

**PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
TO WOMEN**

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The Home Office Police Research Group (PRG) was formed in 1992 to carry out and manage research in the social and management sciences relevant to the work of the police service and Home Office policy divisions. One of the major police department divisions which acts as customer for the PRG is the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit which was formed in 1983 to promote preventive action against crime. It has a particular responsibility to disseminate information on crime prevention topics.

The object of the present series of occasional papers is to present research material in a way which should help and inform practitioners, including the police, whose work can help reduce crime.

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Foreword

This review of the literature on domestic violence was prepared as background to the work on the prevention of this offence carried out on Merseyside and reported in paper 49 of this series.

Since it was originally written, the review has been up-dated to take account of the results of the Home Affairs Committee's work on domestic violence and subsequent government and police action.

The report outlines the scale and severity of this offence and reviews the role of the police and other agencies, particularly those based in the community, in prevention. Violence in the home is unacceptable and offences of this kind are, perhaps above many others, prime candidates for prevention. The perpetrator and location of the offence is usually known and victims have a right to expect protection from further violent attack. This report will hopefully act as a further stimulus to much of the good work underway not only in police forces, but in many community action groups and other agencies around the country.

I M Burns
Deputy Under Secretary of State
January 1994

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Introduction

The review of domestic violence presented here was commissioned as part of a project on the prevention of violent crime on two inner city estates: one in London, the other in Liverpool. It is based on the published international literature and on contact with projects and service providers including those in and around the two project areas.

The body of the report is divided into two main sections:

- i. an examination of some of what is known about this crime generally, and
- ii. a summary of findings regarding prevention and their implications for action. The second section focuses primarily on the police and includes recommendations which can be implemented at local level. The role of the civil law and of community supports for women are also briefly considered.

Although some of the ideas outlined have been developed on the Liverpool estate, and are now being implemented, this report stands in its own right and should help the police and other professionals in any location to examine their work. A further report on the effects of the measures introduced is planned once the evaluation is completed by the personnel actually involved in the implemental ion work in Liverpool. Resource constraints precluded the development of the project on the London estate where racial attacks were taken as the focus (see Sampson and Phillips, 1992).

The Crime of Domestic Violence to Women

Definition

Domestic violence to women is commonly referred to simply as 'domestic violence', and the term is used throughout this report as shorthand. However, the crimes addressed do not include all domestic crimes, nor do they invariably occur within the domestic setting. Rather, they concern *men's violence to their women partners or ex-partners*. Although these crimes involve *physical* violence, the physical is usually but one aspect of a now well documented *pattern* of abuse which includes verbal threats, intimidation, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, physical and social isolation, economic deprivation, and the like (eg. Dobash and Dobash 1980).

Extent

Research carried out internationally since the mid-1970s has shown that domestic violence is not an insignificant problem. Furthermore, it is arguably *the* most under-reported and under-recorded crime (Smith 1989: 6); thus its true extent remains unknown.

Surveys of victims suggest that between 2% (Dobash and Dobash 1980: 164) and 14.5% (Dutton 1988: 136) of assaults are reported to the police. Moreover, of those reported, only a minority end up as recorded crimes (Edwards 1989: 201-6). Nevertheless, police statistics give some indication of the extent of domestic violence relative to other crimes of violence. Dobash and Dobash (1980:247, 260) found that wife assault constituted 26% of all arrests involving violence reported to the courts in Edinburgh and one police district in Glasgow in 1974, second only to violence between unrelated males at 39%. Home Office data on homicides for the years 1983 to 1990 show that between 42% and 49% of all female homicide victims were killed by current or former partners or lovers (in contrast to between 70% and 11% of male victims), and that for most years during this period, approximately one fifth of all homicide victims were women killed by male partners/lovers (calculated from Home Office 1992a: 88, Table 4.4 b).

Crime surveys, too, are limited by disproportionate under-reporting of domestic violence (see Hanmer and Stanko 1985: 368). Owing to the intimate and repeated nature of the crime, victims are understandably reluctant to discuss incidents. Nevertheless, one in four assaults uncovered by the British Crime Survey in 1987 was domestic (Davidoff and Dowds 1989: 14), a figure similar to that found by the Islington Crime Survey (Jones *et al.* 1986:63, 85-86). Further, in line with official homicide data, the British Crime Survey figures showed that 56% of all assaults on women were domestic, compared to only 8% of assaults on men.

Other surveys focus specifically on women and/or domestic violence. Twenty eight percent of a representative sample of 1,007 married or formerly married women in the

UK said they had been hit within marriage (Painter 1991: 44). Similarly, 30% of a representative sample of 430 women in North London said they had experienced physical violence more severe than being grabbed, pushed or shaken, from a current or past partner or boyfriend at some time during their adult lives; 10% of this sample reported such violence during the past 12 months (Mooney 1993). A national sample of men and women in Canada 'found that in 1986, *one man in ten committed at least one serious offence against his female partner which would be considered chargeable assault if it occurred outside the home*' (in MacLeod 1989: 13-14, original emphasis). On the basis of two random sample surveys of intact marriages/cohabitations in the USA, Dutton (1988: 4) estimated that 6.8% of all such relationships are characterised by *severe, repeated* violence. However, this figure is certainly an underestimate because the two surveys did not sample adults not currently cohabiting where rates of past violence are higher.

Domestic violence is, of course, a major factor in separation and divorce. A random sample survey of single parent families in Northern Ireland found that 56% of all separated and divorced women had been in violent relationships (Evason 1982: 17), as had 40% of women interviewed in a sample of recently divorced people in Bristol (in Borkowski *et al.* 1983: 26). Fifty nine percent of divorced/separated women in Painter's UK sample had been hit by their husbands (Painter 1991: 44). Results of a US Harris poll showed that two thirds of recently separated or divorced women reported violence in their previous relationships (in Browne 1987: 4). Moreover, for many women, violence does not stop at the point of separation. This is most starkly demonstrated by homicide statistics. Figures for England and Wales in 1986 and 1987 show that, in approximately 30% of incidents where men killed women spouses, the couple were no longer living together (in Edwards 1989: 200). The North London survey found that 25% of incidents of physical violence occurring in the past 12 months involved former partners (Mooney 1993: 39). US Department of Justice figures for 1983 showed that up to 75% of domestic assaults reported to the police occurred after separation (in Hart *et al.* 1990: 4).

The Extent of Domestic Violence on the Two Project Estates

Data concerning the extent of domestic violence on the two project estates is limited to police statistics. Regarding the Liverpool estate, Pease *et al.*'s (1991) analysis of police incident logs for a 25 month period between February 1989 and March 1991 shows that, of 1,450 calls to the police, 172 (nearly 12%) were domestic.

To estimate the 'true' extent of domestic violence on the estate, the 1986 Islington Crime Survey (ICS), a source of information on violent crime in a British inner city area, is used. (This source is limited by the fact that victims who report crimes to crime surveys are themselves selected, and may be more likely to report their crimes to the police than is the general population). The ICS found that 27% of domestic assaults uncovered by their survey were reported to the police (Jones *et al.* 1986: 88). Using this figure, the estimated number of incidents during the 25 month period rises to 637.

Pease *et al.* (1991) found that 62% of the 172 calls were from addresses which had one or more repeat domestic calls. Moreover, nearly half of the 172 calls came from households which called the police on *more than two occasions*. Pease *et al.* (1991) present two striking ways of expressing the significance of repeat victimisation on the estate:

- i. 'a household with one incident classified as domestic violence has a probability of 0.8 of another within one year, and a household with two such incidents is virtually certain to call the police again for the same reason ... within one year' (p.4), and
- ii. 'after a first incident, 35% of households suffer a second incident within five weeks of the first. After a second incident, 45% of households suffer a third incident within five weeks of the second' (p.4-5).

Less detailed information was available on the London site. The present study compared the incidence of domestic violence with other violent crimes, using figures for *recorded* crime on the estate for 1990. (Disproportionately low criming of domestic violence compared to other crimes makes these estimates extremely conservative.) Fifteen of the 173 recorded crimes in 1990 were classified as domestic, but four of these apparently involved violence to other family members, reducing the figure for domestic violence to women to 11, or 6.4% of *all* recorded crimes. Of the 88 recorded *violent* crimes (excluding racial violence, drugs, motor vehicle theft, fraud and forgery), 12.5% were domestic violence to women.

