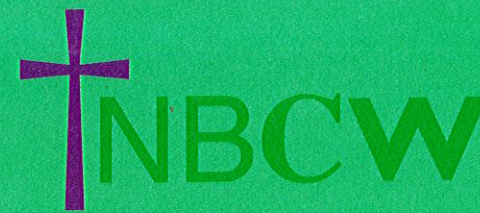


# National Board of Catholic Women

Consultative body to the Bishops' Conference for England and Wales  
Consultative status with United Nations ( ECOSOC)



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## Diocesan Links

Arundel and Brighton\*  
Birmingham  
Brentwood  
Cardiff  
Clifton\*  
East Anglia  
Hallam  
Hexham & Newcastle  
Lancaster  
Leeds  
Liverpool  
Menevia\*  
Middlesbrough  
Northampton  
Nottingham  
Plymouth  
Portsmouth  
Salford  
Shrewsbury  
Southwark  
The Forces  
Westminster  
Wrexham

\*No link appointed to date

## Constituent Organisations

Association of Catholic Chaplains in Education  
British Federation of Notre Dame Associations  
Catholic Association for Racial Justice  
Catholic People's Weeks  
Catholic Women's League  
Christian Life Community  
Conference of Religious  
English Society of the Grail  
Federation of Polish Catholic Women's Organisations Abroad  
National Justice and Peace Networks  
Marriage Care  
National Conference of Secular Institutes  
Newman Association  
Pax Christi  
St Joan's Association Alliance  
The Union of Catholic Mothers  
Union of Catholic Mothers (Wales)  
Women Word Spirit

## Liaison Representatives

European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations (*Andante*)  
CAFOD  
National Council of Lay Associations  
Progressio  
World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations

# Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse

- The National Board of Catholic Women was established in 1939. It provides a forum for Catholic women of England and Wales to come together to share their views and concerns at a diocesan and national level.
- The National Board of Catholic Women initiated and established Family Fast Day, from which CAFOD developed.
- It is a member of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations and a founder member of Andante- a European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations. It is a consultative body to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and has consultative status with the United Nations ( ECOSOC):

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# RAISING AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

A resource pack compiled by  
the Marriage and Family Committee  
and updated by the Social Responsibility Committee of  
The National Board of Catholic Women

## CONTENTS

Foreword	page 3
Introduction	4
What is Domestic Abuse?	5
Domestic Violence Statistics	7
Myths and Realities	8
Stories	9
What the Church teaches about Domestic Abuse	10
Theological Reflection by Professor Mary Grey	13
Children and Domestic Abuse	17
Elder Abuse	18
Black and Minority Ethnic Communities	19
The Legal Situation	20
Pastoral Care	
i. What can everyone do?	24
ii. What can men do?	25
iii. What can the priest and parish do?	26
Additional Information on National Organisations and Groups	27
Domestic Abuse Telephone Helplines (Poster)	28
Acknowledgements	29

Published by: The National Board of Catholic Women (2010)

Compiled by: Social Responsibility Standing Committee of the National Board of Catholic Women

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this publication. The contents are believed to be correct at the time of going to press, but changes may have occurred since that time.

Design and origination: Norton James Design  
Email: nojamdes@aol.com

Hard copies available at £3.00 including p.p. cheques made payable to:  
NBCW (Social Responsibility) and sent to the address below.

This document is designed to be photocopied in part or as a whole

This document may be downloaded from [www.nbcw.org](http://www.nbcw.org)

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## Foreword

This booklet has been compiled by the Marriage and Family and the Social Responsibility Committees of the National Board of Catholic Women. Its aim is to increase the awareness of individual Catholics - both men and women - and of the Church in general, to the incidence and reality of domestic abuse. This initiative is the Board's response to the current determination, both in this country and in Europe, to make abuse against women totally unacceptable.

The term 'domestic abuse' is used, increasingly, to indicate a wider understanding of a range of behaviours which can happen over a period of time of which violence is one aspect. We hope that the information in this booklet will prove useful to groups of interested Catholic men and women, to parishes, dioceses and to clergy. It is not designed, primarily, as a resource for women who may be victims of domestic violence or abuse; rather it is envisaged as an introduction to the subject for those involved in pastoral care.

We are aware, given the constraints of space, that this booklet cannot cover this subject exhaustively; neither can it provide details of local initiatives and resources. What we hope it will do, however, is to encourage its readers to seek out and support such initiatives, publicising them more widely within their parishes. We believe that promoting a greater awareness of the problem will, together with the support of existing, specialised initiatives and projects, be the most effective method by which Catholics will be able to help those women, men and children who are victims of domestic violence or abuse.

Once you have studied the booklet we would suggest that, as a first practical step, you may like to photocopy the information and helpline sheets, found towards the back of the pack, and display these on the notice boards in your churches and parish centres. The sheets provide spaces for you to include the relevant, local telephone numbers. We are convinced that such information could be of positive help to victims of domestic abuse and could make a difference.

**Christine Newman**  
President NBCW

*This booklet has been designed to be photocopied in part or as a whole.*

## Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is:

- To raise awareness within the Catholic community, of the reality of violence and abuse taking place within the home, and involving spouses and children. This abuse may be physical, emotional and psychological.
- To encourage Catholic parishes to become places of safety for people seeking to escape domestic abuse especially women, and women with children.
- To provide a resource for those who have survived abusive situations and need time and space to recover
- To provide a resource for those offering pastoral care and guidance.

### *A theological perspective.*

Domestic violence and abuse are not addressed directly in the Catechism of the Catholic Church nor in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Instead the essential nature of marriage as a commitment by the spouses to love, respect and nurture each other is emphasized in both documents, as is the evil of violence.

- In her theological reflection in this document Professor Mary Grey writes that each individual, woman and man, is created equal in the image of God and is to live in relationships of mutual support of encouragement and equality. She speaks of a, “*compassionate Jesus,*” but also of “*an empowering Jesus, giving courage to break the cycles of violence through the strength of His ever-present Spirit.*”
- Our imperfect human nature means that while we should strive for perfection, this is often not achieved. Even within marriage, relationships can break down and instead of support and encouragement, great pain and suffering is inflicted.
- The Church has a responsibility to recognise that violence does occur within marriage and relationships in the home. The wider Christian family should be prepared to support those in need and to exercise its healing ministry.
- Certain scriptural texts, which refer to marriage and relationships between spouses, are open to misinterpretation. It is important to emphasise that both scripture and the teaching of the church on which it is based, proclaim that marriage is based on love, trust, mutual respect and support between spouses, that all forms of abuse are thus excluded and constitute a violation of the essential nature of marriage. Domestic abuse is a sin. The Church needs to make this clear and encourage clergy to use appropriate opportunities to counter any suggestion that scripture can be exploited to justify domestic violence or other more subtle forms of abuse.

