachers from different parts of the country suffering domestic violence.¹³ Women in the TUC Survey spoke of their sense of shame and their unwillingness to talk to anyone and uncertainty about who they could talk to.

Advice to school representatives

This publication can be the basis of school-based discussions on a range of issues and policies including those below:

- the consequences of domestic violence for schools generally;
- the training of school staff on the identification of domestic violence and the steps to be taken; and

- procedures to provide for the sympathetic and confidential receipt of reports of incidents of domestic violence.

Attention can be drawn to the organisations listed in Appendix 2. You can download this material directly from the equal opportunities section of the NUT website at www.teachers.org.uk.

A workplace issue

Those suffering domestic violence should know where they can turn for help. Coming out of this situation requires legal, physical and emotional support. Appropriate specialist agencies are listed at the back of this guidance in Appendix 2. For advice and support, NUT members should consult their NUT regional office or, in Wales, NUT Cymru.

In England, the Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline – **0808 2000 247** – is run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge. This offers information and support for women experiencing domestic violence, including referral to local refuges and support services. In Wales, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline is **0808 80 10 800** (Freephone 8am -2pm, 8pm -2am).

Some employees may not want their employer or trade union representative to know about their abuse. Letting a work colleague know about domestic violence, however, can be helpful. An employee may be relieved to be able to confide in someone at work, particularly if by doing so, absence or deterioration in performance can be explained and understood.

Workplace policies on domestic violence

Many people who experience violence can take a long time to break free of an abusive relationship. For complex reasons people remain with, or return to, violent partners. It is important that there be no critical judgements made about such decisions. Many women report difficulties in reporting abuse because they fear disbelief.¹⁴

Flexible arrangements can be introduced, that are supportive of staff suffering from domestic violence.¹⁵ Women's Aid has produced CD-ROM guidance for employees on developing workplace policies and good practice in response to domestic violence. A workplace policy can include the provisions set out below.

- Victims of domestic violence should not be penalised for coming in late, going absent at short notice or taking sick leave.
- Periods of special paid or unpaid leave should be arranged.
- Information should be available about local help or support, including culturally appropriate services where appropriate.
- Contacts should be identified for advice where one parent seeks to remove a pupil without consent of the other parent.
- Employees' confidentiality should be protected if they raise this issue in the workplace.
- Steps should be taken to raise awareness of the issue in the workplace.

The NUT's Approach

The NUT seeks to:

- support and empower individuals to gain control and choice over their own lives and to approach the NUT if they need support at work;
- help schools better meet the needs of children living with or fleeing domestic violence through awareness raising, training and a 'whole school approach' ¹⁶ on bullying, citizenship and personal and social relationships;
- create an environment, attitude and culture within schools as workplaces where individuals suffering from domestic violence are confident that they will be treated in a supportive and sympathetic way; and
- reduce social tolerance and 'normalisation' of domestic violence and violence against women more generally so that it is no longer excused, minimised or ignored.

References

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7. C. Abrahams, *The Hidden Victims*, (London, NHC Action for Children, 1984)
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14. Women's National Commission, *Unlocking the Secret: findings from consultation with survivors*, (2003)
15. TUC, *Domestic Violence: A Guide for the Workplace*
16. J. Ellis, *Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls: A Study of Educational Programmes for Children and Young People*, University of Warwick for Womankind Worldwide, (2004)

This guide has been developed using materials and information from the Home Office, Women's Aid Federation of England, Womankind Worldwide, Amnesty International, the Women and Equality Unit and the TUC, research by Audrey Mullender and Jane Ellis, and workplace policies already implemented in England and Wales. Many of the ideas have been drawn from the NUT's task group on domestic violence. Thanks to Rebecca Gill, TUC; Eleri Butler, Women's Aid; and Lis Martin, Womankind Worldwide who have all contributed to this guidance.

APPENDIX 1

Safe and sound: A resource manual for working with children who have experienced domestic violence

Available from Women's Aid website www.womensaid.org.uk or by contacting Women's Aid directly on 0117 944 4411

Safe and sound provides a comprehensive guide to every aspect of providing services for children who have experienced domestic violence, ranging from record keeping and safety planning, to group work, circle games and using art and IT. It looks at disclosures of abuse, advocacy and child contact.

The UK Gold Book: A guide to refuge and domestic abuse services 2004/05

Available from Women's Aid website www.womensaid.org.uk or on 0117 944 4411

This is the only UK directory that provides public contact details for refuge and domestic abuse services for women and children. It is a key resource that enables survivors of domestic violence, agencies and relevant professionals to locate appropriate services with ease and efficiency.

Does Sex Make A Difference?: An equalities resource pack for teachers and personal advisers

Available from www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research

Does Sex Make a Difference is produced by the Women and Equality Unit at the DTI and is aimed at teachers. It contains statistics and lesson plans on all aspects of gender equality including domestic violence.