To produce a more realistic comparison of the frequency of domestic violence relative to other violent crimes on the estate, the ICS estimates of the proportion of selected categories of crime reported to the police are employed. (There is a mismatch here, since the estate figures come from *recorded* crimes rather than the *reported* crimes measured in the ICS. This is crucial for comparing domestic violence with other categories of violent crime, since there is a very high attrition of domestic violence cases from reporting to recording, which is probably disproportionate to that of other violent crimes.)

The ICS found that 27% of domestic violence incidents were reported to the police, compared with 46% of police assaults, 41% of other assault, 53% of theft from person, and 53% of robbery (Jones *et al.* 1986: 88). Using these figures to estimate the 'true' incidence of these categories of violent crime on the London estate, the following relative distribution is produced: 22% of all these categories of violent crime are domestic violence, exceeded only by 'other assault' at 34% and 'theft from person' at 14%. Nearly 40% of all *assaults* are domestic. Bearing in mind the limitations outlined above, it can be argued that domestic violence may account for one half or more of all assaults on the estate.

Thus, an analysis of police statistics for the two project areas confirms conclusions from other studies: domestic violence is a highly significant problem.

Multiple victimisation

Domestic violence is almost always a multiple victimisation crime; that is, attacks by the same assailant are almost always repeated. They also escalate in frequency and severity over time. According to Hanmer and Stanko (1985: 366): 'Estimates are that only 10% of [domestic violence to women] involves an isolated event, and that the other 90% involves systematic beatings, often with escalating violence, over the duration of the couple's married life.' An Islington community study of a representative sample of 286 married working class mothers and single mothers of all classes found that only two women who reported domestic violence had been assaulted once only, two thirds said that violence was a 'regular occurrence in the relationship' (Andrews and Brown 1988: 308). The North London survey found that 30% of women who reported physical violence during the past 12 months had experienced six or more attacks during that period (Mooney 1993: 31). Homicide may be the end result of long term, escalating domestic violence: when men kill their partners it is often the final violent act of many; when women kill it is often after years of suffering abuse (eg. Browne 1987: 10, Ewing 1987: 23).

It is commonly held that women are also revictimised by moving from one violent relationship to another. However, the evidence for this is weak. In the Islington community study, only 3 of the 32 women who had lived with more than one man had been involved in more than one violent relationship (Andrews and Brown 1988: 308). Moreover, in a self-selected sample of survivors of domestic violence, Kelly (1968: 201) found that, in every case where the woman had experienced more than one violent relationship, the new partner knew of the previous violence and used it as a justification for his own violence, casting doubt on the common suggestion (eg. Gayford 1975, Pizzey and Shapiro 1982) that some women seek out violent relationship. On the other hand, evidence is stronger that violent men carry their violence from one relationship to another. Pagelow's study of women survivors in the USA indicated that 57% of male partners who had been previously married were known to have been violent to another wife (Pagelow 1981: 62).

Severity

Despite the stereotype of 'domestics' as trivial, victims typically suffer a high degree of violence relative to victims of other violent crimes. Data from the United States National Crime Survey for 1978-82 indicated that, while two thirds of the domestic violence incidents uncovered would be classified by police as 'simple (misdemeanor) assaults', one half of these 'involved bodily injury as serious or more serious than 90% of all rapes, robberies, and aggravated assault' (Langan and Innes 1986: 1). Ninety two percent of assaulted women in the Islington community study reported severe violence, most commonly being punched, kicked or beaten up. Almost all reported injuries, most often bruising and black eyes, though broken and bloody noses were also frequent (Andrews and Brown 1988: 308). Dobash and Dobash's (1980) study of survivors in refuges in Scotland indicated that 80% of women went to a doctor at least

once, and 40% on five occasions, for injuries sustained from their partners. These women 'suffered serious woundings, innumerable bloodied noses, fractured teeth and bones, concussions, miscarriages and severe internal injuries that often resulted in scars, disfigurement and sometimes persistent poor health' (p. 111).

Violence-prone groups?

It is often argued that domestic violence is characteristic of certain groups in the population. For example, many studies find a *disproportionate* (though not exclusive) occurrence in lower socio-economic and minority ethnic groups (eg. Straus *et al.* 1980: ch.6, Pahl 1985:45-48, Painter 1991: 45). Critics however argue that these groups are simply more visible since they lack material resources to deal privately with their problems, and hence are more likely to seek help from formal agencies like the police, social services and refuges from which research samples are frequently drawn. The fact that general population surveys also tend to find class/ethnic differences is explained by the presumption that middle class and white people are less willing to admit violence to an interviewer. Moreover, not all studies have found class/ethnicity differences. For example, the Islington community study found no difference between working class and middle class mothers in rates of reporting domestic violence (Andrews and Brown 1988:308, note 1). Walker's (1983: 32) self-selected group of 403 American battered women exhibited the race and class distributions found in the general population. (For evaluation of race/class factors, see eg. Pagelow 1981:83-87, Okun 1986:44-49, Smith 1989: 15-16).

Studies also frequently find an association between alcohol and domestic violence: violent partners are either found to be alcohol abusers or to engage in violence when drinking (eg. Genes 1974, Rosenbaum and O'Leary 1981, Pahl 1985). However many of these studies show alcohol abusers/consumers to constitute no more than half of the sample (eg. Genes 1974, Roy 1982), indicating that alcohol cannot explain the behaviour of the other half. Moreover, using data from an American national random sample survey of family violence, Kaufman Kantor and Straus (1987) found that while 'men who were classified as high or binge drinkers had a two-to-three times greater rate of assaulting their wives than did husbands who abstained, ... about 80 percent of the men in both the high and binge drinking groups did not hit their wives at all during the year of this survey' (p.224, original emphasis). Regardless, there are problems in interpreting the data on drinking. As many commentators point out, most studies do not control for possible confounding or intervening variables. Probably the most common suggestion is that, rather than the direct *cause* of violence, alcohol is better viewed as a means of gaining courage to carry out the act and/or as a convenient rationale to excuse it once it has occurred (eg. Pahl 1985:9, Rosenbaum and O'Leary 1986, Kaufman Kantor and Straus 1987).

Finally, perhaps the most common assertion in the literature is that people, especially men, who witness or are subject to violence in childhood engage in violent adult relationships (eg. Straus *et al.* 1980, Kalmus 1984, Walker 1984: 18-20). The 'cycle of

violence' theory however suffers from a range of critical methodological problems (eg. Pagelow 1984: ch.7, Morley, forthcoming): for example, many studies lack control groups of non-violent adults, almost all are based on retrospective accounts by violent adults, and varying and elastic definitions of childhood violence are used. Moreover, many studies find fewer than 50% of violent adults with violent childhoods or, conversely, fewer than 50% of adults with violent childhoods experiencing domestic violence in adulthood. This is almost always the case with respect to women victims. For example, the Islington community study found that 32% of women who had experienced or witnessed violence in childhood experienced domestic violence in adulthood, but so did 22% of women who had no such childhood experiences (Andrews and Brown 1988: 308). Thus, while it may be the case that adults with violent childhoods are more likely to experience domestic violence than adults without violent childhoods, only a minority of adults with violent childhoods experience domestic violence (32% in above example), and the differences between the two groups tend to be small (10% in the above example).

Attempting to isolate particular groups of people prone to domestic violence may be defended as a way of furthering an understanding of the causes and hence cures of the problem. However, the message from the research is clear. While class, ethnicity, drinking, childhood experiences and indeed other psychological/social factors may in some cases contribute to the establishment of violent relationships and/or their continuation, domestic violence to women is far too common throughout society to isolate specific groups as constituting *the* problem.

Costs

Although no national audit of the costs of domestic violence has been undertaken anywhere in the world, evidence from a variety of sources suggests the costs are enormous in personal, social and economic terms.

The fundamental consideration must be *costs to the victim* in terms of her physical and psychological well-being. The high levels of physical injury which result from domestic violence have already been mentioned. In addition victims typically suffer a range of psychological ill-effects: depression, suicidal feelings, anxiety, panic attacks, irritability, sleep difficulties, low self-esteem, and the like (eg. Andrews and Brown 1988: 309-10; Jaffe *et al.* 1986b).

Domestic violence also has a range of negative effects on *children*. They risk injury and even death by the abuser if they accidentally get in the way of an attack or attempt to intervene to protect their mother. A recent study in Toronto, Canada found that children were assaulted in over 12% of domestic violence incidents (Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women 1991: 4). Children had intervened in one third of incidents reported by women in a recent study in West Yorkshire: the main reason children did not try to protect their mothers was that they were too young, although in one case a two year old "picked up a shoe and hit him with it" (Hanmer 1990: 26). Some children have themselves killed the abuser (Jaffe *et al.* 1990).