### *Practical aspects.*

There are many groups and individuals within and outside the Church who work with the survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is not only a sin but it is a crime. For this reason it should not be ‘covered up’ by the community. There are many public bodies and voluntary organisations trained to deal with incidents of domestic abuse, and good working relationships should be developed between the local Church and those agencies. These guidelines will help to signpost access to outside help.

## Acknowledgments:

The NBCW is grateful to the following who have contributed or have given permission for their material to be used in the booklet:

- Womens' Aid
- Professor Mary Grey, St Mary's University College, Twickenham, TW1 4SX
- Bishop George Stack, Auxiliary Bishop of the Westminster Diocese.
- Churches Together in England, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH

We also wish to thank those who have helped in the task by contributing suggestions, writing sections, proof reading etc

- Patricia Stoot – NBCW Bio-ethics Committee Convener
- Rosemary Keenan NBCW Marriage and Family Committee convener, Director of the Childrens' Society, Westminster.
- Verena Wright, Diocesan Link, Portsmouth
- Pauline Hubbard and Helen Gamble.
- Members of the NBCW Social Responsibility Committee

Pearl Clarke	- The Grail
Ita Flach	- Catholic Women's League
Sr Lynda Dearlove MBE	- Director of Women@theWell
Alison Gelder	- Director of Housing Justice
Jackie McLoughlin MBE	- Sutton Refugee and Migrant Network
Yogi Sutton	- NBCW Immediate Past President
Freda Lambert	- NBCW Past President.
Celia Capstick	- Convener of the Social Responsibility Committee

Celia Capstick and Freda Lambert are members of the *Violence Against Women* subgroup of the Social Responsibility Committee and are also members of the *Domestic Abuse Working Group* of the Department of Christian Responsibility and Citizenship (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales) which includes Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), Marriage and Family Life Committee (MFL) and Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS).

## Domestic Abuse Telephone Helplines

You will find most local numbers in your local community telephone book or from the websites - insert for your own convenience.

ORGANISATION	TELEPHONE NO.
PPOLICE (EMERGENCY CALLS)	999
LOCAL POLICE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT	
LOCAL VICTIM SUPPORT GROUP	
LOCAL CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU	
LOCAL LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE	
LOCAL COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE	
SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT	
HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT	
WOMENS AID (national emergency)	0808 2000 247
Local	
LOCAL WOMEN'S REFUGE	
RAPE CRISIS for local Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)	NHS 0845 4647
RAPE and SEXUAL ABUSE Counselling (RASAC)	01962 848018
RELATE —relationship advice (national)	0300 100 1234
(Local)	
LOCAL MARRIAGE CARE	
SAMARITANS (national)	08457 90 90 90
(Local)	
HIV /AIDS NATIONAL HELPLINE	0800 567 123
CHILDLINE (FREE PHONE)	0800 1111
CHILDREN'S LEGAL CENTRE	0845 120 2948
SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (parish or diocesan)	

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS A CRIME

## What is domestic abuse?

The Government defines domestic abuse as “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 communities such as so called honour killings.”

Women's Aid further describes the violence as “forming a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. Domestic violence may include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are in themselves inherently violent”.

### Financial or economic abuse include:

- Preventing a partner from getting a job.
- Harassing a partner at work.
- Denying a partner's access to money.
- Stealing a partner's or children's money.
- Gambling in a way that threatens a family's standard of living.
- Making major financial decisions alone.
- Running up debts.
- Withholding money to enforce a course of action: dictating expenditure.

### Psychological abuse includes:

- Threat to harm or kill their partner.
- Threat to commit suicide.
- Threat to place a person with disabilities in a home or in care.
- Threat to report a partner to social services or immigration.
- Threat to take the children away.
- Threats to harm or kill others, including family members, friends or pets.
- Threats to harm or kill an unborn child.
- Threats to have partner 'sectioned' under the Mental Health Act.
- Never leaving a partner alone.
- Locking a partner in the house or another place.
- Controlling whom a partner sees and, or what a partner does.
- Preventing a partner from using the telephone or receiving mail.
- Stalking a partner.
- Shouting, mocking and verbal abuse.

### Emotional abuse includes:

- Calling a partner names, e.g. fat, ugly, stupid, mad, junkie.
- Constantly accusing a partner of having affairs.
- Humiliating a partner.
- Convincing a partner they are 'mad'.
- Criticising sexual performance.
- Withholding sex or affection.
- Criticising parenting skills.
- Constantly denigrating, questioning or interrogating partner.
- Making a partner feel guilty.

- Undermining a partner's confidence.
- Telling a partner no-one will believe them if they report the violence.
- Prolonged sulking.
- Persistent lying to a partner.

### *Physical abuse includes:*

- Violence which can lead to murder such as - smothering, strangling, stabbing, burning, starving, withholding medication, causing miscarriage
- Serious violence can include pinching, punching, kicking, biting, slapping, pulling hair, throwing objects.

### *Sexual abuse includes:*

- Rape.
- Sexual assault with an object.
- Forcing a partner to commit sexual acts.
- Forcing a partner into prostitution or sex with other people.
- Forcing a partner to see/use/perform pornography.

### *Spiritual abuse includes:*

- Refusing to allow a partner to go to church or practise their faith.
- Using religion as a weapon of control.
- Using religious teaching to justify abuse e.g. 'obey your husband'.

## Additional Information on National Organisations and Groups

### **Police Domestic Violence Units**

Most police forces have Community Safety Units which have a specially trained team to deal with domestic violence cases. Many have women officers who can help traumatised victims. For example, information on all the London boroughs can be found on: [www.met.police.uk/dv/information/htm](http://www.met.police.uk/dv/information/htm). Other police forces' Community Safety Units will be found in your local phone books and on websites.

**The Home Office** has a national helpline 0808 2000 247

### **Women's Aid**

Women's Aid is the key national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. It supports a network of over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK. It has an excellent website with links to other related services e.g. housing. Its refuges provide emergency shelter and support including legal advice for women (and their children) who have been abused.

Contact a free national emergency domestic violence helpline: 0808 2000 247.

General enquiries: 0117 944 4411 email: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk) website: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

### **Rights of Women**

Sexual violence legal advice Tel: 020 7251 8887

### **Respect**

For domestic violence perpetrators. Open Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays 10-1 & 2-5.

Tel: 0845 122 8609

### **Forced Marriage Unit**

This is a government unit providing advice and assistance for those at risk of being forced into marriage overseas. Tel: 020 7008 0151 [www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage)

### **Shelter**

A national organisation providing telephone housing advice and information on such issues as emergency accommodation, hostel referrals, housing benefits/rights and illegal eviction etc.

Shelterline: 0808 800 4444 [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

### **Marriage Care** (formerly Catholic Marriage Advisory Council)

Supports marriage, relationships and family life [www.marriagecare.org.uk](http://www.marriagecare.org.uk)

Tel: 020 7371 1341 - provides general information and contact details of local branches.

