

Manchester Domestic Abuse Strategy Newsletter

Issue 3
April 2008

Welcome to the third issue of the Manchester Domestic Abuse Strategy newsletter, providing regular updates and information on the work being done across the city to wipe out domestic abuse.



Councillor Sue Murphy, left, and Priya Chopra of Saheli speak at the *Forgotten Women* event

Spotlight on plight of 'forgotten women'

South Asian women face poverty and homelessness if they leave abusive partners within two years of coming into the UK, according to research highlighted at a major event in Manchester at the end of last month.

The event covered the problems women face when they try to escape domestic abuse because the law gives them no entitlement to benefits in their own right and expects that they will be supported by their husbands.

Ideas for changes in the law that could help women in similar circumstances were put forward at the event, held in Manchester Town Hall on 25 March.

The event publicised the report *Forgotten Women:*

Domestic Violence, Poverty and South Asian Women with No Recourse to Public Funds.

The research was commissioned by Saheli, the Manchester organisation that provides emergency, temporary refuge accommodation to South Asian women and their children who are fleeing domestic violence.

It was carried out by Dr Sundari Anitha (now at the University of Leeds) with Priya Chopra, Waheeda Farouk, Qamar Haq and Saliya Khan in the North West and Yorkshire.

It was funded by Oxfam, the Care Services Improvement Partnership, the National Institute for Mental Health in England, and the University of

The Manchester Crime and Disorder Partnership defines domestic abuse as any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between people who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender. This includes forced marriage where one or both parties do not give consent to marriage.

Swings and Roundabouts...

Swings and Roundabouts is a new support group in North Manchester that runs every Tuesday, 10am to noon, for women experiencing domestic abuse.

The group offers participants art sessions such as tile decoration and mosaics; pamper sessions and 'cutting ties' workshops.

A counsellor is available for the women to see as well as a Women's Aid advice worker.

The group is also able to support other family members. The aim is to make the group self-sustaining so that the women themselves run it.

The group is advertised through posters, leaflets and word of mouth. It takes referrals from Manchester City Council, health visitors, the Family Welfare Association and Sure Start.

Although Swings and Roundabouts is currently funded by North Manchester Women's Aid, the group is seeking funds to allow them to support activities that the women would like to do.

North Manchester Women's Aid worker Jaki, who started the group, says: "This is the way forward – taking practical help into the community. By offering case work in this group setting we can offer vital help and support to women who otherwise might not be in contact with any services."

For further information email jaki@nmwa.org.uk.

How Discus group helps

The NACRO Discus project works with women experiencing domestic abuse, whether they are in or out of a relationship.

Sue Connell, the project worker, runs a group which doubles as an English class. It takes referrals from the police, health visitors, the council, and survivors themselves.

Sue also runs a drop-in at two children's centres in North Manchester and is developing a drop-in at two other centres.

Sue has close links with the police, who give her information about repeat domestic abuse incidents.

Sue says: "I need more funding for activities for families and I would like to develop more work in schools to raise awareness about domestic abuse among young people and to make young people aware that help is available if they are worried about anyone in their family."

Huddersfield.

Women who come to the UK to join their husbands/ fiancés are subject to a two-year probationary period of residency, also known as the 'two year rule'.

If their marriage breaks down during this period, they no longer have the right to remain in Britain and face deportation to their country of origin. However, if domestic violence is the cause of marital breakdown and they are able to provide 'evidence' of this, they can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

But until such a decision is reached, they have No Recourse to Public Funds, which means they are not entitled to claim benefits or gain access to public housing such as refuges.

Unless they are earning or able to claim job-seeker's allowance based on their previous contributions, they have no income.

This means that women suffering domestic abuse face a stark choice between living with life-threatening violence or facing destitution if they leave, and deportation if they are unable to meet the stringent evidential requirements.

The research report:

- Exposes a situation where women facing domestic abuse, often-extreme domestic violence, are forced into destitution, sexual abuse, mental illness and what can only be described as slave labour.
- Highlights the way the benefit rules create an imbalance of power between the perpetrators and the women by preventing many women from leaving an abusive relationship.
- Demonstrates the inconsistent and variable nature of service provision and (with a few exceptions) local authority support; and shows how a lack of support forces many women to remain in an abusive relationship. Women and their children face extreme poverty and destitution after leaving.
- Highlights the fact that some specialist refuges are forced to use their own reserves to support women not entitled to public support, risking their own financial viability at a time when they are facing a struggle for survival due to a pressure to merge with mainstream services.