Jaffe *et al.* (1990:21) found that almost all the children they interviewed could give detailed descriptions of violence that their parents were not aware they had witnessed; and that, in addition to immediate trauma and distress, domestic violence was associated with a wide range of emotional, behavioural and cognitive problems in childhood. These findings are corroborated by interviews with staff from the local refuge in London who voiced great concern about the emotional and behavioural problems of many of the children in the refuge.

Domestic violence also constitutes a threat to unborn children, as women are frequently battered during pregnancy, often in the abdomen (eg. Dobash and Dobash 1980, Walker 1984). US studies suggest that between 40 and 60% of all battered women are abused during pregnancy (see McFarlane 1991: 136-8). The Islington community study found that many women who experienced domestic violence reported more severe violence while pregnant than at other times, and that women who had experienced violence were more than twice as likely as women with no such experience to have had a miscarriage or stillbirth (Andrews and Brown 1988: 311; see also Bowker and Maurer 1987: 34).

A number of studies document a connection between 'wife abuse' and child abuse, and indicate that the abused mother's partner is most often the child's abuser (eg. Hanmer 1989:92, MacLeod 1987). Stark and Flitcraft (1985: 160-4) found evidence of 'wife' battering among 45% of all mothers whose children were suspected of being abused or neglected in a large metropolitan medical complex in the USA. Moreover, children of mothers who had been battered were twice as likely as children of mothers who had not been battered to be suspected of being *physically* abused. Finally, in families where the mother was battered, the mother's partner was more than three times as likely to be the child's abuser than in families where the mother was not battered. The researchers conclude that 'in all probability, [woman] battering is the single most important context for child abuse' (Stark and Flitcraft 1985: 165), and that 'case-workers and clinicians would do well to look toward advocacy and protection of battered mothers as the best available means to prevent current child abuse as well as child abuse in the future' (Stark and Flitcraft 1985: 168).

Moving beyond the family, interviews with residents on the two project estates (conducted for a parallel study on neighbour disputes) suggest that domestic violence is a source of fear and anxiety to many *neighbours*. Several respondents specifically mentioned incidents involving domestic violence which they had overheard. For some, these occurrences appeared to be a chronic condition. The following quotes are from residents of the London estate:

Terrible rows between them. He was about 35 and she was about 50
Every night we had it. Went to council. They said we can't get them out
for at least 6 months. We took tape recordings but it made no difference.
... Police went up time and time again. Called police when thought he
was killing her. He chucked her dog out the window. (White woman in
her 50s.)

A few times I've been really worried ... I've heard women sort of shouting. (White woman in her mid 20s).

Finally, some attempts have been made to measure the economic costs of domestic violence. Studies of women's employment have shown that violence may result in time off work or the inability to work at all (eg. Shepard and Pence 1988). One American study estimates that businesses lose between \$3 and \$5 billion US dollars a year because of absenteeism from work due to domestic violence (Engelken 1987: 31). Shepard and Pence (1988: 55) conclude that 'the cost to society [from battering is great] in the form of rising social welfare expenditure and the loss of productivity in the workplace' (p. 55). Indeed, studies in Britain of women who have been through refuges as well as of female headed one-parent families generally (eg. Homer *et al.* 1984: 95-9, Pahl 1985:68-74, Millar 1992) suggest that the dependence of women survivors of domestic violence on state benefits is very high.

Economic costs exist also in the form of strain on agency resources. Women typically contact an increasing range of agencies as the violence escalates (eg. Dobash *et al.* 1985 :147-5 1). Interviews with women in refuges suggest that most have contacted between 5 and 8 different agencies for help before coming to the refuge (Binney *et al.* 1981:13; Homer *et al.* 1984: 34). Figures such as these sit beside evidence that many women find agency responses inadequate to their needs (eg. Dobash and Dobash 1980, Binney *et al.* 1981, Homer *et al.* 1984, Pahl 1985, Mama 1989). This, in turn, suggests that agency time and resources are being used inefficiently. Indeed, a single incident can involve a vast number of community resources without bringing about a resolution to the problem; for example, police, solicitors and courts, social workers, hospital staff, emergency housing facilities, childcare facilities (eg. Hanmer 1990: 14).

With respect of costs to specific agencies, it is estimated that between 15 and 40% of all calls to *police* in the USA involve domestic violence, most of which is violence to women (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1982 in Hirschel *et al.* 1991: 4). MacLeod (1987: 35) estimates that in 1980, Canadian taxpayers spent at least 32 billion Canadian dollars (approximately £17 billion) on police intervention and related support and administration for 'wife battering'. Edwards' (1986) research on the Metropolitan Police Force indicated that more than 1,000 women call the London police each week for help.

Strain on *medical services* has also been documented. Examining medical records of 481 women with injuries at a large urban hospital in the USA, Stark *et al.* (1979: 467) found that 18% had injuries suggesting current battering and 25% had probably been battered during the last five years. Almost half of all injuries ever brought to the hospital by the 481 women were from the 25% who had been battered. United States Bureau of Statistics suggests that forty thousand US dollars are paid in medical expenses related to domestic violence every seven hours in that country (in Hart *et al.* 1990: 1).

In addition to studies of specific areas of economic cost, there exist two attempts to produce a *comprehensive* economic audit of the costs of domestic violence, both in Australia (Roberts 1988, New South Wales Women's Coordination Unit 1991). One of these costed services provided for, and productivity lost by, victims because of domestic violence in Queensland using interviews with 20 women (Roberts 1988). The total cost of all services used by these women was estimated at just over one million Australian dollars. This encompassed police and legal services; benefits consisting of social security, childcare and education; emotional supports such as counselling; health services and drugs, and physical supports involving housing, emergency accommodation, emergency services, food, furniture and transportation (p-451). Added to service costs, direct costs to the community including compensation and superannuation payoffs, and indirect costs in lost productivity due to victims having to cease employment, brought the lifetime total cost generated by the 20 women to \$1,165,409; that is, an average lifetime cost per victim of \$58,270 (approximately £27,500) and an average cost per victim per year of \$6,707 (approximately £3,000)(p.460).

Attempts to produce costings of this type have their limitations, however. As the New South Wales report states, 'these figures ... do not count long-term costs of dysfunctional adults and children The ripple effect of gender violence is wide and long-term costs are high, though difficult to estimate' (New South Wales Women's Coordination Unit 1991: 5).

The impression gained from studying the current economic costs of domestic violence in many countries is that there is scope for improving the responses of public agencies and the co-ordination of their work. Although it is predictable that an appropriate and thorough-going response to the problem will, in the short run, increase the cost of community resources, this is likely to be off-set in the longer term by a more effective and efficient use of those same resources.

Preventing Domestic Violence to Women

Prevention of domestic violence to women can be conceptualised in two ways: preventing violence occurring in the first place, or, more commonly, preventing repeat attacks. The vast bulk of work worldwide has focused on attempting to reduce the incidence of repeat victimisation by provision of legal, welfare and social supports for women; and to a more limited extent attempting to control and change male offenders. The emphasis should continue to lie with prevention of repeat violence since support systems and resources remain inadequate for protecting women and stopping men. This report thus focuses on preventing repeat victimisation.

However, reducing repeat violence will not bring an end to the problem. There is little evidence that the prevalence of domestic violence has declined since becoming a recognised social problem in the mid 1970s, and this is not surprising. As the Metropolitan Police's *Working party on Domestic Violence Report* states:

At present, women are not regarded as, or treated as, equal to men in terms of their social and economic rights. There is discrimination against women in employment and education and women are grossly under-represented in key areas of political life, in Parliament, Local Government, Trade Unions. Part of the total climate of sexual discrimination is the whole issue of women's *[sic]* rights to sexual freedom. It is clear from evidence on rape, prostitution, sexual harassment, etc., that women are vulnerable to abuse and mockery. It is in this climate of contempt for women that domestic violence thrives. (Metropolitan Police Working Party 1986: 63)

Thus, to eliminate domestic violence to women, 'values and social structures which promote and condone violence, as well as values and social structures which emphasise the power of men over women and children must be identified and changed' (MacLeod 1989: 15).

This section of the report briefly summarises the results of an inquiry carried out between October 1990 and June 1991 into preventive responses – primarily to repeat offending – overseas, in Britain, and on the project estates. The discussion focuses mainly on policing, with short summaries of the civil law and of community supports for women, although it must be acknowledged that other major areas of service provision have a vital role to play, notably housing, social services, and the health care professions. Developments since 1991 are included where possible. Before examining specific provision, however, some general remarks are needed regarding prevention of repeat attacks.