'Challenging Violence, Changing Lives' meets PSHE and Citizenship guidelines for years 9 & 10.

To order a free CD Rom from Womankind Worldwide's UK education programme, e-mail sian@womankind.org.uk or phone Sian Morgan on 020 7549 0375

www.womankind.org.uk

Womankind Worldwide has produced a free CD Rom for secondary schools to enable young people to reject gender-based violence by joining the international White Ribbon Campaign, and making a public commitment never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women.

The activities run from the summer to the autumn term culminating in a local awareness raising campaign to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25th November).

Amnesty International Campaign 'Stop Violence Against Women'

Available from www.amnesty.org.uk/svaw

Posters, postcards, fact sheets and information about Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women campaign.

Schools Domestic Violence Prevention Pack by Westminster Domestic Violence Prevention Pack

Available on 0208 8690 3266 or from vicky@westminsterdomesticviolenceforum.org.uk

This pack, produced by Westminster Domestic Violence Forum, was developed through three years of work in local Westminster schools. It links a range of activities for use in the classroom with national curriculum and anti-bullying work

For further resources for schools...

Go to the NUT website www.teachers.org.uk

APPENDIX 2

Amnesty International Stop Violence Against Women Campaign

99-110 Roseberry Avenue, London EC1R 4RE

Tel: 0207 814 6200

Email: svaw@amnesty.org.uk

www.amnesty.org.uk/svaw

Broken Rainbow (Pan London LGBT Domestic Violence Forum)

c/o HGLC 40 Borough High Street, London SE1 1BS

Helpline (Survivors): 020 8539 9507 Helpline (Agencies): 020 8558 8674

A 24 hour helpline service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people who are experiencing domestic violence.

Kiran – Asian Women's Aid

Tel: 020 8558 1986

www.rdlogo.com/cwp/kawa/index.html

Kiran provides safe, temporary accommodation for Asian women and their children escaping domestic violence.

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

Tel: 020 7837 7324

www.llgs.org.uk

24 hour information, support and referral service for lesbians and gay men.

ManKind

Helpline: 0870 794 4124

www.mankind.org.uk

ManKind helps and advises male victims of domestic violence.

Southall Black Sisters

52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 4DW

Tel: 020 8571 9595

Advice, emotional support and help for black and Asian women.

Teachers Support Line

England 08000 562 561 Wales 08000 855 088

www.teachersupport.info

Women's Aid Federation of England

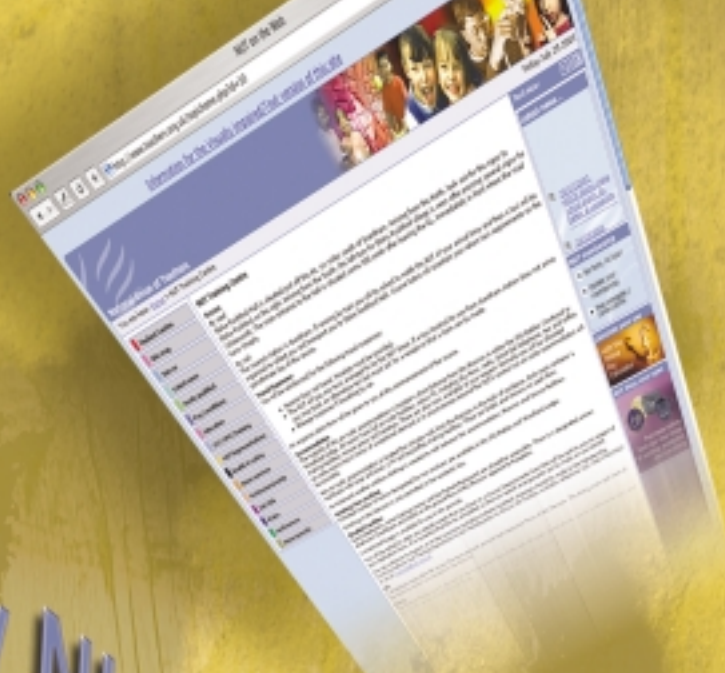
England – Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge.

www.womensaid.org.uk

National charity working to end domestic violence against women and children, co-ordinating an England-wide network of local domestic violence services for women and children including specific provision for Black and minority ethnic women.

Leaflets available on the myths, Housing, and Your Legal Rights, available via the Women's Aid website www.womensaid.org.uk or by contacting Women's Aid directly on 0117 944 4411. A 12-page leaflet 'Getting Free From Domestic Violence' is available in Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, English, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Somali, Turkish and Urdu.

The new NUT website
now, more informative,
action packed and
easier to use than ever...



www.teachers.org.uk

