

Domestic Violence Employer Launch

From Rachel Martin, adva manager

It was exciting to participate in the Employer Launch at Exeter's Phoenix Centre on 4th September 2008.

Much progress has been made to increase agency awareness of domestic violence and abuse in Devon and to see this extended to the county's three largest public sector employers



was an important moment in our journey towards creating a safer Devon. The three big agencies - Devon County Council, Devon Primary Care Trust and Devon and Cornwall Constabulary- were represented at the most senior levels. Phil Norrey, Chief Executive, and Heather Barnes, Director Personnel and Performance, spoke eloquently about the Local Authority's responsibility to its 24,000 staff, 10% of whom would be currently experiencing domestic abuse. Assistant Chief Constable with the lead on domestic abuse within the Police Force spoke of his agency's role to recognise the crime it is and to support its 3,000 staff. Dr Virginia Pearson, Chief Executive of Public Health talked of the health impact of abuse including the PCT's 6,000 staff.

DID YOU KNOW..?

- 10% of current staff experience domestic violence and abuse
- 56% of abused women arrive late for work at least five times a month
- 28% leave early at least five times a month
- 53% miss at least three days of work a month
- 75% of victims are targeted at work- from harassing phone calls and abusive partners arriving at the office unannounced, to physical assaults.

More eloquent than any of the public sector officials at the launch, however, were the

survivors who stood up to tell the seated audience of over 70 people just how domestic violence and abuse had affected their lives - and how support from an employer could make the difference between surviving and further suffering. The audience was deeply moved by survivors' words (which you can read in the next article 'the SEEDS perspective'), and the key message "you as an employer play a pivotal role for survivors at work" was not lost on those absorbed by them.

The Launch closed with a moving and powerful original song, written and sung by Martyn Joseph, telling the story of a man polaxed by the abuse he overhears, admonishing himself for not intervening: "If I were half a man I would do something". Those who had not been moved to tears by the survivors' stories found themselves silenced and haunted by the song. Phil closed the event by acknowledging that if all agencies heeded the words of Martyn Joseph and were "only half an organisation" they would respond to the plight of those for whom they take responsibility.

A powerful launch about a powerful issue. Now let's see the public sector carry out its promises and the private sector organisations in Devon follow suit.

To access the new materials (DVD, posters, leaflet, business card, stickers) please go to www.adva.org.uk



Domestic Violence Employer Campaign 2008

The S.E.E.D.S perspective

As members of S.E.E.D.S we were invited along to the Exeter Phoenix Arts Centre to represent women who experience domestic violence and are working. These women's stories demonstrate how employers might be able to help.

We did this by speaking up in front of employers and representatives from Devon County Council, the Police and other agencies. One of our members Karen told her own story of how an employer had been very understanding and helpful while she was going through this time. We then all told a positive and a negative experience that had been sent in by other survivors.

"I was put under protection when my ex hubby threatened to shoot me, he broke into my home and waited, I called work, explained what had happened and what the police had told me

to do... the response was "work comes first, I think you're being a bit dramatic". This came from someone who had just been taken on as a practice manager... the air was blue when I returned to work you can well imagine, the whole work force were shock and disgusted, including the boss who had taken her on. If it's not happening to them they don't care. I have learnt that from experience!"

"I had a female boss who was a complete Ex called, making all kinds of threats and I shook and couldn't concentrate on my job. She called me into the office where I told her he'd threatened to kill me. Her response was along the lines of: 'don't make your self look foolish,' and 'she wouldn't let anyone treat her like that.' She was hard faced, really unhelpful and I couldn't even leave work to see a solicitor and get some legal advice on injunctions etc."

"Because of my domestic violence I have had a few weeks off this past year. (I work in a school)...this violence has affected my children and one especially. He was excluded from school and all I got was "I won't pay you for this" and "you are having a lot of time of school". My youngest has emotional issues and we think ADHD, as his brother but until I get a diagnosis I am having too much time off school...much the same was said when I had been attacked by my ex husband...I looked frightening and went in to hand in my sick note and it was assumed I was returning to work looking as I did... I got my time off by sick note but now I need time off to see my solicitors and I am being told this is hard and I wont get paid for seeing a solicitor..."

"I work for one of the country's largest universities and without a doubt had I not been working here I would have gone down a long time ago. They have been so supportive on all levels, it's unbelievable. My direct line manager has contacted my ex directly and told him to stop harassing me at work (he was faxing the office all the time), she has agreed that I can 'work at home' on days when I have court/solicitors/social services meetings etc. The university has supported my in counselling (FOC) for 4 years and that has helped me more than anyone can possibly imagine. Ironically I work in a law school (the irony of this leaves me dumbfounded sometimes) and I have so many good friends who are solicitors and barristers though none of them in family!!!! But their friendship and help and support, in whatever small way it has been, has seen me through. There have been many days when I have not wanted to get out of bed and face the world and then I have thought about my 'work family' and they brilliant support they have offered me, I'd have been a complete mess without them!"