Effective early intervention is vitally important if men are to stop their violence and women are to be protected: very few men stop of their own volition, and violence usually increases in frequency and severity over time. Violence is much more difficult

if not impossible to stop, except by separation, when it progresses into a patterned feature of the relationship (eg. Dobash *et al.* 1985, Bowker 1986, NiCarthy 1987, Kelly 1988). Therefore the best hope for effective prevention is *very early* effective intervention.

However, women typically do not seek help from outside agencies until the violence has become established. For example, a Canadian study found that women had been assaulted an average of 35 times before contacting the police (in Jaffe *et al.* 1986a: 38). The decision to involve outsiders is, in fact, an extremely difficult, as well as a potentially *dangerous*, one. There is evidence that women are most likely to be murdered by their partners when attempting to get outside help or to leave the relationship. In 1987/1988, more than 90% of women killed by their partners in Minnesota, USA were actively seeking help from an outside agency or attempting to separate (Pence 1989: 345; see also Browne and Williams 1989). The quality of intervention at this initial stage and its perceived effect on the violent partner's behaviour are crucial in determining whether a woman will continue to seek help (see Dobash *et al.* 1985) as well as in ensuring her immediate safety.

Dobash *et al.* 1985, amongst many others, point out that any one particular attempt to seek help may not directly correspond to the severity of the specific violent attack to which it is linked:

It is important for professionals to recognise that it may not be the severity of a particular attack that leads a woman to seek help. Rather, it may be the cumulative effect of persistent violence and intimidation, decreasing acceptance of the man's justifications for violence and repeated failures to solve the problem alone. Even then, the decision to approach a formal agency is so fraught with misgivings and trepidation that the nature of response can easily lead to discontinuation of contact. (Dobash *et al.* 1985:154-5)

Thus professionals who respond only to the perceived severity of the presenting violent incident risk missing the context of the *continuing violent relationship* in which it is most probably embedded, and may well judge the victim to be undeserving of help, leaving her in an even more precarious situation. It is vital therefore that all service providers who come into contact with women suffering domestic violence should have a perceptive understanding of the context of this crime and its effects on victims.

Finally however, as the Home Affairs Committee (1993a: paras 35, 37) points out, a small minority of women exists in the UK for whom access to help from formal agencies and the potential for escaping violence are particularly problematic. The *Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules* (House of Commons 251, 1990) states that spouses of persons entitled to settle in the UK who do not themselves have such entitlement are allowed to stay in the UK initially for a period not exceeding 12

months, and only if they have the intention of living permanently with their spouse and can be accommodated and maintained without recourse to public funds. Non-entitled spouses who leave the marital home or who attempt to make use of public services during the 12 month probationary period are liable for deportation. Cases have been documented of women who, as a direct consequence of these Rules, have been deported after fleeing violent husbands or have remained trapped within abusive relationships, fearing deportation and unable to apply for benefits or rehousing (eg. Inquiry interviews; *The Guardian* January 9, 1991, October 28, 1992; *The Observer* June 2, 1991; *National Union of Public Employees Journal* 1992, no.5, p.3; Roshni 1992; Home Affairs Committee 1993b: Appendix 9). In its response to the Home Affairs Committee (Cm. 2269 1993, paras 35, 36), the Government indicated that Home Office officials are to consider the possibility of developing practical ways of ensuring that women who feel vulnerable are informed of their status and the help and advice available to them.

The police

The police are the only 24 hour emergency protection service available in every locality to respond to violent attacks. Therefore they are uniquely situated to provide immediate aid to victims of domestic violence. UK studies of women's help-seeking undertaken during the 1970s and 1980s (Dobash and Dobash 1980, Binney *et al.* 1981, Evason 1982, Homer *et al.* 1984, Pahl 1985, Mama 1989: ch. 6, McGibbon *et al.* 1989) showed that the police were one of the *most* frequently contacted agencies, but rated as one of the *least* helpful.

These studies (see also Montgomery and Bell n.d., Edwards 1989, Bourlet 1990) found that police often told victims that they were not empowered to intervene in 'domestics', since these constituted civil matters. Thus, women were sometimes advised to take out a private prosecution or a civil injunction, to contact a welfare agency, or given no advice at all. Frequently police 'mediated' or 'conciliated' the 'dispute', often by suggesting that the victim modify her behaviour in exchange for the assailant's promise not to commit further violence, leaving her without protection and at risk of escalating violence (see also Hague *et al.* 1989). Only infrequently did police arrest the assailant, even when the victim requested it and the violence was severe (see also Smith 1989: 43). In a minority of cases, the police failed even to arrive at the scene. Black victims often reported, in addition, racist treatment (eg. Mama 1989). Women's lack of confidence in the police was consistently cited as a major reason for not reporting attacks.

Police disregard for domestics was reflected in their recording practices (eg. Metropolitan Police Working Party 1986, Edwards 1986, 1989; Smith 1989). Some calls were not recorded in station message books. Some were written up as 'no call for police action', even when considerable time had been spent at the scene. Some were recorded in categories which precluded their identification as domestic violence. Some were recorded as incident reports rather than crimes even with clear evidence

of a criminal offence, one aspect of a more general tendency to 'crime down' domestic offences. A high proportion of incidents initially crimed were subsequently 'no-crimed', disappearing from the statistics altogether. Finally, injunctions with powers of arrest were often improperly stored at the station, making retrieval difficult or impossible.

Overall, police responses appeared to be grounded in a well-documented reluctance to intervene in 'domestics', viewed as private (civil) matters rather than 'real crime work', a view firmly entrenched in police training manuals (eg. Bourlet 1990:14-18, 72-6). Indeed, legal criteria (whether an offence had been committed) were frequently superseded by 'moral' criteria (often a suspicion that the woman was to blame for the violence) or by a belief that domestic violence victims withdraw charges (eg. Stanko 1985, 1989; Edwards 1989; Hanmer 1989), even though the extent of victim withdrawal was debatable (eg. Faragher 1985, Sanders 1988). The crux of the argument from victims and their advocates was that by making intervention contingent on an assessment of the woman's worthiness as a victim or on the likelihood that she would carry through with a prosecution, *'the police abrogate their protective role'* (Faragher 1985:117, emphasis added).

The police began to respond to criticisms of their approach to domestic violence in the latter half of the 1980s. In this they followed trends elsewhere in the world, notably in North America and Australia.

Recent International Developments

Similar criticisms of the police in North America and Australia led many jurisdictions in those countries to institute legal and policy reforms encouraging, and in some cases mandating, tougher criminal justice system (CJS) responses grounded in *arrest*. These moves were accompanied by directives to provide support for victims through transport to a place of safety, information about and referral to other agencies, and the like.

Arrest has been advocated on several grounds (eg. Buel 1988, Buzawa and Buzawa 1990: 84-8): it provides immediate protection by removing the assailant; it sends messages to the assailant, victim and community that domestic violence is a serious *crime*; and it gives the police a tangible product for work which is conventionally viewed as a waste of time. Most fundamentally, however, arrest is believed to *deter* offenders from repeating their violence, that is, to have a *direct* preventive effect.

Two 'classic' studies are cited in the literature to support the deterrent argument. The most influential is the 'Minneapolis Experiment' (Sherman and Berk 1984) which compared the effectiveness of three police responses – arrest, advice/mediation and separation – on misdemeanour domestic assaults. Arrest produced the least repeat offending in the six month follow up period, independently of any other action by the CJS. The US National Institute of Justice subsequently commissioned six replications of the Experiment in different cities throughout the USA. Of the five replications for

which findings were available in 1992, only two found evidence for a deterrent effect of arrest during the first six months (Sherman 1992: 30; see papers in *The Journal of Criminal law and Criminology* 1992, Vol.83, no.1 for a fuller discussion). However, though the authors of the three replications which failed to reproduce the Minneapolis findings all reject *mandatory* arrest policies on grounds of deterrence, two (Dunford *et al.* 1989, Hirschel *et al.* 1991) stress the importance of arrest and the need to clearly define domestic violence as a crime.

Indeed, Dunford *et al.* (1989: 64) appear to favour a *pro-arrest policy* which 'encourages, but does not mandate arrest', for two reasons. First, it would enable police to heed the wishes of victims who do not want arrest. This consideration is important, given the increasingly expressed concern that mandatory policies generally may disempower victims by removing their control over the criminal justice process (eg. MacLeod and Picard 1989; personal communication, Office of the Solicitor General Canada, May 1991; Morley and Mullender 1992). Second, arrest could provide 'an entry point into a *coordinated criminal justice system* rather than an end point, [which might] shift the burden of deterrence from a single official police intervention (arrest) to a sequence of other interventions, each of which may have some salutary effect' (p. 64, emphasis added).