Confidential helpline: 0845 660 6000 Monday to Friday 10.00-16.00

### **Local Authority Housing and Social Services**

Local Authority Housing and Social Services have a duty to provide temporary accommodation for women and their children who have left their home because of domestic violence. There is now also the Sanctuary scheme by which the perpetrator is the one who has to leave the family home.

[www.communities.gov.uk/domesticviolence](http://www.communities.gov.uk/domesticviolence)

Telephone numbers and websites can be found in your local telephone book.

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

Offers free, independent and confidential advice.

## What can the priest and parish do?

The parish is in a unique position to provide love, care and an ethos of safety for victims of domestic abuse.

- If possible, a member of the parish or of the pastoral team should be designated and trained to look after domestic abuse cases. In many parishes this could be the Safeguarding Officer.
- Listen to the victim and accept the statement as true. Never take any action which might put the victim or the victim's children in more danger. Do not act without the victim's consent, unless the children are in danger, in which case the local Social Services should be informed immediately.
- Marriage is a sacrament and a covenant between a man and a woman. In a case of serious domestic violence a victim should never be encouraged to remain in the same house as the perpetrator in the hope of saving the marriage or for the sake of the family. (See Canon Law 1153). Violence is totally unacceptable
- Ensure that Marriage Preparation courses cover problems of domestic violence in marriage, its effects and sources of help.
- Make links with groups and organizations which support victims of abuse such as Victim Support, Women's Aid, Police Domestic Violence Units.
- Consider raising the issue of domestic violence or abuse during a homily or a service of reconciliation. It is likely that there will be number of victims and perpetrators in the congregation. Emphasise that domestic violence is a sin and a criminal offence.
- Where there are groups in the parish, for example Mother and Toddler groups, SVP, parish school, there is the possibility that they may have contact with survivors of domestic abuse. Volunteers, workers should be alert to the possibility of meeting women who are survivors and ensure they know how to respond appropriately.
- Display information about support agencies and organizations for domestic violence and other forms of abuse – both national and local - which are provided in this booklet.
- Ensure that policies for Child Protection and the care of vulnerable adults are displayed or are readily available. Procedures should be followed at all times.

### **BUT DO SOMETHING.**

What YOU do CAN make a difference.

## Domestic Violence Statistics

Most of these statistics have been taken from Women's Aid web-site - [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) (2009)

- The total number of women supported by domestic violence services in England on one typical day (2.11.06) was 11,310. This represents a 50% increase since 2003. (*Women's Aid survey*)
- Domestic Violence can affect one in four women in their lifetimes, regardless of age, social class, race, disability or lifestyle. Between 6- 10% of women suffer domestic violence in a given year. (*Council of Europe, 2002*)
- Domestic Violence accounts for between 16% and one quarter of all recorded violent crime. (*Home Office 2004*)
- In any one year there are 13 million separate incidents of violence against women from partners or former partners. (*Home Office, 2004*)
- On average, two women a week are killed by a violent partner or ex partner. This constitutes nearly 40% of all female homicide victims. (*Povey, (ed.), 2005; Home Office, 1999; Dept. of Health, 2005*)
- Every minute in the UK, the Police receive a call from the public for assistance with an incidence of domestic violence - an estimated 1,300 calls a day or over 570,000 each year. (*Stanko, 2000*)
- Government research puts the cost of Domestic Violence in England and Wales alone at £23 billion. (*Walby, S. 2004 The Cost of Domestic Violence, London*)
- Over 75% of 11-12 year old boys think that women get hit if they make men angry. More boys than girls of all ages believe that some women deserve to be hit. (*A Mullender et al, Children's Perspectives on Domestic Violence, Sage, 2003*)
- Women are much more likely than men to be the victim of multiple incidents of abuse and sexual violence: 32% of women who had ever experienced domestic violence did so four or five (or more) times, compared with 11% of the smaller number of men who had ever experienced domestic violence. (*Walby and Allen 2004*)
- Women are more likely than men to have experienced all types of intimate abuse (partner abuse, family abuse, sexual assault and stalking) since the age of 16. (*Coleman et al 2007*)



## Myths and realities

Misunderstandings and misconceptions about domestic abuse make it difficult for women and men to talk about what is happening to them. One in four British women will experience violence in their lifetime. When they do talk to others they are often met with unhelpful responses. It is important to bring domestic violence into conversation so that the silence of this taboo subject is broken. You can help by talking to others about the facts.

Some common myths about domestic violence and abuse include:

**Myth:** *It only happens to a certain kind of woman.*

**Reality:** Women from every class, race and religion can suffer domestic violence. Similarly their level of education, employment or financial situation does not protect them from finding themselves in an abusive situation.

**Myth:** *She can leave at any time.*

**Reality:** Planning or making the exit from an abusive relationship is often the most dangerous time. Many women are quite rightly scared to make that final step. Also a woman may feel ashamed about what has happened or may feel it is her fault. She may be worried about money, housing or the children's future. She may even be physically prevented from leaving her home. Sadly, many women do not have the support from family, friends, employers or even the church to give them the courage to leave.

**Myth:** *Men suffer from domestic violence just as much as women.*

**Reality:** Only about 6% of domestic violence cases involve assaults by women on their partners. Some men do suffer verbal abuse but, while this can be psychologically damaging, generally it is easier for them to leave a violent situation and their greater muscular strength means they can protect themselves more easily. It is rare for a woman to kill her partner.

**Myth:** *It isn't that serious.*

**Reality:** Every week two women are killed by their partner or ex-partner. As there is no specific crime of domestic violence you have to read between the lines of a newspaper report that tells of a woman being stabbed by her boyfriend or strangled by her husband to understand the context.

**Myth:** *It is just the odd domestic row - all couples have them.*

**Reality:** Children are the forgotten victims of domestic rows. In 90% of cases children are witnesses of family quarrels and it is estimated that 750,000 children live with domestic violence. It is known to have terrible and long term emotional effects.

**Myth:** *It has nothing to do with me.*

**Reality:** Although you may never experience domestic abuse personally - it is estimated that someone you know is experiencing it at this moment. In 2006, 200,000 women and 150,000 children used the services of Women's Aid, the foremost charity in this field.

## What can men do?

- If you are being violent, stop. No woman deserves your violence. It is your responsibility to change.
- Examine your own behaviour (and conscience). If you think women may find your behaviour threatening, change it or seek help to change it.
- Learn to express your feelings clearly without becoming aggressive and threatening.
- Speak out about other men's behaviour. Challenge your friends if they condone any kind of violence against women.
- Accept that when a woman says, "No", to a sexual advance, she means it.
- Think about your attitudes to women and the way that you treat them. Do not "invade women's space", for example do not sit or stand too close to a woman unless you are sure you have been invited to do so.
- Remember, many women are threatened by actions such as whistling, staring, leering, shouting etc. especially when carried out by a group of men. It is inappropriate to behave in this way towards women.
- Bring up your children, particularly your sons, to recognise that women have a right to live free from the threat and reality of violence.
- If you are walking behind a woman late at night, cross over to the other side of the street.
- Be aware that your anger is becoming an issue and that managing your anger may need external help.
- Be aware of cultural macho attitudes and make an effort to help other men see women as equals and not sex objects.
- Ensure that your children see you as a good role model as a husband and father.
- Understand that a pregnant woman may unwittingly attract violence from her partner and take steps to prevent it.

