Older Women, Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse: Recent Findings and Ongoing Challenges

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Older women, Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse

- Violence against Women
- What has been achieved?
- What works?
- What is to be done?

- Domestic Violence, older women and Elder Abuse
- Similarities
- Differences
- What is to be done?
- Recent developments
Violence against Women

- 25% Violent crime is partner assault
- 90% assaults on women by men
- 40% female murders by known men (at home)
- Happens to anyone: across all strata
- Everybody's problem
- Major consequences
- Violence is systematic, severe
- Context: Conflict & Tolerance
What has been Achieved?

- 1970s Women's Aid
- UN statement 1993
- Margin to mainstream
- Zero Tolerance
- Public recognition
- Professional responses
- Refuges
- Legislation
- Police provision
- Political recognition
What works?

- Sanctions for perpetrators
- Focus on: violent behaviour
  - beliefs and attitudes
  - criminal justice system
  - responsibility
  - programmes for violent men
- Sanctuaries for women
- Focus on: assistance and support
  - accommodation
  - personal safety
  - financial viability
What is to be Done?

- Prevention
- Protection
- Justice
- Provision
- Partnership working
- Empowerment
Older women, Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse

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

- Adults
- Shared living arrangements
- Causative factors
- Power and control
- Citizenship and empowerment
- Legal remedies
- Interventions
- Issues of Safety and protection
Differences

- Different causes
- Demographic factors
- Historical factors
- Timescales

- Societal views
- Nature of abuse
- Public responses
- Different origins (as social problem)
What is to be Done?

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

- Marginalisation, exclusion, violence and older women
- To be old is to be marginalised (single)
- To be old and female is to be marginalised (double)
- To be old and female and abused is to be marginalised (triple)
- Bruises on the Soul
Elder Abuse

- Definitional issues
- Lack of awareness of abuse
- Detection and identification problems
- Professional orientation important
- NGO development necessary
- Education and training central
Definitions

• Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human or civil rights by any other person or persons
• Not just Elder Abuse but Adult Protection/Adult Safeguarding (in UK)
• Gender blind or gender neutral?
Definitions (2)

- A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person
  
  Action on Elder Abuse, UK (1995)

- Used in UK prevalence study 2005-2007

- Limitations in usage:
  - Operationalisation difficult
  - How far does expectation of trust extend?
  - Position of older women?
Definitions (3)

• Abuse, like beauty is in the eye of the beholder
  – Callahan, 1986
  – Multiple beholders, many settings
• Issues relating to vulnerability (how defined?)
• Issues relating to consensus and usage
• Issues relating to the perfect definition (is it necessary, or possible?)
What is Elder Abuse?

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

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

- Different types of abuse
- Different causative factors
- Different settings and locations
- Different participants
- Different witnesses
- Different responses and interventions
Critical Factors

- Social and cultural contexts
- Gender and power relations crucial
- Not just family and interpersonal relationships: institutional settings an important context
- Not just about frailty, vulnerability, dependence
- Personal, cultural and structural levels at which abuse and violence occur
- Ageism as a master category, abuse a consequence
Older Women and Abuse

• Rarely considered as a separate group
• VAW work often does not include older women or women with disabilities
• Elder abuse/safeguarding often does not reflect experiences or needs of older women
• Needs of older women not fully considered, or explored, especially relating to domestic or intimate partner violence
European Perspectives

- Cultural and economically diverse region
- Differing meanings and understandings of abuse and violence
- 30 year time span of involvement in area: some more recent than others
- Legislation and policies differ
- Intervention strategies differ
- Recent work on older women and abuse…
EU Programme (specific)

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

• DAPHNE I
  – 3 country study looking at recognition, prevention & treatment
  – UK, Ireland, Italy 1998 - 2000 (co-ordinated by UK)

• DAPHNE II
  – Trans-national action on Elder Abuse (financial abuse of older women)
  – 4 Countries: France, Italy, Spain, Belgium
  – Co-ordinated by France (FIAPA); completed (2006-09)
DAPHNE Projects

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Psychological impacts
  - shame, guilt
  - distress, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - anxiety, depression

- Social impacts
  - isolation
  - loss of family and friends, work

- Physical impacts
  - injuries due to violence
  - illnesses exacerbated by lack of care
IPVoW: life with violence

