

Written evidence submitted by MDVS (Merseyside Domestic Violence Service Ltd) (COR0230)

The Committee invites evidence on the following issues:

The prevalence of these issues since the Government issued 'stay at home' guidance on 23 March.

1. The reason for submitting this evidence is to highlight the economic abuse of females during lockdown which is something that has hardly been mentioned.
2. Case study: Economic abuse of females during lockdown
3. Tip of the iceberg; during the early weeks of lockdown in March 2020 MDVS noticed a considerable drop in referrals and self-referrals and the voices of the BAME communities fell silent.
4. Indicators that perpetrators had increased presence in the home thus preventing victims from seeking help/support or calling the police.
5. Female victims were finding it extremely unsafe working and living under the same roof as the perpetrator which intern posed a risk to their physical and emotional wellbeing and economic stability.
6. • Case study: In the early stages of lockdown, we received a phone call from a female seeking advice and support; she had been assaulted at home by her partner and was worried that facial injuries and her emotional state would prevent her from participating in a planned webinar due to facial injuries inflicted by her partner and this affected her ability to work safely from home risking her job and worse.
7. The female felt trapped and isolated as lockdown prevented her from escaping to her parents who were isolating and to other friends and family. She refused to call the police stating that her partner had nowhere to go which would only make matters worse.
8. The female was strongly advised to call the police but refused and sought support from her employers who were supportive and understanding. The female has given permission to share her experience of lockdown to help us understand how this situation affects women working from home under lockdown.
9. Perpetrators have seized the opportunity of lockdown to step up power and control over their victim/s to severely disrupt their lives.
10. The use of tactical behaviour such as economic abuse entrapment and isolation has been further exasperated by the loss of childcare and schooling severely disrupting economic stability and safety of women children and young people trying to work and study safely from home.
11. Coming out of the first lockdown created a surge in referral from Liverpool Children's Services which increased by 70%

12. The lockdown is resulting in more women and children fleeing domestic abuse adding to the existing crisis of homelessness in Liverpool.

13. Recommendations by MDVS:

Government funding is needed to deal with the root cause of the problem which is the perpetrators of domestic abuse through the provision of emergency out of hours accommodation 24/7 where they can access other layers of support to address behaviour and other issues,

Currently if a perpetrator is arrested, he/she would face a DVPO.

Under the DVPO scheme, police and magistrates have the power to ban a domestic violence perpetrator from returning to their home or having contact with the victim for up to 28 days in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident.

During this time, most perpetrators have nowhere to go and they often return to the home of the victim who is placed at further risk of significant harm and reprisal hence reluctance of the victim to report or press charges and the cycle continues.

14. Outcomes

Increased safety of victims

Increased reporting and prosecutions

Prevention of harm and escalation

Early crisis intervention

Males will have an opportunity to seek support to change abusive behaviour.

Break in the cyclical nature of domestic violence.

15. Summary: The way forward is to tackle the behaviour of the perpetrators and end the silent suffering of victims and the financial implications of domestic abuse and economic impact. Women are also trapped because of financial dependency and children and young people needs.

16. The pandemic has forced women to resume relationships with their abuser and endure violence because of loss of family support and networks of support and risk of homelessness and the other aspects of poverty.

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