**The examples given above are only some of the actions you can take to tackle violence against women.**

**BUT DO SOMETHING.**  
What YOU do CAN make a difference.

## What can everyone do?

- Find out what your local Council, M.P., Police etc. are doing to make women's safety a priority and lobby if necessary.
- If you witness a woman being harassed or attacked, and if it is safe, try to do something to help her. If you do not feel you are able to, or it is not appropriate, then phone the police.
- If you overhear a woman being attacked in her home, do something. If you do not feel able to intervene yourself, then phone the police.
- Complain about sexist jokes and jokes that trivialise rape and other forms of violence against women.
- At work challenge sexual harassment and support women who complain about it.
- Join a group complaining against violence against women.
- Raise money for women's support services, e. g. refuges, rape crisis lines etc.
- Ensure that advice leaflets are available and posters on display in parish facilities, schools, retreat houses, pastoral centres etc.
- Report street lights that are not working, by writing to the local Council so that they can be repaired.
- Write letters of complaint to newspapers that print stories blaming women for the violence that they have suffered or which sensationalise or trivialise sexual violence.
- If you see violence against women trivialised or sensationalised on TV; in advertising at the cinema or in video games, complain.
- Complain about lap dancing clubs and 'adult' adverts for sex in your local newspapers and area.
- Talk to other people - friends, family, colleagues, members of your parish, your parish clergy etc; about violence against women and get them to take action.

**The examples that are given above are only some of the actions that you can take to tackle violence against women.**

## **BUT DO SOMETHING.**

**What YOU do CAN make a difference.**

## Stories

### Wendy's Story

"I'm the eldest of five children, born of Catholic parents who brought us up in the faith. We regularly went to mass and were known by the parish clergy. I had a happy childhood. I married in 1970 and had two children. Life was going well. We had a home of our own and my husband managed his family's business.

After a number of years my husband's tone and manner started to become aggressive towards me and the children. He began visiting the pub on his way home from work. Returning home, he verbally abused us and we became fearful of him. He became mentally and physically abusive and the children would run screaming from their beds at night to the top of the stairs whenever he attacked me. We lived from day to day in fear of his moods.

The final straw came when my mother stayed with us over New Year's Eve and my husband was very drunk. She was horrified at his foul language and the verbal onslaught to which we had become subjected. When he knocked me to the floor she called the police. They removed my husband from our home and after talking to him, released him and told him to stay away from us. He immediately returned home in a worse frame of mind. We had to flee the house to escape from his violence.

Despite the turmoil that floods my mind and emotions as I write this, I am safe. The two youngest children have not yet settled, at least they no longer wake up screaming at night. The staff of the Women's Aid Refuge where we are staying, are helping me to build a positive attitude towards rebuilding my life and my work as a school secretary gives me both independence and dignity.

Before this happened to me I wondered what sort of women lived in refuges. Now I know - they are my sort. I often glance at the Catholic Church across the road and wonder about the attitudes within it towards women like me".

### Adapted stories

#### Angela's story:

As a Christian, Angela believed that a wife should submit to her husband so she felt she should not complain when her husband started abusing her. When a friend pointed out the effect it was having on the children, she finally got enough courage to seek help.

"Two Irish policewomen helped me to realise that no one should be beaten as I had been. They gave me shelter and friendship when I needed it most. They helped to counteract those who said I was doing the wrong thing to leave my abusive marriage.

Three years of control and beatings had made me obedient and accepting - I had become a passive victim. One night I screamed my rage at God and then prayed. Within days a religious sister had spoken to me on the street, given me food and supported me through the many ensuing crises. I am now a survivor. Through the donated food, my link to God and love was reawakened".

*(From 'What is this place?' Published CTE 2005)*

#### Christine's story:

"Another Christmas day had passed without my brother speaking to me. It had been the same for the last few years since we had quarrelled. We are a Catholic family. I decided to challenge my brother and went round to his house but received no response to my knock even though I knew he was there. Eventually he opened the door, pulled me inside and hit and punched me. He had been drinking. I escaped and went home and my mother suggested I should go and see the parish priest who was a friend of his. The priest's advice was to try and forgive him, that he had problems and that to go to the police would create further difficulties in the family".

## What the Church teaches about Domestic Abuse

Recent Church documents and statements have denounced domestic abuse as a sin and advise the abused spouse to seek help and to leave the abusive situation.

### Canon law states:

**Canon 1153 #1** If either of the spouses causes grave mental or physical danger to the other spouse or to the offspring or otherwise renders common life too difficult, that spouse gives the other a legitimate cause for leaving, either by decree of the local ordinary or even on his or her own authority if there is danger in delay.

**#2** In all cases when the cause for separation ceases, conjugal living must be restored unless ecclesiastical authority has established otherwise.

### *Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales 'Cherishing Life', 2004*

37. The Scriptures warn us of the reality of sin in ourselves and in others. The story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4: 1-16) tells us how envy fractures the peace intended by God and leads to domestic strife, violence and murder. However since Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), the recognition of sin in the life of the Christian is not a reason for despair. Rather it is an invitation to repent and trust in the mercy of God granted through humble confession and reconciliation. The path to holiness is a step by step growth through conversion, often through many falls and many new beginnings.

138. Today, there is greater awareness of domestic violence than in the past, particularly violence directed against women and children, though women and grown-up children can also perpetrate violence against other family members. This greater awareness is a positive development as it is the first step towards addressing a serious moral and social problem. The equal dignity of man and woman is the true basis for a just and fair relationship. Marriage therefore needs to be presented more effectively as a covenant relationship, a partnership of life and love, built on equality and mutual respect.

### *Message from Bishop George Stack, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster*

**On the occasion of the launch of "Domestic Violence Awareness week" 19th November 2007:**

"As Bishops of the Catholic Church, we state as clearly and as strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form – physical, sexual, psychological or verbal is sinful; often it is a crime as well. We call for a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence. We acknowledge that violence has many forms, many causes, and many victims- men as well as women. The Catholic Church teaches that violence against another person in any form fails to treat that person as someone worthy of love. When violence occurs within marriage the abused person may question, "*How do these violent acts relate to my promise to take my spouse for better or for worse?*" The person being assaulted needs to know that acting to end the abuse does not violate the marriage promises. While violence can be directed towards men, it tends to harm women and children more.

We call on the Christian community to work vigorously against it. Where domestic violence has been made a priority issue in parishes, agencies and organizations then we commend and encourage these efforts.