The term 'coordinated criminal justice system response' refers first to coordination *within* the CJS – *between* police, prosecution and sentencing; second to coordination between the CJS and community services. Several studies suggest that both are needed to make arrest an effective preventive response. The most notable is the second 'classic' research – the London, Ontario pro-charging studies (Jaffe *et al.* 1986a, Jaffe *et al.* 1991) – which found that, while police intervention *per se* was effective in reducing repeat violence, charging was more effective than not charging. In London, Ontario most offenders whose cases are recorded as crimes are also charged and prosecuted (coordinated CJS); and the police fund a 24 hour crisis intervention service and training. Moreover police responses are embedded within interlinking community services including a victim advocacy clinic providing legal advice and counselling, a programme supporting victims throughout the court process, shelters (refuges) and longer term housing, treatment for batterers, and a comprehensive public education programme. As the researchers state: 'These services provide an important community context in evaluating police services and policies Other communities that do not provide the same level of support for victims may vary in the effectiveness of a police policy to lay charges against perpetrators of wife assault' (Jaffe *et al.* 1986a: 48).

Indeed other evidence suggests that arrest/charging without these supports may in some cases increase risk to the victim of reprisals from an angry partner (eg. Davis 1968:365, Steinman 1990; see also Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada 1986: 3). Certainly, fear of reprisal appears to be a major reason why many women withdraw charges, or do not call the police (eg. Dobash and Dobash 1980, Mama 1989). Clearly this is not to reject arrest as a potentially useful response – it may offer immediate, short term, life-saving protection. However, it would be surprising if one discrete

police *act*, isolated from any other means of controlling the man or protecting the woman, would deter violent behaviour which has often developed over many years.

Coordinated CJS responses may, in fact, have two effects. First, they may bring offenders under further control and offer victims protection and support. Second, they may change the nature of the initial police intervention itself, since in jurisdictions with good CJS/community coordination the police often demonstrate a commitment to tackling domestic violence (eg. Jaffe *et al.* 1991).

This second point is pertinent to police *policy* on domestic violence, where the international evidence shows that even mandatory arrest policies do not remove discretion in police decision-making, and that without strong leadership, monitoring, and a structure of accountability to the community, policy does not translate into practice (eg. Ferraro 1989; Bales and Trotsky 1988; personal communication, Office of the Solicitor General Canada, May 1991). Jurisdictions where policies appear to have produced positive effects on practice are ones where the CJS is an integral part of a comprehensive, coordinated community response, and *accountable* to women through continued internal and independent monitoring (eg. Gamache *et al.* 1988, Pence 1989, Jaffe *et al.* 1991, Hirschel and Hutchinson 1991). These jurisdictions also demonstrate high levels of victim satisfaction with the police.

A number of models exist throughout the USA for providing this coordinated community response (Goolkasian 1986, Cahn and Lerman 1991, Edleson 1991). They are based in organisations staffed predominately by victim advocates linked to local shelters who help women deal with the CJS, civil courts and welfare agencies, and who work closely with these agencies for change in policies and practices. All are grounded in the philosophy that domestic violence is criminal behaviour, that the abuser must take responsibility for his behaviour which requires primary focus on CJS sanctions, and that the victim should be supported and most importantly empowered through the interventive process. The most successful organisations appear to be ones that are organised *independently* of the CJS (Cahn and Lerman 1991, Edleson 1991), notably Community Intervention Projects (Edleson 1991), pioneered in Duluth, Minnesota (Pence and Shepard 1988) and spreading throughout jurisdictions in Minnesota and elsewhere in the USA. (See also McGregor and Hopkins 1991, for discussion of a successful crisis intervention service in Australia which operates as an independent victim advocate service in close collaboration with the police.)

Recent UK Developments

In the United Kingdom, the police were the first statutory agency to tackle the need to improve their response to domestic violence. Pioneering policy changes in the Metropolitan and West Yorkshire forces were followed in July 1990 by a Home Office Circular 60/1990 (and parallel circulars in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

The Circular recommends that police forces develop policy statements and strategies grounded in an understanding that domestic violence is a crime as serious as assaults by strangers, and that the primary duty of police is to protect the victim and her

children and to take positive action against the assailant. Police are reminded of their extensive powers to deal with domestic violence under the criminal law and warned of the dangers of attempting conciliation between victim and assailant. They are advised to take positive action in every incident, rarely to attempt conciliation, to interview the victim separately from the assailant, to prepare information leaflets for victims, to arrange for medical assistance, to escort victims to a place of safety if requested, to consider arresting and charging the assailant and *not* to be affected by the fact that some women withdraw charges, to provide continued support for victims during the pre-trial period, to liaise with other agencies, to set up (where practicable) dedicated domestic violence units, to ensure that all offences are properly recorded and not 'no-crimed', and to make records easily retrievable.

There is widespread agreement that the Circular provides a sound foundation for developing sensitive and effective police responses to domestic violence (eg. Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 14). The critical issues concern the degree to which forces have changed their policies in line with the Circular and, most crucially, the degree to which policy changes have been translated into practice. By July 1991, all forces in England and Wales had formulated policy statements on domestic violence (in Home Office Memorandum to Home Affairs Committee 1993b: 2). Comprehensive and detailed information concerning the Circular's impact on force policy and practice is as yet unavailable, though the Home Office is currently undertaking an impact study, to be completed in 1994. Nonetheless, existing though patchy evidence from police statistics, small scale research including this Inquiry, accounts of service providers and victims, and the recent Home Affairs Committee investigation into Domestic Violence (Home Affairs Committee 1993a, 1993b) suggest that recent policy changes have had a positive impact on practice in many areas, although some very important concerns remain.

Police dispositions

Improvements in police dispositions have been documented. Edwards (1989) analysed police statistics in two London divisions, comparing the situation before and one year following the inception of the Metropolitan Police force order in 1987. During that period, incidents logged at the station increased by 77%, the percentage of incidents recorded as crimes increased from 12% to 21%, the percentage of incidents resulting in arrests increased from 2% to 17%, and the percentage of crimes subsequently 'no crimed' decreased from 83% to 64% (figures calculated from Edwards 1989: 202-3, Tables 6.2, 6.3). Metropolitan Police statistics for London as a whole show that recorded domestic violence increased from 770 in 1985 to 9800 in 1992, the latter figure representing 26% of all recorded assaults in London. Further, in 1992, arrests were made in 45% of recorded domestic violence.

Domestic violence units

A particularly notable advance has been the creation of domestic violence units (DVUs). The first was established in Tottenham, London in 1987. By the end of

1992, DVUs existed in 62 out of the 69 Divisions in the Metropolitan Police, and in 20 of the 42 other police forces in England and Wales (Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 23).

There is some evidence that divisions with DVUs do better than those without. Edwards (1989) compared two London divisions in 1988, one with and one without a DVU. The division with the DVU did better on a number of measures. For example, more arrests were made for crimes and for breach of the peace, more incident reports were written, and more cases were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (pp.205-6). Edwards also pointed to figures for Tottenham in March 1988 showing that 29 of the 36 crimed cases were reported to and pursued by the Crown Prosecution Service (pp.206-7). While these findings are indicative, they are not controlled studies, and thus it cannot be concluded that the results were due to the existence of DVUs rather than to positive generalist practice regarding domestic violence.

Another study compared two divisions with DVUs with one which had no DVU but where every case was followed up by a uniformed officer (personal communication, Jayne Mooney 1991). Results suggested that victims favoured the DVUs. They preferred relating to Unit officers over uniformed ones, indeed they did not respond well to uniformed officers. Moreover, the DVUs appeared to play a valuable role in linking the police with other agencies, the major problem being the shortage of adequate back-up support services from other agencies, particularly refuges and counseling services. Finally, the researcher expressed concern that the organisation and running of DVUs is left to the initiatives of individual officers, and that little coordination exists between them.

Hanmer's study of the West Yorkshire Police one year following its policy changes (1990: 44, 53-4) suggested that victims and agency workers were broadly in favour of their Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Units. Arrests were more likely to occur with Unit involvement than with local stations. However, some negative responses were noted, in one case involving a victim being told she would have to wait two weeks before the Unit could take her statement. Agency workers generally liked the Units but expressed concern about the shortage of staff and resources for the Units and the consequent use of an answerphone, about the attitudes towards domestic violence of some officers, and about the fact that not all Unit officers are women.

