

# Developing strong partnerships/health links in addressing Domestic Violence, HBV, Forced Marriage & FGM

Deborah Jamieson

Head of Children, Families & Social Inclusion  
Programme, Department of Health

[Deborah.jamieson@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.jamieson@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

# Links between social exclusion & domestic violence

- **Tackling social exclusion and reducing health inequalities is a priority for Government**
- **Defined; ‘what can happen when people suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environment, bad health and family breakdown.’**
- **Exclusion may come about because of dim future prospects and not just current situation.**

# Domestic abuse

- Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.
- Accounts for 16% of all violent crime
- 77% of victims of domestic violence are women
- Has more repeat victims than any other crime (on average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police)
- On average, two women are killed every week by a current or former male partner

# Economic Costs

- The estimated annual cost to the economy of violence and abuse for England & Wales is probably somewhere between £22.9-36.5 billion. The overall cost to society may be much more than this, if the real cost of people not reaching their full potential is factored in
- In 2001, the cost of domestic violence to the NHS for physical injuries is around £ 1.2 b per year. This includes GPs and hospitals. Mental health care is estimated at an additional £176 m. Total tangible and intangible costs are over £23 billion per year.

# Setting out the context-what about children?

- Keeping children and young people safe is a top priority for this Government. This includes keeping children safe from practices such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and HBV.
- Forced marriage & HBV affects both children and adults as well as men and women from a wide range of communities.
- An interview with a health professional may be the first and only opportunity victims have to tell someone about what is happening to them

# FGM-health impact

- **FGM is very harmful. It can cause long-term mental and physical suffering, difficulty in giving birth, infertility and even death.**
- **FGM is typically performed on girls aged between 4 and 13, although in some cases it is performed on new born babies or young women prior to marriage or pregnancy.**
- **There are approx 74,000 women in the UK who have undergone FGM, and about 24,000 girls who are at risk of undergoing FGM.**

# Forced Marriage

- Evidence suggests many victims assume that health professionals cannot help them and they may not feel confident in expressing their concerns.
- Consultations with health professionals may be one of the few occasions when the victim is unsupervised by a family member
- By being aware of the warning signs and making routine enquiries, they may encourage victims to speak out.

# Forced Marriage & Health Professionals

- **The guidelines on Forced Marriage for Health Professionals (2007) detail cases such as Sanita who came to the UK following a forced marriage.**
- **While attending a local hospital to tend to injuries that were inflicted by her husband, the consultant was able to speak to Sanita alone and she told him everything.**
- **To this day, Sanita still genuinely believes the consultant saved her life.**

# Related health issues

- Most cases of FM involve young women & girls between age 10 & 30, although 15% of those helped by the FMU are male

Related health problems can include;

- Self harm
- Attempted suicide
- Eating disorders
- Depression
- Substance misuse
- Early/unwanted pregnancy

# Appropriate response from health professionals

- Health professionals have a duty to ensure that they work within safeguarding law as well as related professional codes.
- Under the Children Act (1989), everyone with information that a child is potentially or actually at risk of significant harm must inform social services or the police.

# Health response

- ***Working Together to Safeguard Children*** published in 2006, includes guidance on safeguarding children who may have been or are in danger of being victims of this crime.
- In addition, good practice guidance for anyone working with or who has close contact for children and who has specific concerns about their welfare is set out in “What To Do If You’re Worried A Child Is Being Abused” (2006).

# What is health doing?

- Produced *Domestic Abuse: a handbook for health professionals*;
- Training DVD for health professionals on female genital mutilation (FGM) & funded a FGM prevalence study to estimate the prevalence of female genital mutilation in England and Wales with the launch of the report in October 2007;
- Contributed to Forced Marriage guidelines for health professionals

# What is Health doing?

- **Rolled out routine enquiring of all pregnant women about domestic abuse when taking a social history and providing information, irrespective of the response with the intent of raising awareness around support services**
- **We have commissioned and funded a voluntary sector organisation to produce a report on 'Developing effective responses for Asian women experiencing domestic violence.' To be published soon.**

# What is health doing?

- **Developing a National Violence and Abuse Prevention Framework (health), will be launched at engagement event on 25<sup>th</sup> November.**
- **Four priority approaches identified, to include: addressing alcohol misuse; improving parenting skills; positive and protective relationship skills to prevent violence and abuse for young people; information sharing and partnership working.**
- **Producing a Children & Domestic Violence toolkit-published soon**

# What is health doing?

- **The Department is working with NICE on developing guidance on the identification and recognition of all forms of child abuse. Guidelines expected late 2008.**
- **Mental Health Collaborative pilots where routine enquiring of violence and abuse (including HBV, FM) occurs within mental health settings. This is underpinned by training of staff and will help inform current national rollout.**

# Innovative Partnership working, Family Intervention Projects

- **FIPs are projects which provide support to challenging families at different levels**
- **They gain the agreement of the family to a range of behavioural changes and engagement in interventions.**
- **Accredited parenting programmes are delivered and services (such as health) are brought in and coordinated around the family, based on the Dundee model.**

# Key Findings from Sheffield-Hallam study

- **A sixth of families were homeless with 9 out of 10 on verge of homelessness**
- **62% of the families had 3 or more children**
- **68% of families were headed by lone parents**
- **79% of families had at least one child assessed as 'vulnerable'**
- **38% of children at risk of being taken into care**

# Key health problems in FIP families

- 80% of parents had poor health/mental health problems
- 47% of families affected by domestic violence, children at risk
- High proportion of children with ADHD

# Following intensive interventions

- **In 85% of families anti-social behaviour ceased**
- **Over 80% of families tenancies had stabilised**
- **Over 85% of children back in schools**
- **Domestic violence reduced**

# Resources

- 'Into the Mainstream'  
[www.doh.gov.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.doh.gov.uk/mentalhealth)
- For 'Responding to Domestic Abuse' and other related documents for health professionals, go to Crime reduction minisite-domestic violence,  
[www.crimereduction.co.uk](http://www.crimereduction.co.uk) or [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)
- A full set of the Guidelines for Health Professionals is available from the FCO website:  
[www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage)