

Engaging with older people who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse



Dewis Choice

Community Care Live Manchester

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Objectives

- ▶ How domestic abuse within older people differs and does not differ from abuse within younger age group;
- ▶ Spotting the signs of domestic abuse within intimate partner abuse and adult family violence;
- ▶ How to engage with older victims and overcome age-specific barriers to disclosure;
- ▶ Supporting older victims of domestic abuse;
- ▶ The Dewis Choice Project.



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Definition of Domestic Abuse

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional.

Home Office (2013)



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Domestic abuse in later life: 'Ignored, invisible & overlooked'

- ▶ Neglected in policy and practice when compared other age groups (Lewis and Williams, 2013; Blood, 2004);
- ▶ Research design and implementation - Crime Survey for England and Wales (2012/2013) did not include domestic abuse statistics for those over the age of 59 years (ONS, 2016);
- ▶ Our review - white, middle class heterosexual female victims under 70 years;
- ▶ Does ageism exist within some feminist groups? (Harbison, 2008).

Similarities across the age groups

- ▶ Domestic abuse in both age groups is gendered
- ▶ Abuse at similar rates to their younger counter parts
- ▶ Experience all the same forms of abuse
- ▶ Coercive control exists in both age groups
- ▶ Older men and younger men can both be abusive
- ▶ Reluctance to report the abuse



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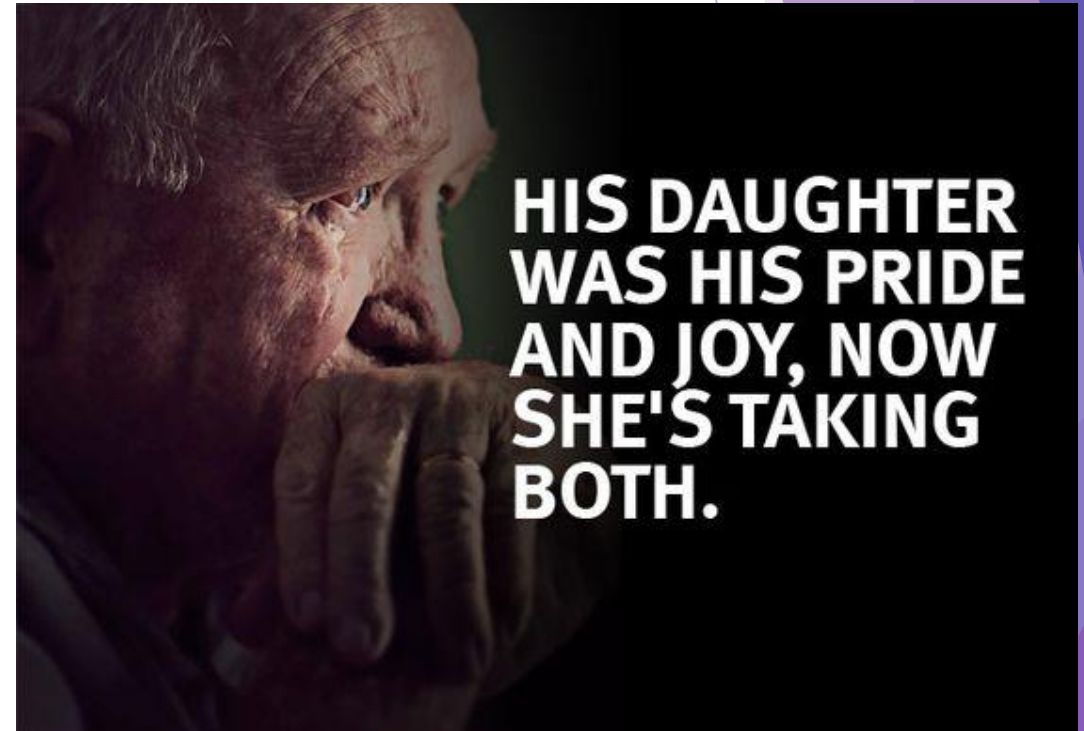
Differences across the age groups

- Perpetrators- older women are more likely to experience abuse from an adult child (son) or grandchild than an intimate partner (Safe Lives, 2016)
- More than one perpetrator
- Domestic abuse in later life can be more complex with added issues around the ageing process (health needs, priorities)
- Motivations for abuse- long standing, new relationship, late onset as a consequence of change in relationship dynamic (retirement, ill health)
- Unintentional abuse?
- Age related dependency (Bealaurier & Taylor, 2001)
- Caring responsibilities
- Dependency and interdependency
- Older victim's experiences are further impacted on by age discrimination.
- Older men are more likely to experience domestic abuse compared to their younger counterparts.