More recently, a Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE) survey of 102 refuges in England and Wales (in Barron *et al.* 1992: Appendix 3) found that nearly one half of the refuges had a DVU in their area and a similar number had been involved in liaison/consultation with a DVU. Nearly 75% of refuges with local DVUs said they knew what their Unit's role was and 70% said they had found the Unit helpful in improving the overall response to domestic violence.

Overall, research for this Inquiry suggested that DVUs had in most cases improved relations between the police and other agencies, and were viewed as sympathetic to

victims. However, a number of concerns about DVUs were raised, some of which have been noted above, and most of which were echoed nearly two years later in the Home Affairs Committee Report (1993a: paras 23-32).

The lack of a systematic approach to DVUs within most forces or between forces is a major concern (Inquiry interviews, Home Affairs Committee 1993a: paras 25, 26). There is no overall coordination or monitoring of units, agreed standards of operation are lacking, and officers have no formal job description or training. The way DVUs are set up is often left entirely to officers from local stations. This means that DVU roles differ from unit to unit, as do their relations with 'mainstream' policing activity, their lines of support, and their accountability.

There appears to be general agreement that a key role of DVUs is to support the victim (eg. Inquiry interviews, Metropolitan Police Community Involvement Policy Unit, n.d., Victim Support 1992: 2.20). But disagreement exist concerning exactly what this can and should entail. Providing information and support regarding the criminal justice process, making referrals to other agencies, and assisting in gathering evidence for legal proceedings through interviewing the victim are important activities which fit comfortably within a policing remit. However, some DVU officers offer strictest confidentiality to their victim clients (see, for example, Metropolitan Police Community Involvement Policy Unit, n.d.: Appendix 3). The police are clearly not in a position to promise this, since they are obliged to follow up information which a victim might inadvertently give implicating herself or her assailant in illegal activities.

Indeed, some black women have expressed the view that police are often more interested in investigating the 'criminality' of their partners or in conducting immigration investigations than in offering protection from violent men (eg. Mama 1989, who also found that victims have themselves been arrested pending immigration investigations; Inquiry interviews with victims and service providers). This view was given weight by comments of DVU officers in a division serving a large black population in interviews for this Inquiry. These officers expressed a heightened enthusiasm for working in the DVU based on the opportunities it provided for collecting intelligence concerning the illegal activities of the partners of women seen by the Unit.

A further danger is that the boundaries of the role of the DVU officer have not been sufficiently clearly drawn. Some DVU officers go beyond their policing roles, attempting to engage in 'social work' activities inconsistent with these roles (eg. Inquiry interviews, Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 28, 29): for example, trying to coordinate all support services for women or offering support already provided by independent women's advocates, notably Women's Aid (see 'Inter-agency liaison' below). Some of these issues are illustrated by the debate surrounding the role of the Islington Domestic Violence Crisis Intervention team highlighted in Home Affairs Committee inquiry (Home Affairs Committee 1993b: QQ22-7). This pilot project, launched in early 1993, is to provide 24 hour civilian back-up within a police station.

Although the project provides civilian counselors, their location within a police station has been questioned. Recent research from the USA and Australia (see 'Recent International Developments' above) suggests that a more successful model is one where independent advocates work in close conjunction with the police, but are accountable first and foremost to women victims (an accountability which the police cannot provide) and who are clearly seen by victims to be independent.

An extreme example of the dangers inherent in the police going beyond their law enforcement role was the tragic case of the fatal stabbing of a woman by her husband inside a London DVU in April 1991. The DVU officers had left the couple alone in a room, apparently at their own request, to discuss their troubles. Defending this practice, the Chief Superintendent told reporters:

Officers dealing with domestic violence cases perform a difficult dual role of police officer and social worker.... They're allowed a great deal of discretion and allowing parties to talk through their difficulties is a legitimate option. If both parties agree, this can be done in private. Many cases have successfully resolved using this very method. (*Independent Newspaper* April 30, 1991).

This practice however is directly contrary to the Circular (see above), to the Metropolitan Police's *Domestic Violence Best Practice Guidelines* which warns that 'Police Officers are not trained counselors' (Metropolitan Police Community Involvement Policy Unit, n.d.: 35, original emphasis), and to assertions made in all recent police documents that the victim's safety should be the primary consideration in policing domestic violence. In fact, the Metropolitan Police are currently reviewing their DVU guidelines in the light of this tragic case (Home Affairs Committee 1993b: Memorandum 4, p28).

It may be significant that the couple concerned were Asian. Interviews undertaken for this Inquiry with a range of Asian professionals in various parts of the country indicate that police officers may be especially reluctant to intervene in Asian communities, because they believe that these communities prefer to deal with marital conflicts through conciliation and that 'cultural' differences should be respected (see also Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 33). However, as Siddiqui and Patel argue in the context of the DVU killing: 'the adoption of such differential strategies denies Asian women the choices and alternatives that are often available to other women...such dangerous thinking...silences women and strips them of their rights' (Siddiqui and Patel 1991). In their quest to promote good race relations and 'multi-culturalism', the police may inadvertently define as 'the community' those who have the power to speak; that is, primarily male leaders.

Concerns have also been expressed that DVU officers do not always adequately carry out their advice-giving and referral roles. The Home Affairs Committee Report (1993a: para 28) noted evidence that DVU officers sometimes give incorrect advice, for example that all civil injunctions have powers of arrest attached, or concentrate on other agencies' roles and on civil remedies rather than on their own law enforce-

ment powers. Moreover, although now against national Victim Support policy (Barron et al. 1992: para 6.4; see also Victim Support 1992: para 6.27), officers in some areas still automatically refer women to local Victim Support groups (as well as other agencies) without seeking women's prior consent, a practice which may put their safety at risk.

Perhaps the most widespread criticism of DVUs is that they tend to be marginalised from mainstream policing (eg. Inquiry interviews, Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 27, 1993b: Q27, Memorandum 20: 71, Memorandum 22: 102). Indeed, the most striking finding from interviews with service providers for this Inquiry was that, although relations with DVUs were generally positive and helpful, more work needs to be done in changing the attitudes and behaviour of front-line officers (see also McGibbon et al. 1989: 100-1; Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 16, citing evidence from a range of sources). While accounts were given of sensitive and appropriate emergency responses, officers were accused often of not responding promptly when called, not taking protective action, not arresting or charging even when clear evidence existed that a crime had been committed, misinforming women about their legal options, not informing of other supports, including the DVU, and disclosing confidential refuge addresses. Some service providers felt that even in areas where the emergency response to victims was improving, this was the case mainly for 'respectable' victims – notably, white, middle class women with conventional lifestyles. Moreover, some DVU officers complained of difficulties in getting their colleagues to notify the DVU of cases, to record cases fully, to consult DVU files, to pass to DVU officers injunctions delivered to the station, and to properly tag incoming calls.

Agency workers, including some DVU officers, were concerned that most DVUs are open only during the daytime and are often under-resourced and under-staffed, limiting the service available to women and sometimes endangering their lives. The use of answerphones in DVUs was particularly disliked. Indeed, use of answerphones together with a lack of emergency response at some stations has fuelled a fear among some workers that the police may regard DVUs as being *the* solution to dealing with domestic violence, without a commitment to integrating them within mainstream policing or to resourcing them adequately (eg. Inquiry interviews, Barron *et al.* 1992: para 6.7). Rights of Women (Mavolwane and Radford 1992) have documented cases where women phoning the police, desperate for help, have had their call transferred by the duty officer to the DVU answerphone. Similar problems were identified in memoranda of evidence presented to the Home Affairs Committee (1993b). For example:

When women ring to report an incident of violence, the desk officer insists on transferring them to the domestic violence unit. Frequently the officers are not in, so the client fails to get any service at all. (Appendix 9: 233) Most domestic violence units are staffed by one or two officers only. This means that any woman calling the unit will invariably receive an answerphone message requesting her to leave her name and number so

that an officer can get back to her. This is useless to women who have no home phone or who are staying in Bed and Breakfast or other temporary accommodation, who feel unable to give out a refuge number or who are fearful that their abuser may intercept a call intended for them. (Memorandum 22: 102)

Clearly, the overall level of resources available to the police is not under their control, and it is important to acknowledge that the Service is extremely stretched. In his testimony to the Home Affairs Committee, the Chief Constable of Gloucestershire and Chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers' Crime Committee made this point strongly (1993b: QQ181-188). In particular, he defended not having DVUs in his own force by referring to lack of resources. However, in so doing he also demonstrated that, despite Circular 60/1990, the belief that domestic violence is a lesser problem has not died: 'As a Chief Constable, one cannot look at domestic violence in isolation. In my county alone, crime has doubled in five years and that needs to be addressed: a lot of that is *serious crime like burglaries* which have gone up by leaps and bounds' (Q186, emphasis added). The significance of this comment was not lost on the Home Affairs Committee (1993a: para 16). If the police genuinely believe domestic violence to be a crime as serious as assaults on strangers, then justifiable concerns about resource shortages cannot absolve them of their duty to prioritise domestic violence. In their Report, the Home Affairs Committee stated: '**We do not believe that resource limitation should be used as an excuse for an inadequate response to domestic violence.** ... a response to violent crime, whether it occurs in the home, the pub or the football match, is a core function of the police' (1993a: para 20, original emphasis).