We express our desire to offer the Church's resources to both the women who are abused and the men who abuse. Both groups need strength and healing from God. Violence against women in the home has serious repercussions for children. Children who grow up in violent homes are more likely to develop alcohol and

## *Immigration Issues and Domestic Abuse*

People who enter or stay in the UK on the basis of marriage or relationship to a spouse or partner who is settled in the UK or is a British citizen are initially given limited leave to remain. They are subjected to a two year probationary period, at the end of which, with the support of their partner they can apply for indefinite leave to remain. During the two year period the spouse from abroad has no recourse to public funds. If the relationship breaks down the spouse from abroad becomes liable to be removed from the UK unless they can show the required evidence of domestic violence under the domestic violence concession rule. They will need to produce one of the following:

- An injunction, non-molestation order or other protection order against the sponsor if the sponsor is the violent partner.
- A relevant court conviction against the abuser.
- Full details of a police caution against the abuser.

## *Refugees and Asylum Seekers*

Other issues regarding immigration status, apart from the two year rule, can also disadvantage refugee and asylum seeking men and women. These may range from a lack of emotional and family support to a lack of financial resources. It must be noted also that there is a limited amount of assistance that can be given by agencies as it may prejudice any ongoing procedures with the UK Borders Agency. See: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

### **The following are helpful suggestions:**

- Keep all personal papers about the situation and the children in a safe place.
- Keep their passports with them at all times.
- Contact the registered immigration advisory service for a free help service
- List the incidents that have happened and talk with people whom she trusts.
- Contact a women's support service.

An **Occupation order** under the Family Law Act 1996 is a court order about the home and can be used to:

- Enforce the women's right to remain in her home.
- Make sure that she can get back into her home if she has had to leave.
- Make the abuser leave the home or restrict him to part of the home.
- Prevent the abuser from returning to, entering, or attempting to enter the home.

## Power of Arrest

The Family Law Act insists that in most cases where there has been violence or threats of violence, the abuser may be arrested if he does not obey the court order. Not all court orders have the power of arrest. If there is a 'penal notice attached' instead of a 'power of arrest' notice and the order is broken the abuser is in contempt of court and an application can be made for the abuser to be sent to prison. If the victim needs assistance the local Police Community Safety Unit can be contacted.

NB Court orders must be applied for within fourteen days of the last incident and the name and address of the perpetrator must be supplied so that it can be served.

## Compensation

A solicitor may be able to claim compensation on behalf of the victim if the abuser is convicted of an offence in the magistrates' court. Compensation is also sometimes available through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme when the victim is no longer living with the abuser and evidence is provided of the assault. A police or doctor's report is enough.

## Housing and homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a new category of priority need: people fleeing violence or the threat of violence (Section 10) This is in addition to the priority need categories under the 1977 housing (Homeless persons Act) which include pregnant women and people with dependent children. In cases of domestic violence the Guidance which accompanies the Act is clear that: 'local authorities should not seek proof of violence, or contact the perpetrator. The effects of domestic violence can be cumulative, where incidents occurring over time may erode a victim's self confidence and contribute to making her/him vulnerable'. The Guidance points out that some people may leave in a crisis without planning and others may have left after careful planning. Local Authorities are reminded that it is not their job to make judgements on the way people have responded to violence or abuse. The Guidance further provides that it is not reasonable for someone fleeing domestic violence to remain in their own home, therefore they cannot be ruled to be intentionally homeless within the meaning of the Act, and that someone fleeing domestic violence does not need to show a 'local connection' in order to be provided with housing by a local authority. Taken together this means that in most cases a local authority has a duty to provide housing to a woman who has left her home because of domestic violence.

For a useful website on domestic violence and housing see:

[http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/pdfs/dv\\_housing\\_homelessness.pdf](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/pdfs/dv_housing_homelessness.pdf).

drug addictions and become abusers themselves. The stage is set for a cycle of abuse that can continue from generation to generation.

The Church can help to break this cycle. Many abused women seek help first from the Church because they see it as a safe place. Even if their abusers isolate them from other social contacts, they may still allow them to go to church. Recognising the crucial role that the Church can play we address this statement to several audiences:

- To women who are victims of violence and who may need the Church's help to break out of their pain and isolation.
- To clergy, parish workers and teachers, who are often the first responders for abused women.
- To men who abuse and may not know how to break out of the cycle of violence.
- To society which has made some strides toward recognizing the extent of domestic violence against women.

Domestic violence is often shrouded in silence. As Catholic Bishops, we are (I am) glad to support "*Domestic Violence Awareness Week*". People outside the family hesitate to interfere, even when they suspect abuse is occurring. Many times, even extended family denies that abuse exists, out of loyalty to the abuser and to protect the image of the family. Some people still argue - mistakenly - that intervention by outside sources destroys the sanctity of the home. Yet abuse and assault are no less serious when they occur within a family. Typically abusive men deny that the abuse is happening or they minimize it. They often blame their abusive behaviour on someone or something other than themselves. They tell their partner "*You made me do this*"

## Scripture and Church teachings

"Religion can either be a resource or a roadblock for battered women. As a resource, it encourages women to resist mistreatment. As a roadblock, its misinterpretation can contribute to the victim's self-blame and the abuser's rationalizations. Abused women often say, "*I can't leave this relationship. The Bible says it would be wrong.*" Abusive men often say, "*The Bible says my wife should be submissive to me.*" They take the biblical text and distort it to support their right to batter.

As Bishops we condemn the use of the Bible to support abusive behaviour in any form. A correct reading of Scripture leads people to an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women and to relationships based on mutuality and love. Beginning with Genesis, Scripture teaches that men and women are created in God's image. Jesus himself always respected the human dignity of women. John Paul II reminded us that "*Christ's way of acting, the Gospel of his words and deeds, is a consistent protest against whatever offends the dignity of women.*" (*Mulieris Dignitatem n15*)

Men who abuse often use Ephesians 5: 22, taken out of context, to justify their behaviour, but the passage 9:21-33 refers to the mutual submission of husband and wife out of love for Christ. Husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church. Men who batter also cite scripture to insist that their victims forgive them - see for example, Mt 6: 9-15. A victim then feels guilty if she cannot do so. Forgiveness, however, does not mean forgetting the abuse or pretending that it did not happen. Neither is possible. Rather, forgiveness means that the victim decides to let go of the experience and move on with greater insight and conviction not to tolerate abuse of any kind again.

An abused woman may see her suffering as just punishment for a past deed for which she feels guilty. She may try and explain suffering by saying that it is "*God's will*" or "*part of God's plan for my life*" or "*God's way of teaching me a lesson*". This image of a harsh cruel God runs contrary to the image of a kind, merciful and loving God. Jesus went out of his way to help suffering women. Think of the woman with the haemorrhage Mk 5: 25-34 or the woman caught in adultery Jn 8: 1-11. God promises to be present to us in our suffering even when it is unjust".