"I have been very lucky, if it hadn't of been for my 'family' at work, supporting me so for many years through the DV, I think I would be a complete wreck. My ex rang one of my bosses and demanded that she send me home right there and then or else he would come and smash the shop windows then set fire to her house, she stood her ground and challenged him, whilst I was having a panic attack on the floor. I thought she was going to make me go home or I was

cont. over...

going to get sacked but instead she told me she understood and it was up to me what I wanted to do, what I thought was best. Other bosses have sat me down and treated my injuries and held my hand whilst I have cried, another rang her husband to come and take me to the hospital when I turned up at work with a head injury. And after the last beating I had, my boss arranged through a counselling service at work, to pay for me to run away for a week, and arranged 3 months off with full pay to sort myself out. So as you can see I had a fantastic support network.”

“Employer told my ex that he would get an injunction at my work place to prevent him coming there and harassing me.”

“If it wasn’t for the helping hand of my employer of two weeks, where HE noticed the potentially abusive situation, I would still be up there with no other way out.

From our perspective of the day, it was quite a nerve racking experience, as this was the first time we had spoken in front of so many people. Once we got going there was no stopping us! This was a good experience for us as we all felt that we had made a positive contribution to the day.

We all enjoyed the song from Martyn Joseph, which stirred strong feelings amongst some of our members.

We had a surprise at the end when each of us was presented with a bouquet of flowers! A good day... a good experience.

Kathy (S.E.E.D.S)

Music Against Domestic Abuse 2008



Exeter Phoenix Sept 4th

This year’s MADA event surpassed all expectations and followed a hugely successful employer’s campaign, both taking place at the Exeter Phoenix. Martyn Joseph, who was jointly headlining the MADA event, kindly provided both a climax to the Employers event and a prequel to the evening event by performing his song ‘Half of a Man’. A clip of Martyn’s performances was shown on both Westcountry and BBC Spotlight TV.

MADA 2008 was so well attended that people were queuing for 20 minutes to get into the main auditorium. They were not disappointed as opening act the Joyce Gang performed a dazzling set with an array of styles ranging from traditional Irish to modern jazz. With 5 acts billed for the MADA event intervals were short and young North Devon singer songwriter, Jenna Witts, gave a confident and polished performance which provided further evidence of her growing stature within the industry and her ability to reach out to a wide audience. She had toured with Steve Knightley and co wrote the

haunting ‘Seven Days’ from Show of Hands Country Life album.

The half way point saw Daniel Rachel and his band take to the stage with an energetic and meaningful collection of songs including ‘Let it be Mine’ which was a hit for Daniel in January of this year. Daniel had kindly donated proceeds for the single to the London based Domestic and Sexual Violence charity – Tender. He had previously played a benefit gig at the famous Borderline Club in London.

The penultimate act, Rachel Taylor- Beales, gave us an innovative and soulful performance with a mixture of folk, jazz and country which created a unique sound. Her stage presence and ability to tell stories thrilled the audience and she will undoubtedly be a name to look out for in the future.

The evening reached a climax with headliners and award winning musicians Martyn Joseph and Steve Knightley (Show of Hands) fusing their talent, friendship and humour to provide an hour of captivating songs from their huge catalogue of outstanding material. It was a privilege and honour to have them grace the stage at a MADA event and their combined individual talents culminating in a mesmerising encore will be long remembered by all that attended.

Many thanks to the MADA team and all the artists for their support and hard work. Check out all the pics on www.ma-da.co.uk



ASK Domestic Violence Health Project – Update

The project, which was funded by adva until the end of August 08 has been extended and is now funded by the Devon PCT until March 09.

Up to date a total of 1386 patients have routinely been asked if they are experiencing domestic abuse. 117 patients (8%) have disclosed domestic abuse and so far 36 patients have taken up the offer of support from the Health IDVA (31%), 10 of which were risk assessed as very high risk and referred to MARAC (figures from 9th September 2008).

Surprising and significant is that only a very small number of patients who engaged with the Health IDVA have had any kind of previous support. GPs and practice nurses have fed back that before the introduction of ASK the main response was to hand out Women's Aid's

telephone number and involve Social Services or/and the police in serious cases. Another finding is that many patients, who have disclosed abuse as part of the routine enquiry were not known to their GPs as suffering DV and there was no information on their medical records, although in hindsight the symptoms are easily recognisable as abuse symptoms. With the Health IDVA on sight, instant access to support makes it acceptable to seek support.

The Health IDVA has now pulled out of Holsworthy Health Centre, and a Torridge Women's Aid Outreach worker is now placed at the surgery one day a week to take on referrals from GPs and practice nurses, which has been successful.