Male victims

- ▶ Domestic abuse as a gendered crime (Scott et al., 2004; Brandl et al., 2003; Mears, 2002);
- ▶ National data set showed a significantly higher number of older male victims compared to their younger counterparts (Safe Lives, 2015-16);
- ▶ Out of 131 cases 27% involved a male victim (Clarke et al., 2012);
- ▶ Health and Social Care Information Centre's Annual Report on Safeguarding Adults return for 2013-2014 claims that 40% of safeguarding referrals were men (ADASS, 2015).



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Signs of Domestic Abuse in Older Age

- ▶ Guised under normal parts of ageing
- ▶ Learnings from domestic homicide reviews identified missed opportunities to help and support the victim
- ▶ Assumption that violence isn't as severe in later life
- ▶ Greater potential for IPV in caring relationships (Sharp-Jeffs and Kelly, 2016)
- ▶ DASH RIC and adapted DASH RIC
http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/adult_protection/ric_checklist.aspx



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DASH RIC - additional considerations

3. What are you afraid of? Is it further injury or violence? (Please give an indication of what you think (name of abuser(s)...) might do and to whom, including children).

*Prompt being told you can't see your grandchildren or being threatened with this?

Comment:

12. Does (.....) try to control everything you do and/or are they excessively jealous? (In terms of relationships, who you see, being 'policed at home', telling you what to wear for example. Consider 'honour'-based violence and specify behaviour.)

*Prompt: Having your use of a telephone controlled and your letters opened against your wishes?

4. Do you feel isolated from family/friends i.e. does (name of abuser(s)) try to stop you from seeing friends/family/doctor or others?

*Prompt: Your partner or relation making friends and family members feel uncomfortable or unwelcome when they visit, so they stop visiting?

Comment:

20. Are there any financial issues? For example, are you dependent on (.....) for money/have they recently lost their job/other financial issues?

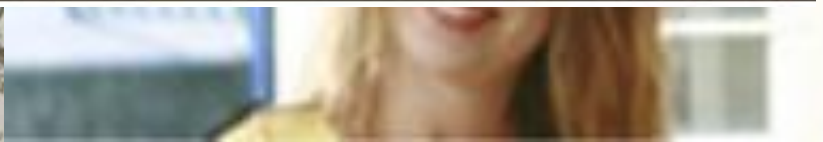
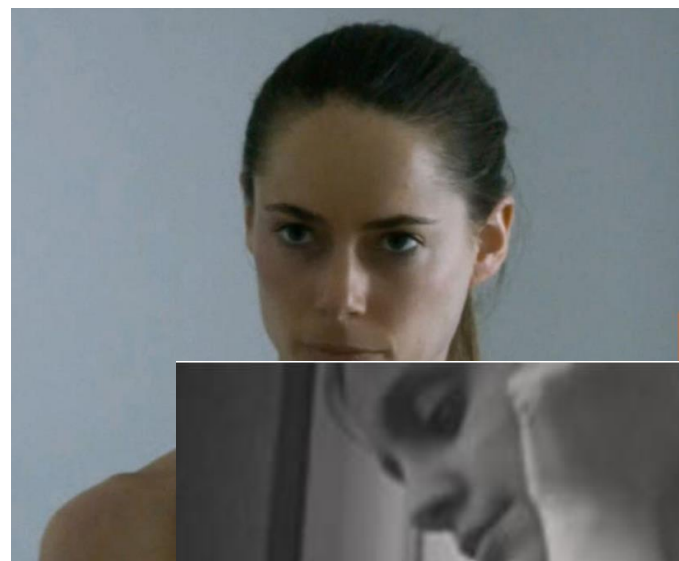
*Prompt: not having your name against the mortgage on the family home, or any access to Joint accounts or savings
Being stopped from working (either paid employment or voluntary work)

Service Provision and Marketing

- ▶ Existing domestic abuse service provision has been criticised for often overlooking the needs of older women (McGarry, 2014);
- ▶ Limited services that do exist for older women are not adequately fit for purpose;
- ▶ Service provider's marketing strategies influence help-seeking for older victim-survivors of domestic abuse;
- ▶ Images of older people are often not used in public campaigns about domestic abuse. Research indicates that as a result, it is difficult for older women to identify themselves as potential service users;
- ▶ Services' responsiveness and accessibility to older victim-survivors will be questioned by drawing on examples of services' imagery and text.