## The United States Catholic Bishops' Conference

The Department of Family, Laity, Women and Youth has worked extensively on the issue of Domestic Violence. Their pastoral letter *'When I call for Help'* states: *"As bishops we condemn the use of the Bible to support abusive behaviour in any form. A correct reading of scripture leads people to an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women and to relationships built on mutuality and love."*

## The Pastoral Commission of the Irish Bishops Conference

A document entitled *'Domestic Violence'*, produced by the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and the bishops' Pastoral Commission argued that the language of the Scriptures needs to be explained so that it is not interpreted as being anti-women. The document identifies seven New Testament readings which it said, *'would be better omitted from the new lectionary, currently in preparation'* in Rome.

### The readings are:

Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter: 31-6; Titus 2: 4-5; Ephesians 5: 22-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 1 Corinthians 14: 33-35; 1 Timothy 2: 11-15;

The first four of these texts are in the current lectionary. Ephesians 5: 21-32 includes the phrase *"Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord"*. The document adds that if the identified scriptural passages *"are quoted, in any context, they should be suitably commented on in the light of contemporary church teaching"*.

The overall level of reported crime in Ireland has fallen in the past three years but the number of reported incidents of domestic violence has continued to rise. Officials believe that only one-third of women who suffer domestic abuse report it. About 40 percent of those who contact support services do so to seek advice rather than to bring criminal charges against abusive partners. Each year, in the Irish Republic, which has a population of about 36 million, 18,000 women contact women's shelters for help. Last year, nearly 8,000 abused women contacted a telephone help line run by Women's Aid and more than 1,200 calls were received from callers speaking on behalf of women suffering abuse. Statistics show that women who are pregnant are particularly vulnerable. Women's Aid claims that more than a third of women who suffer physical violence report that they were assaulted while carrying a child.

While the document notes that most reported cases of domestic violence are by men against women, *"it would be a mistake to presume that all domestic violence is perpetrated solely by one gender against another. Women, too, can be guilty of violence against men. There is increasing reason to believe that more such cases than is commonly believed remain unreported, for the same reasons that many cases of violence against women are not reported,"* it said.

In a foreword to the document, Bishop Laurence Ryan of Kildare and Leighlin, President of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, and Bishop William Walsh of Killaloe, secretary of the Pastoral Commission, wrote: *"In the past, more people than was realised suffered the wordless martyrdom of domestic violence in silence and without redress. Thankfully awareness of domestic violence, its scope and diversity, is now far more widespread. This is one of the healthy aspects of our contemporary society. Naming domestic violence as an abuse is one of the first steps in countering it"*.

## Ecumenical Statement

In 1999 the Metropolitan Jeremie, President of the Conference of European Churches and Cardinal Vlk, President of the Council of European Churches produced the following statement (adapted): ... *"Sexual and other forms of physical violence threaten women everywhere and the most widespread instances take place within the home. The Churches are deeply concerned that violence against women may even take place within their own communities and in Christian homes. This is something on which the Churches themselves have been silent about for too long... We invite the leaders of each Church to declare publicly that any kind of violence against women is a sin... These matters should be addressed in every aspect of the Churches' life including preaching, teaching and pastoral care"*. (Letter on Violence to Women 1999)

If the police are called to an incident it is important that the woman speak to them separately from the partner. Perpetrators can sometimes use this situation to put the victim in the wrong so it is important that she tell her story at the earliest opportunity.

## Women's Rights in Law

**The Family Law Act 1996** has simplified some of the laws concerning domestic abuse and gives the court power to regulate who may reside in the family home. It also involves other measures such as mediation (trying to resolve problems) for couples who are separating. The Act aims to treat married and unmarried couples who live together in exactly the same way. For example, under the Family Law Act 1996 lesbians and gay men who live together have the same rights as heterosexual people.

**The Protection from Harassment Act 1997** may be useful in circumstances where the Family Law Act does not apply.

**The Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004** is a law that came into force in 2005. It includes provisions to:

- Increase the protection available to the survivors of domestic abuse by making a common assault like a push or a shove an arrestable offence
- Make a breach of a non-molestation order an arrestable criminal offence.
- Allow co-habiting and same sex couples the same access to restraining orders as married couples
- Create a new criminal offence of 'causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult'.

**The Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999** is designed to protect anyone giving evidence in court by allowing the use of screens, giving evidence via a video link and by allowing the public gallery in court to be cleared.

**The Criminal Justice Act 2003** allows a court to hear about a defendant's previous convictions, in certain circumstances, so that they can be aware of the seriousness of the situation and take this into consideration when sentencing.

**The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003** makes it a criminal offence to carry out female genital mutilation on a UK national or a permanent UK resident anywhere in the world even in a country where it is legal.

**Victim Personal Statements** are written statements about how a crime has affected a victim emotionally and psychologically from her point of view.

## Court orders

There are two main court orders used for protection:

- Non-molestation orders state the way the abuser should behave in future
- Occupation orders state who has a right to live in the home and can also prevent a person from approaching or entering the home.

A **Non-molestation order** orders the abuser not to assault, molest or harass the victim or any relevant children living with them. The Family Law Act 1996 says the purpose of this order is to make sure of the health, safety and well being of the victim and any children. Molestation can take the form of physical violence and can also include harassment such as sending threatening letters. These orders can be for any specified period.

## The Legal Situation

### *Police and their Powers: Criminal Law*

Violence against women in the home is a crime and the police must respond to calls for protection and enforce the criminal law. Depending on the circumstances, an abuser can be arrested and charged with the offences of:

- Common assault (e.g. shoving or threats)
- Assault occasioning actual/grievous bodily harm
- Malicious wounding (e.g. cutting or stabbing)
- Rape
- Attempted rape
- Attempted murder
- Criminal damage
- Indecent assault
- False imprisonment
- Kidnapping
- Witness intimidation

The police may also arrest an abuser to prevent further physical injury and to protect a vulnerable person or child. If there is evidence and the abuser admits to the offence, the police can also issue a formal warning against him.

#### **A woman can expect the police to:**

- Respond as quickly as possible to her call
- Talk to her separately from the abuser
- Arrest the abuser where there is evidence (e.g. a witness statement) of an assault or other offence
- Arrest the abuser if he has broken the terms of an injunction or his bail conditions
- Arrange for her medical treatment if she needs it
- Have a woman police officer present
- Act positively and sensitively to her requests
- Give her information about local sources of help
- Provide transport to a refuge or other safe place
- Accompany her back home and protect her if she wishes to collect her belongings
- Provide a follow up visit or further contact by letter
- Keep records of all incidents of domestic violence against her

If the abuser is arrested and charged with an offence, police may release him on bail. The bail conditions, which are set by the court, will usually state that the abuser is to keep away from her. If the abuser breaks these conditions, he can be arrested again and this can count against him.

#### **The police should inform her:**

- when the abuser has been released, whether released on bail or otherwise
- whether he has been charged
- of any action taken, including any forthcoming court dates.

The woman should ask any questions that she feels to be necessary to clarify her case. She has a right to make a statement to the police. It is important that note is taken of the crime number and the names of the officers allocated to the case. This information will be useful if social workers, advice workers, solicitors or the local housing office become involved.