Mount Pleasant Health Centre and Leatside surgery are still taking advantage of the presence of the Health IDVA and numbers of referrals have gone up.

Both surgeries have extended the routine enquiry: Mount Pleasant has put the DV question on the mental health review template. Leatside has added the DV question on the family planning templates and is considering adding it to the prescription template.

The practice nurses at Mount Pleasant Health Centre have had refresher training in early September and since then 8 more referrals have been made by the time of writing this article (2.10.2008).

The plan for the next few months is to research potential for a cluster based domestic violence response in Totnes, which would involve the MIU (minor injury unit), community nursing team and vulnerable adults' team. A meeting has taken place with the lead nurse at the MIU and

interest in DV training and in setting up a referral pathway and structured response seems to be high, and has already resulted in one referral from the MIU to the Health IDVA.

Watch this space!

For more information contact Christine Fritsch, Health IDVA on christine.fritsch@devon.gov.uk or on 07969101508



Exeter Women's Aid LGBT focus group

The Exeter Women's Aid LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender) focus group was set up in January, to address the low numbers of referrals we receive for women in abusive same sex relationships. Exeter Women's Aid (EWA) has always offered a service to women irrespective of the gender of their abuser, yet out of over 700 women supported last year, only 2 identified as lesbian or bi-sexual.

We wanted to ensure our service was completely accessible to all women and therefore the focus group was launched with 3 principle aims:

To look at why the referral rate was so low, particularly to explore whether it was due to a lack of awareness about same sex domestic abuse (DA) or whether there were perceived obstacles to accessing services. Secondly to implement any measures that would improve our accessibility to lesbian and bi-sexual women and to better publicise this service. Thirdly to raise awareness within the LGBT community of DA in order to encourage survivors to access support and to extend this awareness raising to other agencies who may inadvertently overlook DA when it occurs between women.

The focus group is comprised of several agencies other than EWA including representatives from Intercom (LGBT support), ADVA, Police, Probation, Broken Rainbows Cornwall (LGBT DV support) and Victim Support. This has provided agencies with a forum in which to share expertise and to gain ideas for making their services more responsive to LGBT DA. The

focus group has undertaken several projects: We are focusing LGBT issues during Awareness Week and are planning events with local LGBT groups. In the run up to this week some LGBT publications will run articles on DA and DA services. We ran workshops at the recent Intercom LGBT conference and gained useful feedback on DA services. We have ensured that LGBT training is a core-training requirement for EWA workers and have been exploring the provision of LGBT DA training for other agencies.

As part of our research, a short questionnaire aimed at lesbian, gay and bi-sexual respondents has been devised and is currently being distributed. It asks respondents who have experienced DA (either personally or through friendship with a survivor) which agencies they approached and to comment on the response they received. It also asks those who did not disclose what made them reluctant to do so. The results will form a report to be compiled next January. The small numbers of questionnaires we have received so far indicate that women believe that they are unlikely to be taken seriously when disclosing because of a perceived lack of understanding and/or homophobia within non-LGBT agencies. One of the perceived attitudes is that abuse will not be treated as seriously as abuse within heterosexual relationships, possibly because professionals will not believe a woman can pose the same risk as a man. Of course by its very definition abuse relies on an imbalance of power and the risks are no less real and serious if your partner is of the same gender as you.

Some of these attitudes are demonstrable in the experiences of individual respondents, but the impact is felt far more widely as others in the community hear of these experiences and feel anxious of making disclosures – an anxiety the

abuser can manipulate to ensure the victim's silence.

In the same way that viewing same sex DA as lesser than that of heterosexual abuse is detrimental, viewing it as exactly the same overlooks some crucial differences that need to be acknowledged in the way a service responds to survivors. There are aspects of some same sex relationships that may not be commonly experienced within heterosexual relationships, for example it is not unusual for lesbian and bi-sexual women to continue to be close friends with ex-partners. As domestic abuse is about relationships it is important that survivors feel they can disclose to someone they can be open with without worrying about being judged or not understood.

There are also LGBT specific forms of abuse, which need to be recognised, such as the abuser using the threat of 'outing' their partner to ensure control over them. Furthermore there can be barriers to accessing mainstream DA services; a lesbian woman for example may fear a homophobic reaction from other tenants if she were to move into a refuge. A professional's assumption that the abuser is male may give the impression that the worker is 'heterocentric' and discourage a woman from pursuing a disclosure.

We hope that by engaging agencies in a dialogue about LGBT DA, we can ensure that professionals feel confident in responding to a survivor irrespective of the gender of her abuser and that women feel there is a real understanding of the issues they may be facing as lesbian and bi-sexual survivors.

The focus group welcomes your suggestions and comments. For more information on the work of EWA please see www.exeterwomensaid.org.uk

Article by Collette Winters
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Events

Domestic violence awareness week 21st–28th November – what's on?