Some commentators, including some police officers, argue that special units inevitably marginalise, and suggest that while DVUs exist, domestic violence will not be taken seriously by other officers. Some divisions have attempted to deal with marginalisation by creating alternatives to DVUs; for example, designating a sergeant in charge of domestic violence for every relief. However none of the alternatives discussed in interviews for this Inquiry were viewed as successes, and some divisions had returned to DVUs. Indeed, marginalisation may not be a necessary consequence of special units. A problem in many divisions appears to be that although DVUs may have the support of senior management, that support does not take the form of active daily supervision and monitoring. Most DVUs are staffed by one or two (usually women) uniformed officers. Rarely do these officers have sufficient rank to challenge their colleagues or to institute and effectively monitor procedures. Junior officers cannot be expected to enforce policies.

West Yorkshire, on the other hand, appears to have had some success with specialist units headed by sergeants who are responsible for daily monitoring of practice on their divisions. This task is considerably aided by a force-wide Domestic Violence Index which holds information on every domestic violence call. The controller checks the Index when calls come in, informing responding officers of any history *before* arrival

on the scene. The police also run a 24 hour helpline, directly connected to the control room, which is especially important outside Unit opening hours. Finally, in addition to daily monitoring, the Force undertakes periodic monitoring research, and independent monitoring occurs through outside research and local authority sponsored inter-agency domestic violence forums (see Hanmer and Saunders 1991).

Nonetheless, Hanmer's (1990) survey of victims showed that there were still problems in West Yorkshire. Although advice given by uniformed officers was in line with the new policy in 55% of cases, in the remainder the response was not, and included advising victims that nothing could be done because 'you are man and wife' or 'it is up to her to bring charges' (p.34). Where assailants were present on police arrival, 40% were arrested, but in 25% of cases the police did not even speak to the man. Nor were police arresting for breach of injunctions. Not being present when the police arrived appeared to be the most effective means of avoiding police intervention. When asked whether the police were helpful, half of those women who had phoned the police once in the past year said 'no', as did nearly two-thirds who had phoned more than once. The most helpful responses consisted of advice and information to the woman regarding ways of protecting herself and children, and firm action to control the man. Unhelpful advice included doing nothing, taking the man's side, blaming the woman, and racist harassment. Some police simply did not turn up when called. Finally, over half of women said the police did not help in the way they wanted, which in most cases was a stronger response.

Inter-agency liaison

This Inquiry found strong support from service providers for a closer, more effective and hospitable working relationship with the police, and indeed the international evidence demonstrates the central importance of inter-agency coordination in achieving an effective preventive police response (see 'Recent International Developments' above). It is clear that in many areas liaison between DVU officers and other agencies has begun and has markedly improved perceptions of police by these other agencies. DVU officers also expressed feelings that positive working relationships were being established.

Of crucial importance are signs in many areas of improved relationships between the police and Women's Aid, widely acknowledged as the key agency supporting women who experience domestic violence (eg. Women's National Commission 1985: paras 21-24, Victim Support 1992: paras 6.14-6.21; see also 'Community supports for women' below). Mutual training by police and Women's Aid has occurred in some locations and has helped to remove prejudices on both sides which are often unfounded (personal communication, WAFE 1992). This may be a necessary first step towards evolving formal consultation mechanisms with respect both to local police policy and practice development and monitoring, and to dealing with individual cases. However, in some areas police and local Women's Aid groups have not discussed policy and practice (personal communication, WAFE November 1992), clearly indicating that further work is needed.

In many areas, the police are also involved in inter-agency work through local domestic violence forums which bring together a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies (see Victim Support 1992: Ch.7). Indeed, some inter-agency groups have been organised by the police, in line with policy statements suggesting that police *initiate* local inter-agency groups or *coordinate* the work of other agencies (eg. Metropolitan Police Working Party 1986: para 13.2.1, Home Office Circular 60/1990: para 10). This Inquiry found evidence that attempts by DVU officers to coordinate inter-agency groups had created suspicion and ill feeling in some areas, with agency workers refusing to attend meetings because they felt that the police had insisted on setting the agenda for the group and were using other agencies for their own ends (see also Southall Black Sisters 1989, Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 28). Forums 'brokered' by local councils or the voluntary sector and including strong representation from local refuge and other support groups for women – as for example in Hammersmith and Fulham, Nottinghamshire, Leeds, and Wolverhampton – have been more successful in bringing together a range of agencies, including a positive role for the police, and setting and implementing concrete agendas (Inquiry interviews, Victim Support 1992: Ch.7).

Streatham's deferred cautioning policy

A well publicised claim that policy has improved police practice in dealing with domestic violence concerns Streatham's deferred cautioning policy (extended throughout Metropolitan Police District 4 Area [Victim Support 1992: para 2.18]). This policy encourages arrest followed by cautioning after a two month deferral period for domestic violence offenders who have caused *minor* injury only, who admit their offence, who are first-time offenders, and whose victims do not want to prosecute. Data on police dispositions appear to support the policy's success when compared with the pre-policy situation at Streatham and a comparison division with no domestic violence policy: both comparisons showed the policy to produce more recorded crime, arrests, and charges and less 'no criming'. Further support is claimed from official re-offending rates and interviews with victims (see Buchan and Edwards 1991).

However, it is unclear whether the improvement in dispositions resulted from the *cautioning* policy *per se* or from a strong interventionist policy on domestic violence generally plus a DVU, both of which were absent in pre-policy Streatham and the comparison division. Further, only 35% of victims (a total of 23 women) whose partners were cautioned were interviewed, and those victims not interviewed may have been more likely still to be living in dangerous situations since 'the interview sample was drawn without having to make contact with victims who were living with difficult offenders' (Buchan and Edwards 1991: 56). Indeed, in the course of discussing interview contact (p. 57), the researchers make a number of statements which suggest that the circumstances of some victims were extremely precarious; for example, two women who were interviewed had left their homes, fleeing violent partners; one woman, who was finally tracked down by methods which included leaving a letter

with the offender, said she was depressed and did not want to be interviewed; at one house, the offender answered the door, and 'was very rude and abusive stating that the woman was not at home and in any case would not wish to be interviewed'.

In addition, concern has been expressed over the legality of the cautioning policy, its potential for symbolically trivialising domestic violence, and the possibility that it may divert cases from prosecution (eg. Horley 1990, Inquiry interviews). This last concern, contrary to the researchers' claims, has not been refuted since the dispositional comparisons mentioned above were not well controlled. To the extent that practice has improved at Streatham, it is most likely to be the result of commitment by the Chief Superintendent to take domestic violence seriously, and careful monitoring of cases. A cautioning policy could well backfire where this is lacking.

Towards an effective police response to domestic violence

Overall, the limited evidence discussed above suggests that the UK has made some very important strides in improving police responses to domestic violence. Using survey data collected from 100 refugees in September 1992, WAFE summarised the situation as follows:

In a number of areas, police officers are giving a higher priority to domestic violence, are giving out more information to women, are following up cases and are generally becoming more sympathetic and understanding of women's situation. The response is, however, very uneven, and in some areas, police attitudes seem largely unchanged. (Barren *et al.* 1992: 6.2)

The Home Affairs Committee Report (1993a) came to similar conclusions: 'It was clear that the picture varied both between different police forces and within individual forces, and a recurrent description of the police response was that it was "patchy"' (para 17). The Report noted evidence both of positive attitude change and responses (para 15) and of the continuing failure of many officers to take domestic violence seriously (para 16).