## A Theological Reflection Professor Mary Grey

### *“Weep for yourselves and for your Children” Domestic Violence against Women*

Violence against women takes many forms, but particularly horrifying is the fact that much of it takes place in the apparent safety of the home. An English man's home may be his castle, but for his wife it may be a place of pain, fear and imprisonment:

- In the US, a woman is beaten every 15 seconds - in the UK every 20 seconds; every 6 minutes, a rape occurs; every day four women are killed by their batterers.
- In South Africa, one adult woman out of every six is assaulted regularly by her partner. In almost half of these cases, the man involved also abuses the woman's children.
- In France, 95% of the victims of violence are women, 51% of them at the hands of their husbands.
- Internationally, the abuser is likely to be a family member: 94% of all reported incest cases cite father-daughter incest.
- New forms of violence appear continually: trafficking of women, young girls and boys is on the increase. Honour killings among certain groups are a serious problem. Internet pornography sites as well as dating sites are another danger especially to vulnerable young girls. And this all takes place in the home.
- Scandals involving clergy abuse of boys have seriously damaged trust. There is also still an issue of clergy abuse of women.

The catalogue seems unending. The task here is to develop a Christian pastoral response to an injustice which for too many centuries has been unacknowledged by church and theology alike.

### *The roots of violence*

We live in a culture of violence. What happens in the home happens outside of it too. Military violence is tolerated, even encouraged “for our nation's security”. Violent films and pornographic violence against women are easily available for domestic consumption through TV or Internet. Acceptance of the inevitability of violence is partly due to the structural ordering of society known as patriarchy. Through its institutions, laws and use of power, patriarchy has sanctioned the control of male over female cross-culturally, and made it possible for violence against women to remain both invisible and condoned.

Wife-beating has traditionally been an accepted part of many societies. “*Violence against women has its roots in distorted power relations*”, writes Aruna Gnanadason, a theologian with the World Council of Churches, calling for recognition of the structural inequality of women as a contributing cause of patriarchal violence. What part has the Church played in recognizing this in its own theology and in attempting to eradicate it?

## Christianity and violence against women

Christianity's highest value is that of love; Christian ethics are built around the idea *'Love your neighbour'*. Yet many aspects of Christian teaching reveal a blindness to the reality which many women experience and thus contribute to keeping hidden the truth about violence against women. Often, when the Church that a woman is taught to believe in and trust is not interested in the suffering of women as women, her sense of guilt, shame and desperation is heightened. There is simply no escape.

For example, the Church calls on women as mothers to uphold its teaching on the sacredness of the family and to be responsible for the moral standards within it. An attitude of critical disapproval faces a woman who seeks a divorce, even on the grounds of cruelty. *"You've made your bed and now you must lie on it!"* sums up a still-prevailing attitude, even though a woman may be facing physical or psychological abuse within marriage. Behind this is the old prejudice that blames women for sin, particularly sexual sin. Woman is seen as temptress, needing firm control. We read: *"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved by bearing children"* (1 Timothy 2:13-15), a text which links women's responsibility for sin with the need to atone for this through motherhood. Teachings such as this, together with St Thomas Aquinas' statement that woman is "a misbegotten male", mean that there is still a lurking mistrust about female sexuality. Women are traditionally more associated with the body, with sexuality and the irrational side of human nature. Thus it is still widely-held that women are themselves to blame for rape because they 'ask for it'.

The other side of the coin is that women are frequently idealised. Feminine virtues of caring, compassion, gentleness and purity are extolled as being the prerogative of women. Frequently, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is used as a role model as 'Virgin-Mother'. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* Pope John Paul II wrote that all women are called to be either real mothers or spiritual mothers. Now, no one wants to undervalue motherhood, or to diminish the need for all Christians to be caring and compassionate. On the contrary, there is an urgent need in British society as a whole to heal the damaged image of marriage and reduce the spiralling divorce rate. It is vital to tackle issues like domestic violence and the frequent lack of justice within the married relationship.

To assume that motherhood is synonymous with being female and to lump all women together as mothers, while simultaneously idealising motherhood, only serves to mask the suffering and vulnerability of many real mothers. And Christianity's frequent stress on the importance of suffering and sacrifice in Christian discipleship makes it worse. Stories abound of women who pluck up courage to tell in the confessional or interview what violence and abuse they are enduring, only to be told to 'offer it up', or to unite their sufferings with that of the crucified Christ. Such advice serves both to keep domestic violence hidden, as well as to miss the point that Jesus' suffering was freely-chosen, as part of his mission to bring about the kingdom of God.

And, finally, women are told to *'forgive and forget'*. Forgiveness is absolutely and rightly at the heart of Christianity. But we have only recently begun to understand that justice-making is essential to the process of forgiveness; and that telling women to forgive without this vital element is equivalent to condoning the violence. In light of this, what kind of pastoral response could be made?

## Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

Understanding the cultural differences within the black and minority ethnic communities is essential to approaching the problem of abuse within these families –even where the religion is Catholic/ Christian. Abuse is less likely to be reported and help less likely to be sought by women and men where family ties are strong and patriarchal structures remain in place.

However culturally specific forms of violence and abuse such as forced marriage, honour crimes, honour killings, female genital mutilation, child and women abuse related to 'possession by evil spirits' or 'dowry problems' must be addressed within the framework of domestic abuse. The need to protect the person remains the main imperative, irrespective of the cultural context in which domestic abuse occurs.

Government and the police service and others now also recognise that mediation and reconciliation processes can exacerbate the situation where the parties are of unequal status.

### Help and resources can be obtained from:

Catholic Association for Racial Justice [www.carj.org.uk](http://www.carj.org.uk) Tel: 02088028080

Southall Black Sisters <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk> Tel: 0208 571 9595

Forced Marriage Unit This is a government unit providing advice and assistance for those at risk of being forced into marriage overseas. Tel: 020 7008 0151 [www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage)

Local Women's Centres are available in your local directory

## Elder Abuse

There is no legal definition of elder abuse as yet in this country but Action on Elder Abuse has defined it as '...the mistreatment of an older person'. The abuse can be physical, psychological, financial, sexual, neglect, spiritual as in the normal definition of domestic abuse (see page 5) and may also include inappropriate use of medication or withholding nourishment.

Causes in the home can include poor quality relationships, the inability of the carer to provide the level of care required, and lack of support networks. Causes in care homes may be inadequately trained or insufficient staff, poor supervision, little support from management, working in isolation or lack of a religious or ethical ethos.