Many women suffer income poverty and struggle to meet their own basic needs and those of their children.

Often women become isolated on leaving as they are cut off from family and friends or lack funds to visit them or fear they may be traced if they see loved ones.

Many women are unaware of the specialist support available to them because of language barriers. They also have to contend with the more common effects of domestic abuse, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems.

They found limited access to counselling, and two-thirds of women in the research study did not have access to a GP. Many of these women are very unlikely to report domestic abuse due to language barriers and the fear of bringing further shame on their family. They are often unaware of how or to whom to report abuse.

Many women trying to qualify to stay in the country by proving domestic abuse are unable to provide the required evidence because they reported the abuse a long time after it occurred. Occasionally the agency has not documented the abuse properly.

The report recommendations include:

- Changing the law, including allowing survivors access to safe housing and benefits
- Allowing a wider range of admissible evidence under the domestic violence rule
- Extending the domestic violence rule to all survivors on restricted immigration status, such as students and partners of workers.
- Providing better publicity and information on services
- Improving training on domestic abuse and those with No Recourse to Public Funds
- Improving routine enquiry into domestic abuse and publishing national guidelines for practitioners, particularly in social services.

The Manchester Domestic Abuse Management Group is working to bring in some of the changes that can be made at a local level.

Their plans for next year include starting to introduce routine enquiry within appropriate services, working with Saheli and South Manchester Law Centre to produce multi-agency guidelines for professionals helping survivors with NRPF, training trainers to ensure domestic abuse training covers this issue, supporting group work for survivors and raising their awareness of what women are entitled to claim.

They also would like to promote the charitable fund that Saheli has set up to assist survivors awaiting decisions on their immigration status with funds for clothes, baby equipment etc.

If you would like a copy of the research report please contact Saheli on 0161 446 2699.

Copies are £15 and all proceeds go to the charitable fund for women with NRPF.

Donations to the charitable fund can also be made by contacting Saheli.

- The No Recourse Day of Action is confirmed as April 23 - put the date in your diary now! Join us at the House of Commons, organise an event near you or take action from your desk!
- The housing department at the law firm Fisher Meredith have been working with the Housing Law Practitioners Association to campaign for a change in the law to benefit people made homeless by domestic violence.

Reports/articles:

- The report on Women Asylum Seekers in Pakistan (WASP) report can be found on the Endthefear website at www.endthefear.co.uk/
- Guardian report on women with no recourse to public funds: www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/jan/23/immigrationandpublicservices
- How Government is Addressing Sexual Violence and Abuse: transcript of a speech by Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker: www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/711626
- Report on Specialist Domestic Violence Courts and Government's approach to tackling domestic abuse: www.egovmonitor.com/node/17593



Women's Domestic Violence Helpline - Greater Manchester

Chief Officer

Salary scale: £28,221 to £32,436 NJC Points 36 - 40
35 hours per week

You will lead on the strategic management of the organisation ensuring our future sustainability. You will have a clear commitment to women victims of domestic abuse and proven management skills with significant experience in the voluntary sector.

Initial appointment for fixed term of 12 months with extension subject to successful outcomes.

This post is open to women only under S7 (2) (e) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Closing Date: 28 April

Interviews: 12 May

For an application pack, write to Women's Domestic Violence Helpline, PO Box 390, Manchester M16 7WE, email office@salfordcvcs.co.uk or visit www.communitiesinsalford.org.uk to download an application pack.

Women's Domestic Violence Helpline is an Industrial and Provident Society with exempt charity status No. 27923R

Book lifts the lid on forced marriage

Moss Side councillor Sameem Ali has just published a book about her experience of forced marriage, *Belonging*.

It is a story that new figures show is disturbingly common in our city. Women in Manchester are being forced into marriages they do not want at an estimated rate of six a month and outreach workers suspect the true figure is even higher.

Sameem's hope is that her book will raise awareness among young people about the risks of forced marriage and prompt a greater understanding of the devastating effect of forced marriage in the wider community.

Central Manchester Women's Aid say they have dealt with 75 women seeking help to escape a forced marriage since April last year.

Nationwide, the government's Forced Marriage Unit says it deals with about 300 cases a year, around a third of whom are children - some, like Sameem, as young as 13.

Sandhyah Sharma, from Central Manchester Women's Aid, says that the national figures must be the 'tip of the iceberg'.

"It's a massive problem and it's not just a South Asian community problem," she says. "We see women from the Irish traveller community, Polish, Spanish, African women.