NORTH DEVON

Friday, 21st Nov:

DV week kicks off with a Gala night at the Cedars, Barnstaple. Silver service 3 course meal with live music, disco and auction. Prizes to be auctioned include a night at a spa hotel, a champagne balloon trip, tickets to Graham Norton show with backstage passes etc.

Monday, 24th Nov, 12.30:

There is a noisy launch following refreshments at the Family centre in Ilfracombe. We will walk from the Family centre to the Quay, where petals will be strewn at 2.30. Transport will be arranged to get back up the hill.

19.30: Pub quiz in the 'Cork and Bottle' pub, Barnstaple.

Wednesday, 26th Nov:

Youth event - A noisy march to Barnstaple square by North Devon college students and some primary schools, finishing with a programme of live music in the square.

Thursday, 27th Nov, 19.30:

Bingo at the British Legion, Barnstaple.

Friday, 28th Nov:

Music event in the evening in The Inn on the Square, Barnstaple. Lots of live music with local young acts.

Also we are planning lots of stands outside various venues, like supermarkets and pannier markets during the week. One will be situated at the Mayors table in Barnstaple Pannier market on Friday 28th. Hopefully a football match between the police and Barnstaple team will take place and a sponsored assault course at Chivenor base.

EAST DEVON

Tuesday 25th November, approx 10:30 am: Launch at Honiton Town Council Offices. Tuesday is market day. This will be preceded by a short noisy march to the council offices.

Other activities during the week:

Distributing posters and leaflets via local networks to a variety of venues using the Mosaic tool. Home is where the hurt is posters will be displayed in public toilets across East Devon. Entries in parish magazines and local publications as well as local press. We are considering getting printed Xmas cards with a DV theme. These have been designed by Collette at Women's Aid. Consideration of a photo shoot re men against domestic abuse. Beer mats with local 24 hour headline number being distributed.

MID DEVON

We have no silent marches and the likes but will be promoting the week by displays at a variety of locations which will include:

Leisure centres, libraries, council offices, doctors surgeries, citizens advice, and all parish and town councils will be asked to display leaflets or put items in newsletters etc.

We also are working with the Anglo-Polish association in Tiverton who will do promotion during their surgery sessions that week, and they plan to host a women's event specifically that week. DV is classified differently in Poland and they can explain how it would be dealt with if reported in the UK.

The Crediton Family centre plan an event in the town centre, probably with a local café to promote DV awareness. They also go out to 10 rural parishes and will take information and displays in the days around the DV week. Cullompton Family Centre may also take part but no confirmation as to what yet.

Mid Devon Pub watch will be sent posters and leaflets to display as well as beer mats. In addition they will be sent questions so that those that hold quizzes can include a couple of questions during that week.

EXETER

Monday 24th November:

We are holding a "noisy march". Exact details are still being discussed, and will be announced in due time. We are planning stalls and displays around at Bedford Square - maybe a poetry reading.

We are also planning to target areas of underreporting. Leaflet drops in perhaps 3 areas of Exeter during the week, where there are very few reports of DV, and where MOSAIC profile suggests people who are less likely to report live.

SOUTH DEVON

The feedback from South Devon was that the DV Forum in South and West Devon is currently on hold with little planned for DV week.

Other news

Women's Aid has launched an awareness campaign about domestic violence for teenagers.

The campaign, called Expect Respect, asks teenagers to both expect and give respect in their relationships and aims to work with teenagers now to reduce the amount of domestic violence experienced in the future. For more information about the campaign go to www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-press-information.asp?itemid=1783&itemTitle=Women%92s+Aid+launches+teenage+domestic+violence+campaign+with+Bliss+magazine§ion=0001000100150001§ionTitle=Press+releases

Help to overcome abuse and trauma for Sheffield women.

Women in Sheffield who have suffered from chronic trauma and abuse are to be helped to overcome its impact on their lives through a substantial grant of £458,611 from the Big Lottery Fund announced yesterday. For more detail about Sheffield's Women's Counselling and Therapy Service go to www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/lfi/DNWA-7JKJ2W

The CPS has launched a public consultation on its draft third edition of its Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Violence.

The second edition of which was published in February 2005. The Policy explains the way the CPS deals with cases involving domestic violence. It gives advice on what the CPS does, how domestic violence cases are prosecuted, and what victims can expect from the CPS. The CPS would welcome responses by 29 October 2008. The consultation documents (and further information about the process) are available online. Go to www.cps.gov.uk/consultations/dv_index.html for details.

Your Contribution...

If you'd like to contribute articles or news to this bulletin, please don't hesitate to get in contact. Your contributions are more than welcome!
info@devon.gov.uk

adva
against domestic violence and abuse
in Devon

www.adva.org.uk