• Types of violence
  – all types of abuse – including physical

• Start of violence
  – early on in relationship
  – gradual onset or worsening/significant life events

• Characteristics of perpetrators
  – controlling and jealous
  – financial control

• (from survivors’ perspectives on experiences)
Survivors’ views on impacts

• Women
  – Emotional: loss of confidence, low mood, suicidal thoughts, PTSD
  – Social: strained relationships, ‘Jekyll and Hyde’
  – Physical: suffocation, broken bones, black eyes, injuries and physical health problems

• Children (effects of violence on them)
  – Witnessed abuse, ‘heavy handed’ in parenting
  – Future relationships?
Leaving the violent relationship

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

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

• Police file analysis: 150 cases, 7 forces
• 76% victims were aged 60-69 years old
• 64% reports from women (36% for 70+)
• 11% were caregivers, 20% receiving care
• 19% serious illness, 15% mental illness
• 30% receiving health support, 13% social support
Mind the Gap Project

- 48% perpetrators were aged 60-69 years (13% were 40–59 years; 14% were 70-79 years)
- 41% history of prior violent offences
- 13% reported substance misuse problem
- 10% mental health problem (3% dementia)
- 89% reports concerned physical violence
- 66% arrested but 77% no prosecution (18% of these received formal cautions)
Other Developments

- Human Rights perspectives
- UN principles for older persons
- MIPAAA commitment to rights
- Strengthening Older People’s Rights
- Focus on ageism, age discrimination and violation of rights
- UN convention of rights for older people being considered
- UN Expert group meeting
- Council of Europe declaration
UK Government Principles: VAW

- Prevention – taking action before harm occurs
- Provision of Services
- Partnership – local solutions through services working with their communities
- Justice outcomes - including protection
- Recent developments:
  - Violence Against Women and Children Action Plan under review
  - Development of definition of Domestic Violence
UK Government Principles: Adult Safeguarding

• Empowerment – supporting people to make decisions and have a say in their care
• Protection: support and representation
• Prevention – taking action before harm occurs
• Proportionality – safeguarding must be proportionate and consider people’s human rights
• Partnership – local solutions through services working with their communities
• Accountability – safeguarding arrangements should be accountable and transparent
Key Points

• Safety is everybody’s business
• Focus on preventing abuse and exploitation
• Include whole population approaches
• Connect people within communities to encourage safety
• Raise awareness in the whole community; make it easy to get good information and report concerns
Key Points

• Involve citizens in shaping strategies that bring personalisation and safeguarding together

• Develop an inclusive approach that considers and involves individuals, carers and families

• Develop multi-agency approaches and work with regulators

• Review should focus on outcomes
  – Have supportive systems in place that can respond if things go wrong

• (DH document on safeguarding & personalisation)
Future Possibilities

• Obtain older peoples’ perspectives on abuse, on impacts and responses, especially older women

• Include individuals at all stages

• Working together on Safeguarding:
  – Adult social care; Housing and Health, NGOs
  – Domestic Violence forums and agencies
  – Police and criminal justice agencies

• Developing joined-up approaches, extending concept of multi-agency working

• Responding to individual’s needs: individualised approaches
Future Possibilities: Research

• More specific research and development
• Older women’s perspectives (and service users more generally)
• Intervention studies
  – Model projects and evaluation studies
• Research on impact, effectiveness and outcomes
  – Of mistreatment
  – Of interventions
The Way Forward?

• Improve recognition, awareness and understanding of domestic violence and linkages
• Develop policies to prevent and protect
• Develop appropriate responses and provision
• Promote education (including general awareness raising) and training
• Centrality of older women in processes and development of policy and practice
• Improve and extend partnerships to join up safeguarding and domestic violence approaches
Finally…..

• Thanks for listening
• Thanks for your interest in this issue
References

References

• UN (2013) *Neglect, Abuse and Violence Against Older Women*, New York: UN
Useful Websites

• Scottish legislation: http://www.scotland.gov.uk


• Breaking the Taboo Projects: www.btt-project.eu/index.php?id=12


• EUSTaCEA project: http://www.age-platform.eu

• IPVoW projects: http://www.ipvow.org