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Images of older age



Do you see her? Women's Aid



<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/do-you-see-her/>

women's aid

until women & children are safe

www.womensaid.org.uk



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Do older people seek help?

Under-representation across all sectors:

- ▶ Older people are less likely to report than other age groups (Safe Lives, 2015-16);
- ▶ They do not access third sector specialist services (McGarry et al., 2014, Roberto et al., 2013);
- ▶ Statutory sector via third party report - poor uptake (Wydall et al., 2015);
- ▶ Help for the abuser.



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From your experience, what are the barriers to older people engaging with services when they experience domestic abuse?



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Individual Level

Lack of sense of entitlement

Fear of repercussion from the perpetrator

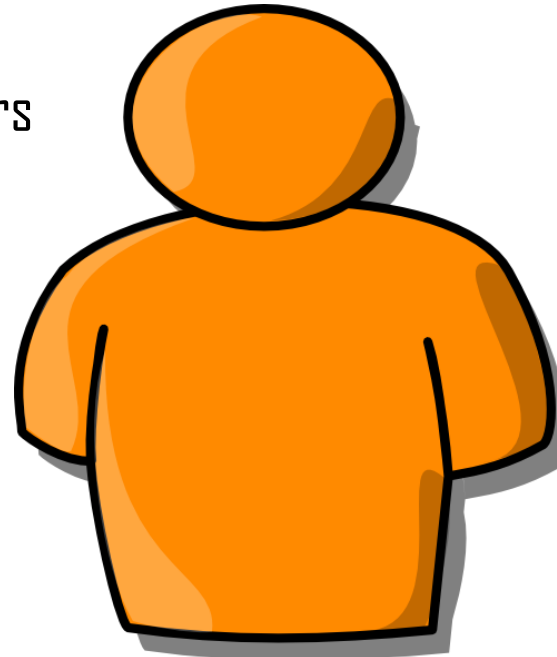
Age-related factors

Feeling responsible – directly or indirectly- for the abuse

Generational factors

Feeling that they would rather live with the abuse than lose a family member

Meanings of the home



Socially and economically dependent on the perpetrator

Fear of the negative family consequences

Fear of not being believed

Stigma attached to statutory agency involvement



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Institutional and organisational barriers

Stereotype of the
'perfect victim
and witnesses'

Terminology

Existing services not
suitable for older
people

Ageism



Discriminatory
practices

Paternalistic
responses

Identifying and
responding to
domestic abuse



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How can we engage with older victim-survivors of domestic abuse to help overcome age-specific barriers to disclosure?



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Supporting Older Victim-Survivors

- ▶ No one size fits all
- ▶ Look beyond the surface
- ▶ Establish trust and develop a rapport
- ▶ Recognise the needs of the victim and the perpetrator



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Help for the perpetrator

They [the parent] wish to see the relationship continue because they want to support their son. They are being victimised because their son needs to support his drug addiction. They think they are caring for their son. The mother is caught in this dilemma, wanting to support her son, and the dilemma that reporting her son will further criminalise him, and if they do highlight these abuses they are likely to suffer further abuse for having done so. So, when they say they are happy living this existence, are they saying it honestly and truthfully? You have to try and understand the motives of the mother . . . a solution needs to help both of them, because they are so interdependent.

(Criminal justice manager: interviewee 2)



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Supporting Older Victim-Survivors

- ▶ Integrating the MARAC and Safeguarding procedures to increase options of use of advocates including IDVAs and IMCAs
- ▶ Increasing the use of advocates
- ▶ Carers assessments
- ▶ Control over their own decisions



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Control over decisions

'...For older person, being in control, knowing what is going to happen well in advance, is very important. With the statutory sector, it can feel, unless carefully handled, as though decisions are made without them. The voice is not central to the process. You go rushing in there and they won't want to know.'

(Senior Criminal Justice Manager)



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‘...research shows that victims of elder abuse want two things.

First, they want the abuse to end.

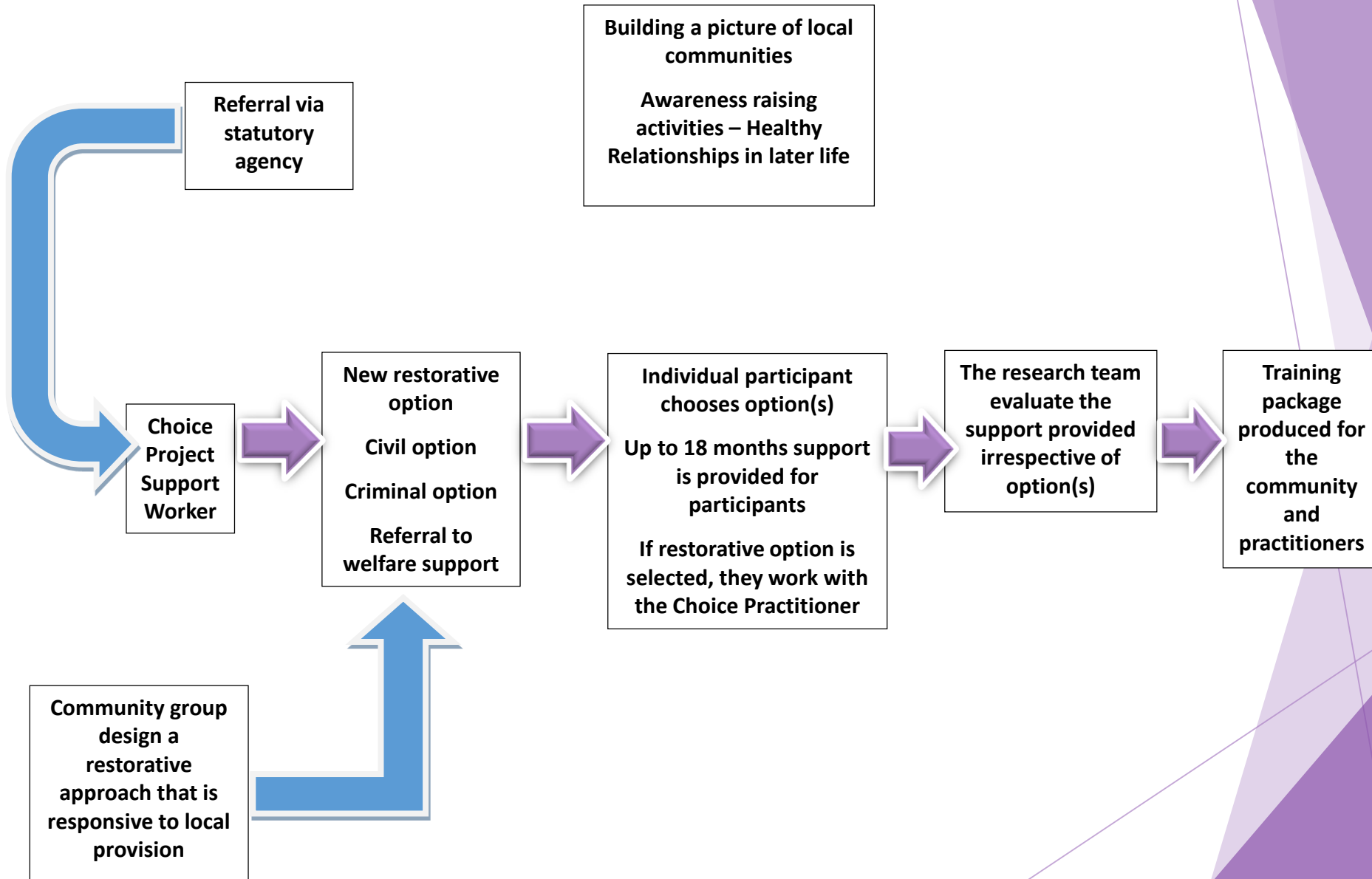
Second, they want justice.’

(Williams, J 2015)



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The Choice Project



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Contact Information



Dewis Choice

Website: <http://choice.aber.ac.uk/>

Email: choice@aber.ac.uk

Twitter: @choiceolderppl



@rebeccazerk

@wydall69

Helplines

Live Fear Free helpline

0808 8010 800

Action on Elder Abuse

080 8808 8141

Age UK

0800 678 1174

Solicitors for the elderly

0844 567 6173