

Dewis Choice

Centre for Age, Gender and Social Justice

Ignored, Invisible and
Overlooked: Barriers and
Enablers to Help-seeking

#HiddenVoices
@choiceolderppl

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Dewis Choice Initiative

Falling outside the 'public story' of domestic abuse?

The Systemic Ageism of Domestic Abuse

Policy and service responses are aimed at white heterosexual female victim-survivors with young children.

"There has been a tendency by researchers, policy-makers, and activists to assume the aspirations for justice of people experiencing domestic violence."

(Holder and Daly, 2017, p. 2)



Defining Help-seeking

- Private strategies
- Indirect or unspoken disclosures
- Help-seeking journey is continuous and ongoing with multiple goals and priorities that can change over time (Holder and Daly, 2017);
- Help-seeking and recovery processes are not linear

*I think that's probably where practitioners start to just lose patience with people because there isn't a linear progress is there, it's two steps forward, three steps back, one step- you know it's constantly going backwards and forwards.
Health practitioner.*

Recalling information is difficult when dealing with trauma and this often conflicts with CJ organisational goals:

They [police] don't know how to behave around you and their very insensitive because they expect you to give 100% ... you've got to remember everything and you're so traumatized that you struggle to remember things ... they need everything done there and then, you've got to be on the ball all the time, you can't forget anything.

Extraction process versus incremental disclosure and 'testing the waters'

It's taken me six months to tell Choice Worker and she was the first one that I told. And... had there'd been a bit more support at the police station, perhaps question me more [about the abuse]... maybe things would've been different. Perhaps I would've been better understood. But I found it quite difficult to talk about personal things. IPV Victim, aged 63.

Our Previous Research Findings

Access to Justice findings

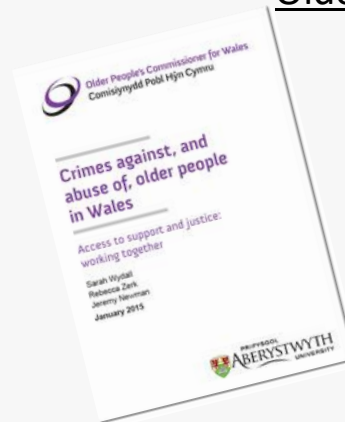
- Older victims of abuse are not always central to the decision making process
- Often denied their basic human rights to access justice
- Diverted away from specialist domestic abuse support
- Welfarised response



Practitioner Perspectives (OPC Study)

Older people:

- are just as likely to experience abuse from a family member as they are an intimate partner;
- stay longer before accessing services;
- rarely access services directly;
- are less likely to leave the family home;
- view home more significant for security;
- have a stronger sense of embeddedness in the local community.



For publications see: <https://dewischoice.org.uk/what-we-do/research/research-output/>

De-bunking the myths about help-seeking in later life:

Our research found:

- Intimate partner relationships - the majority of older people do choose to leave the abusive partner;
- Adult family violence – older people do not always want to maintain a relationship with adult children or grandchildren.
 - Less about ‘intrinsic vulnerabilities’ in the research literature about ‘frailty, dependency and age-related factors inhibited help-seeking’;
 - More about extrinsic vulnerabilities – a lack of service provision creates non-enabling environments which increases the risk of harm.

Inbuilt ageism – Masks domestic abuse in later life

Organisational & Structural Barriers

- Not recognised as domestic abuse;
- Coercive control disguised under conjugal roles and care giver stress;
- Limited opportunities to disclose;
- Not heard or listened to by agencies;
- Coerced choices;
- Rule of optimism or rule of pragmatism?;
- Older perpetrators perceived as less dangerous;
- Perpetrators rarely face conviction.

1 in 4 domestic homicides involve a victim aged
years and over (18% of the population)

Enabling Positive Help-seeking

- Space and time away from perpetrator;
- Time to give historical context;
- Older clients need to be believed, listened to and their feelings validated;
- Reframing repeat call outs;
- Empowered through rights and entitlements;
- Revisit justice and help-seeking options.



Free Practitioner Resources

<https://dewischoice.org.uk/information-and-advice/resources/>



'Do you see me?' Coproduced LGBT Film

<https://dewischoice.org.uk/>

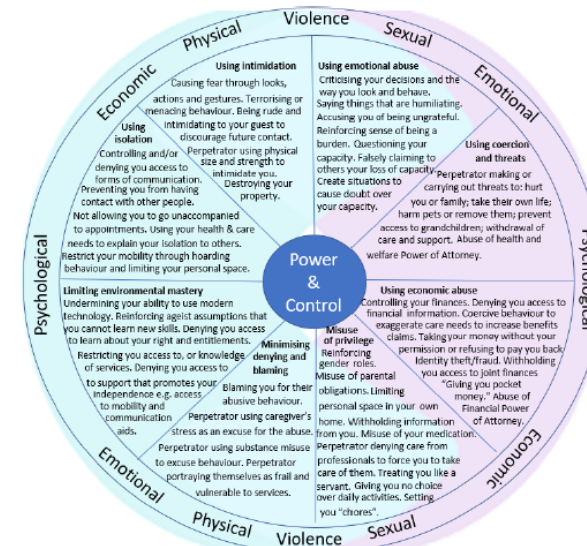
The Centre for Age, Gender and Social Justice



Individualised safety plan – guidance

For a safety plan to be effective it should be tailored to the individual's unique circumstances, in particular, the relationship between the older person and the abusive person. The actions in a safety plan should feel achievable; taking into account of what has, or has not, worked in the past, and avoiding actions that may increase risk. The plan will

ONLINE
TRAINING



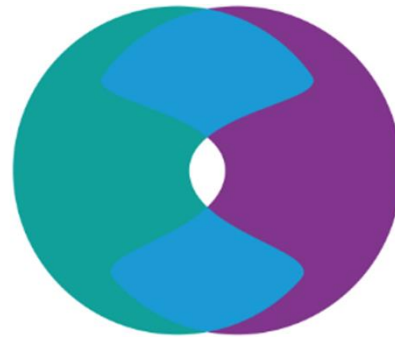
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<https://dewischoice.org.uk/what-we-do/training/>

***‘Justice and empowerment, along with adult protection should
lie at the heart of any comprehensive safeguarding service’***

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (2010)



Dewis Choice

If you have any questions or comments please contact:

Email: choice@aber.ac.uk

Choice website: <https://dewischoice.org.uk/>



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Helplines

Live Fear Free helpline

0808 8010 800

Hourglass

0808 808 8141

Age UK

0800 678 1174

Solicitors for the elderly

0844 567 6173

But when it is a continuous thing, it really wears away. And I just got to the stage, where I thought, I am seventy-seven this year, I want to live the rest of my life doing what I want to do without fear of what somebody is going to say to me. You know? I have always done what I was told, or expected. My generation, you were brought up to, the man was the boss, the man was the bread earner. The women were there to look after them.