Help and resources can be obtained from:

Action on Elder Abuse Response

Tel: 080 8808 8141 web: <http://www.elderabuse.org.uk>

Age Concern

Tel: 0800 009966 web: <http://www.ageconcern.org.uk>

Carers National Association

Tel: 080 8808 7777 web: <http://www.carersuk.org.uk>

Counsel and Care (advice on care homes)

Tel: 0845 300 7585

*\* Adapted from 'Responding to Domestic Abuse' Appendix 6 and 7 Church of England, Church House Publishing*

### Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS)

CSAS is responsible for driving and supporting improvements in the practice of safeguarding within the Catholic Church in England and Wales. It has in place a National Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for dealing with children and vulnerable adults. However its primary role is one of co-ordination, advice and support in respect of the wider job of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. CSAS is currently developing its policies on vulnerable adults with the inclusion of appropriate parish and diocesan responses towards domestic abuse. Training for clergy and pastoral teams including Safeguarding Officers is recommended. The website [www.csas.uk.net](http://www.csas.uk.net) has a useful list of resources. CSAS contact: Tel: 0121 237 3740 Fax 0121 237 3741

## Towards a pastoral theology in solidarity with women as victims of violence

- 1 The struggle against domestic violence presents a new focus for theology. Women and men, both created in God's image, are called to just relationship and communion. The incarnate Jesus came to give fullness of life (John 10.10). A focus on violence against women understands a compassionate Jesus in solidarity with the victims, yet an empowering Jesus also, giving courage to break the cycle of violence through the strength of his ever-present Spirit. A spirituality against violence promotes a spirituality 'for life'; it envisions transformed, healing relations between women, men and children. A society committed to non-violence tells the truth about the way we relate and puts its energies into change.
- 2 When a woman has plucked up courage to speak her story of violence, it is vital to listen, and to acknowledge the truth she tells. Compassionate listening should be an inbuilt part of clergy training.
- 3 Violence against women needs to be named as sin. Even if this is a sensitive area, people need to hear domestic violence named and preached against at parish level. The Church must be seen to be facing the truth about the violence in women's lives, the climate of fear in which they are often forced to live and overcome the reluctance to face the truth about female sexuality.
- 4 Marie Fortune, of the Centre for Domestic Violence in Seattle, has developed a pastoral response against violence based on the prophet Micah's exhortation to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. The necessary "requirements" for this are "truth telling, acknowledgement of the violation, compassion, protection of the vulnerable, accountability, restitution and vindication" Forgiveness, she says, becomes an option only when some form of justice is being done. And, given the great damage done to self-esteem, the hardest part of the forgiveness is for the victim to forgive herself.
- 5 It is important to engage with Scripture and the texts of tradition, to identify passages which ignore or condone violence against women, (such as the story of the murder of the concubine in Judges 19), and to highlight strands which can be a resource in the struggle. Phyllis Trible's inspiring study 'Texts of Terror', re-tells the tales of four Biblical women, so that the injustice inflicted on them is now mourned, and they become vindicated through our struggle.
- 6 Re-education in terms of men and women as equal partners is necessary. Eradicating the roots of violence means facing the truth about patriarchal structures which maintain this violence. It means querying the subordinate position of women both in Church and society, and exposing false theories of gender and sexuality.
- 7 Linked with this is the need to examine models of power that operate in Church, society and our relationships. If violent gun crime is the accepted way to settle disputes, it is unsurprising that violence is prevalent in the home. Re-education in people's understanding of power as shared, and the peaceful settling of conflict, must replace the ethos of domination.
- 8 Public valuing of women needs to be reflected in the language we use for worship. Sadly, despite a few token changes, the language of liturgy is still exclusive of women. The Scripture writer is still heard as addressing men. If women's presence is only assumed and implicit, the tacit message remains powerful: that she is not valued.
- 9 All of these points need addressing in clergy training for the priesthood. Women with professional training in these issues should be used in the training process.
- 10 We welcome sincere initiatives on the part of the Churches to tackle all related issues for example, sex-trafficking, and we hope that the Church will act in solidarity with the many excellent secular groups tackling domestic violence.



## Resources

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- Joanne Carlson Brown, Rebecca Parker, *'Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse'*, (New York, Pilgrim, 1989).
- Marie Fortune, *'Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex invades the Pastoral Relation'*, (New York, Harper and Row, 1989).
- Marie Fortune, *'Sister; Save Yourself Direct Talk about Domestic Violence'*, (New York: Pilgrim 2006).
- Marie Fortune *'Forgiveness and Abuse: Jewish-Christian Reflections'*, (Haworth Press 2004).
- Aruna Gnanadason *'No Longer a Secret: The Church and Violence against Women'*, Geneva, (WCC, 1993).
- Mary Hunt, *'Waging War at Home: Christianity and Structural Violence'*, Miriam 's Song V, Priests for Equality, (1992).
- Marjorie Procter-Smith, 'Reorganising Victimization': the Intersection between Liturgy and Domestic Violence, in E. Stuart and A. Thatcher eds., *'Christian Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender'*, (Leominster: Fowler Wright: Gracewing 1996), pp.380-395.
- Phyllis Trible. *'Texts of Terror'*, (Fortress, Philadelphia. 1984).
- Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, 'Battered Women and the Bible', in *'Christianity and Crisis'*, November 1981.
- Tracy J. Trothen., *'Linking Sexuality and Gender: Naming Violence against Women in the United Church of Canada'*, (Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2003). Also, *'Family Violence and Religion: an Interfaith Guide'*, (Volcano Press).

## Children and Domestic Abuse

The effect on children of domestic abuse will vary depending on the degree to which they have experienced it, their stage of development, their age and their own personality. Every child is different.

Nevertheless it is estimated that at least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence and nearly three quarters of children on the 'at risk' register live in households where domestic violence occurs. (*Department of Health 2002*). The majority of children in these households witness the violence that is occurring, and in 90% of cases they are in the same or in the next room. (*Hughes, 1992*). This witness can take various forms. The child may be forced to witness the abuse and even to participate in it, for example verbally abusing the victim. They may hear the abuse or see the injuries resulting from it. They may find themselves inadvertently in the middle of an incident. All children witnessing domestic violence are themselves being emotionally abused. They are at increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma and mental health difficulties. There is a strong correlation between domestic violence and child maltreatment. From the findings of a study of young adults' experience of domestic violence carried out by P. Cawson in 2002 on behalf of the NSPCC, their responses showed that of those who said they had been:

- neglected as children -  
88% had lived with some level of domestic violence and for 59% the violence was constant or frequent.
- physically abused as children -  
75% had lived with some level of domestic violence, and for 36% the violence was constant or frequent.
- emotionally abused -  
71% had lived with some level of domestic violence and for 48% the violence was constant or frequent.
- sexually abused -  
54% had lived with some level of domestic violence and for 20% the violence was constant or frequent.

Violence against children can continue during contact arrangements with the estranged parent. A survey of 130 abusive parents found that 76% of the 148 children who had been ordered by the courts to have contact with their estranged parent were said to have been abused during visits. Most of these children were under the age of five. (*Radford, Sayer & Amica, 1999*).

**It now is considered essential that where children are involved the matter should be reported to the police or the Safeguarding services. National safeguarding procedures should be followed.**

**For further information on safeguarding children go to:**

**[http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/procedures/dv/safeguarding\\_children\\_abused\\_through\\_dv.pdf](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/procedures/dv/safeguarding_children_abused_through_dv.pdf)**