"Basically pick a country, any country where there is a tradition of arrangements or different ways of marriage then you will find issues around forced marriage."

MPs also recognise that forced marriages, like instances of domestic violence, are vastly under-reported.

A House of Commons select committee investigating forced marriage found that in 15 areas across the country 2,089 children were missing from school.

The figures were disclosed amid growing concern that pupils - mainly from ethnic minorities - were being forced into marriages abroad against their will.

Politicians have been debating whether to criminalise forced marriage for years.

The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act, which was passed in Parliament last year, allows courts to make orders to protect the victim or the potential victim of a forced marriage and help remove them from that situation.

While aspects of the practice, like kidnap and rape, are illegal, forced marriage itself is still not against the law. But Councillor Ali, now 38, thinks that criminalising forced marriage would dissuade young people from reporting it at all.

"Imagine the situation where a 15-year-old knows they are going to be forced into a marriage and they ring the relevant number and police get involved. If the police then say, 'OK, you're being forced into a marriage, that's a criminal act, we're going to arrest your parents' - which young girl or young boy is going to put their parents through that at that age?"

Instead, she thinks that the avenues of help, like the Forced Marriage Unit should be better publicised in schools and airports to raise awareness.

"The victims don't know what help is out there or even if anyone can help them," she says. "I only found out about the Forced Marriage Unit two years ago, and I've been in that situation.

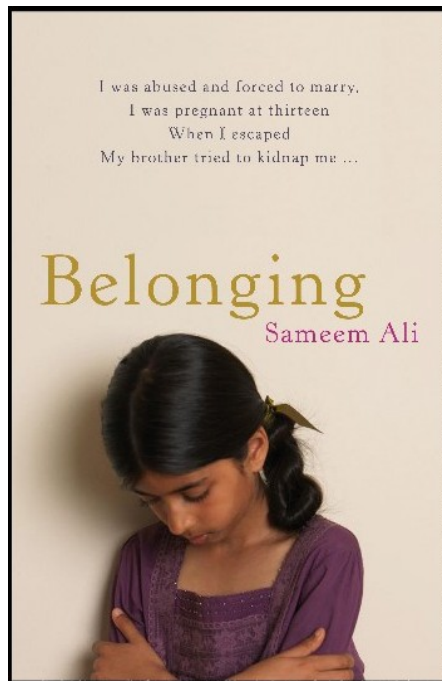
"It's still happening today and I think 25 years later, a quarter of a century, it's still the same. My son is 24 years

old now and it's been shoved under the carpet for all these years.

"I'm working with Manchester's Domestic Abuse Management Group to ensure that forced marriage is high up the agenda of domestic abuse work.

"We're discussing posters in schools and airports, more work in schools to ensure that children who go missing are followed up and an increased recognition of forced marriage amongst professionals such as NHS staff."

(Based on an article in the Manchester Evening News, Thursday, 20th March 2008, http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/community/s/1041753_forced_marriage_an_issue_for_the_whole_community)



Changing faces...



Juliet Appleby

Sarah Khalil, Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator for the Manchester Partnership, has just started her maternity leave. She's due back in February 2009.

At a meeting of the Domestic Abuse Management Group, Director of Adult Services Caroline Marsh thanked Sarah on behalf of all the partners for her hard work and wished her all the best.

During Sarah's absence, her replacement will be Juliet Appleby, who was a Press Officer and Chair of the Communications Sub-Group for the domestic abuse strategy.

Juliet will start in a few weeks and can be contacted on j.appleby@manchester.gov.uk

Juliet writes: "I look forward to working with you all in this exciting and challenging job.

"I'll try to get round to see as many people as possible in the first few months as I settle into the role."

Domestic abuse training for all social workers

From September every social work student at Manchester Metropolitan University will undertake half a day's domestic abuse training regardless of his or her speciality, with the option to do a more in-depth elective looking at the links between different forms of abuse.

Debbie Thackray, senior lecturer in Social Work at MMU, said: "Since I became involved with the City Council's domestic abuse sub-group on training I have become more aware of what is happening on the ground and had the opportunity to develop strategic links with practitioners and other trainers.

"These links give MMU's social work students a unique opportunity to really focus on domestic abuse and to grasp the inter-connection between different forms of abuse, a research speciality of mine.

"MMU, already popular with students, is rapidly becoming a specialist area in student training in domestic abuse."

MMU's domestic abuse training will look at the links between child abuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse and animal abuse as well as forced marriage, the changing population, and women with no recourse to public funds.

Debbie's research is into survivors of childhood sexual abuse and links with mental health problems and domestic abuse. For more information contact d.thackray@mmu.ac.uk

Teams get together

Manchester City Council's Domestic Violence Outreach Team, a floating support service for people who have experienced domestic violence, is about to merge with a team from Manchester Advice to become the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor team.

The trained staff aim to prevent people becoming homeless by supporting them to remain safely in their own home if this is possible and is what they want, by improving property security through the Sanctuary scheme, and by giving information about legal protection and service support.

The team is closely linked to Children's Services, which includes two workers who provide support to children who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse.

Delia Edwards, Manager of the DV Outreach Team, said: "We're looking to develop into the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service alongside Manchester Advice.

"This will increase the team size and allow us to offer an even more effective and independent service to high risk survivors of domestic abuse."

Catch-up...

If you missed the last practitioners' forum then follow this link to an article on St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre in the Guardian.

<http://lifeandhealth.guardian.co.uk/women/story/0,,2268854,00.html>

Future dates for practitioners' forums will be advertised shortly.

Courses and conferences

Manchester Safeguarding Children Board training on Domestic Abuse. Free to all Manchester agencies. On 21 October 2008. Email s.shorrock@manchester.gov.uk to book a place.



Rights of Women training 2008 courses include:

- Contact between children and violent fathers: in whose "best interests"?
- Asylum and immigration law: protecting women from violence and securing their position in the UK.
- Just Married? The law of marriage, divorce and forced marriage.
- Safe as houses: domestic violence – women's rights to housing and property.
- Meeting the needs of trafficked women: immigration and criminal law.
- Removing the barriers: domestic violence and securing women's immigration position in the UK.
- Supporting survivors of domestic violence: law and practice.
- Supporting survivors of sexual violence: law and practice.
- Pathways to Justice: BMER women, domestic violence and relationship breakdown.
- Finding refuge: gender-based violence and seeking asylum in the UK.

Training is provided by female solicitors and aimed at those working with women who have experienced domestic and or sexual violence, including IDVAs and ISVAs.

Courses are open to women only and are accredited by the law council and bar council.

If you would like further information about *Rights of Women* tel 020 7251 6575/6, textphone 020 7490 2562, email info@row.org.uk or visit www.rightsofwomen.org.uk, where you'll also find a training brochure.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact: Women's Domestic Violence Helpline 0161 636 7525 10am- 4pm (Urdu and Punjabi spoken Mon & Tues 10am-1pm and Wed 1pm -4pm).

- National 24 hour Helpline 0808 2000 247.
- Help for Male Victims 0808 801 0327.
- Advice for perpetrators can be found from Respect 0845 122 8609.
- In an emergency call 999.

Do the Right Thing series of seminars:

- Domestic violence and children
- Domestic violence and disabled people, mental health and addictions
- Domestic violence and black and minority ethnic communities
- Domestic violence and men: best practice workshop

Various dates and venues. For more information, e-mail right.thing@virgin.net

Also from *Do the Right Thing* ...

Domestic Violence and the Arts: National one-day conference on how the arts can be used in our communities and schools to raise awareness of domestic violence, and to work therapeutically with victims, survivors, child witnesses and perpetrators of domestic violence.

Tuesday 22 April 2008: The Derby Conference Centre: 9.50am-5pm. Book 01332 780 096 or e-mail right.thing@virgin.net



Sexual Violence Conference: Prevention, Prosecution and Victim Support, Tuesday 22 April 2008 - Central London.

For more information contact David Moffat, Capita Conferences. Tel 0207 808 5293 or email: david.moffat2@capita.co.uk



Community Care Conferences: Working with Faith Communities to Safeguard Children; Working Together to Combat Violence and 'Honour' Abuse.

Topics include Female Genital Mutilation, forced marriage, honour abuse and domestic abuse, faith based child abuse, working with communities.

Venue – London. Tel 020 7347 3500



Westminster Briefing: Supporting Female Victims of Crime: Improving Services for Women Affected by Domestic Violence and Rape.

Thursday 19 June, 10.45am to 2pm. Venue: Westminster.

For more info tel 020 7096 2922, fax 020 7096 2946, email luke.espin@westminster-briefing.com or visit www.westminster-briefing.com



ANY NEWS?

If you have any items for future issues, please contact Juliet Appleby on email j.Appleby@manchester.gov.uk