The report (Home Affairs Committee 1993a: paras 33-7) also highlighted the following evidence suggesting that much work is still needed to ensure that black and minority ethnic women are given equal access to and treatment by the police: black and minority ethnic women lack confidence in police, they are particularly likely to find the police unhelpful if not openly racist and are thus less likely to contact them. Asian women may suffer from police reluctance to intervene in their communities, and a minority of women may be inhibited from using the police due to immigration legislation. In addition, some women may be silenced by lack of police sensitivity to language problems and lack of interpreters (eg. Mama 1989, Inquiry interviews, Home Affairs Committee 1993b: Appendix 9). Police sometimes speak only to and through the violent man, or use friends or relatives who may, instead of interpreting,

put pressure on women not to seek help or to request police action to the detriment of their own wishes and safety.

The international evidence shows that effective policing requires more than policy change. It requires, above all, *coordination* between the police and other criminal justice and community agencies, *police accountability to women victims* through continued internal and independent monitoring, and well funded *independent victim advocacy and support* services which work closely with the police (see 'Recent international Developments' above).

The UK has only just begun to tackle the need for truly comprehensive and coordinated CJS responses (see generally, Home Affairs Committee 1993a, 1993b). Although cooperation between the police and other agencies is beginning in some areas, often through inter-agency forums, the development of something approaching community coordination will take time, effort and a great deal of commitment on all sides. A small number of innovative pilot projects which aim to produce a more coordinated response are already under way or about to begin. For example, two court-mandated re-education programmes for violent men exist in Scotland, a civilian crisis intervention team based within Islington Police Station has recently begun operation, and victim advocacy services for women dealing with the CJS are being developed in Leeds and Nottinghamshire.

Much work also still needs to be done to establish police accountability to victims. No formal mechanisms yet exist for police liaison and consultation with Women's Aid or other victim advocates. Internal and independent monitoring is extremely limited and patchy.

Finally, community services for women, notably Women's Aid, have inadequate resources to provide the level of support and advocacy required to enable women safely and effectively to use the police (see Barron *et al.* 1992: Appendix 2, Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 130). This is clearly outside the control of the police, as the Home Affairs Committee Report acknowledges (1993a: para 22). Nevertheless, the Committee states: 'in our view there is not much point in making the work of the police more efficient and effective if at the end of the line there is inadequate refuge provision available for victims' (para 22; see 'Community supports for women' below for a discussion of refuges and other victim supports).

Recommendations for an effective local police response

Despite the shortcomings noted above, it is clear that the police in many locations have moved further than other statutory agencies in developing positive policies and practices towards domestic violence to women. Listed below are a number of recommendations, some of which build on practice already occurring in various locations, but all of which are intended to sharpen up the police response.

- i. Acceptance of women's experiences and understandings of domestic violence.

- ii. Prompt and sensitive response to calls: a. ensure victim's (and children's) safety; b. never attempt conciliation; c. interview victim away from perpetrator; d. provide accurate and precise advice, supplemented by multi-lingual advice leaflets for women, and e. transport victim and children to a place of safety if requested. iii. Policy encouraging arrest when evidence allows. Victim's wishes should always be considered.
- iv. Readily available independent interpreters, with officer training regarding their use.
- v. Equal service to women of all communities and circumstances.
- vi. Integrated, coordinated and adequately resourced DVUs headed by senior staff to provide: a. prompt follow-up of cases in conjunction with CID; b. visible contact point for women to obtain information and advice concerning criminal justice matters, information regarding community supports, and referral to other agencies with *prior consent of the victim*; c. liaison with relevant health and social welfare agencies, including in particular local Women's Aid refuges, and support groups, concerning all aspects of police policy and practice; d. advice to and training of officers; e. daily monitoring of division practices; f. accurate and comprehensive records, and g. links with local inter-agency forums.
- vii Extension of DVU opening hours.
- viii. Where no DVUs exist or their establishment is not practicable, implementation of functions listed in vi. above through a specialist officer or the generalist system of policing.
- ix. Computerised domestic violence index.
- x. Mutual training of police and relevant support agencies including, in particular, Women's Aid.
- xi. Coordination of police with other agencies, ideally through local inter-agency forums.
- xii Public accountability through independent monitoring.

Civil law remedies

Since the mid 1970s, many jurisdictions worldwide have passed civil laws designed to protect women suffering domestic violence through the provision of two types of injunction (order): i. protection, restraining or non-molestation orders which require the abuser to stop harassing or assaulting the victim (and/or her children), and ii. exclusion or ouster orders which require that the abuser leave the home or, if he has already left, remain away from it.

A major advantage of injunctions is that they are designed explicitly to *protect* victims from *future* violence. As the Law Commission states: 'most acts of violence are also crimes, but the object of the criminal law is primarily to punish and deter the offender, whereas the object of family law is primarily to protect the victim' (Law Commission 1989: 1). In fact, the international evidence suggests that injunctions, properly enforced, have a vital role to play *in conjunction with* criminal justice sanctions, as part of a coordinated community response (eg. Pence 1989). In addition, the exclusion order in particular 'gives a victim of abuse an enforceable right to be safe in her home, and establishes that the abuser rather than the victim should bear the burden of finding another residence' (Lerman 1980: 272).

In England, however, the failure of injunctions to provide effective protection has been widely documented. The following major problems are acknowledged:

- i. exclusion orders granted *ex parte* (in emergency without notifying the respondent) are very difficult to obtain;
- ii. judges dislike granting *exclusion orders* under any circumstances due to concerns about the property rights of respondents; where granted they are temporary usually limited to three months, and are therefore not a long term housing solution;
- iii. powers of arrest are hardly ever attached to *ex parte* injunctions;
- iv. injunctions with *powers of arrest* attached are difficult to obtain even at full hearings (*ex parte* provision and powers of arrest are essential for effective protection, since women are often in imminent danger);
- v. women are frequently offered *undertakings* at county courts instead of injunctions, which amount to informal 'promises' by assailants without the need to admit guilt or give evidence, and without provision for powers of arrest;
- vi. injunctions are inadequately enforced (recent evidence suggests that half of all injunctions are breached on one or more occasions [Barron 1990: 65]): police rarely arrest for breach of injunctions even when powers of arrest are attached, solicitors are often reluctant to take breaches back to court, and judges rarely commit men to prison for breaching injunctions;
- vii. injunctions are restricted to married or cohabiting couples, providing no cover to ex-partners (except under limited conditions) or to partners who have never cohabited;
- viii. the civil law is cumbersome and complicated to use due to the existence of different statutes with varying eligibility criteria and powers, and
- ix. injunctions are rarely used jointly with criminal justice sanctions, rather they tend to be viewed as alternative measures; indeed, the existence of bail con-

ditions prohibiting the abuser from returning home may deny the victim the possibility of obtaining an exclusion order.

(For a fuller discussion, see Homer *et al.* 1984: 61-6, McCann 1985, Parker 1985, Freeman 1987, Law Commission 1989, Mama 1989, Barron 1990.)

Many of the above points are addressed in the recommendations and draft bill published by the Law Commission in May, 1992. The Commission's recommendations include:

- i. extending the categories of people who can apply for orders (paras 3.26, 4.9);
- ii. confirming that the courts should consider all the circumstances of a case and that it is their *duty* to grant occupation orders (formerly exclusion orders) to applicants without property rights 'if it appears likely that the applicant or any relevant child will suffer significant harm if an order is not made and that such harm will be greater than the harm which the respondent or any relevant child will suffer if the order is made' (para 4.33), where 'significant harm' is defined as 'ill-treatment or impairment of physical and mental health' (para 4.34);
- iii. *requiring* courts to consider factors such as 'risk of significant harm to an applicant or a child if the order is not made immediately' (para 5.10) when deciding whether to grant *ex parte* orders;
- iv. *requiring* courts to attach powers of arrest to injunctions where violence has occurred or is threatened, *unless* the applicant or child is adequately protected without such power (para 5.13);
- v. *enabling*, but not requiring, courts to attach powers of arrest to *ex parte* orders when violence has occurred or is threatened and the court is satisfied that significant risk of harm exists if the power is not immediately attached (para 5.14);
- vi. extending the duration of *ex parte* occupation orders granted to applicants without property rights up to six months in the first instance (4.37) and those with property rights for any specified time or until further notice (para 4.36), and
- vii *empowering* the police to apply for injunctions on behalf of victims (para 5.20).

The Commission's recommendations have received widespread, though not universal, support (see Home Affairs Committee 1993a: Section C, 1993 b). However, even if enacted in full, the legislation does not and cannot effectively cover all areas of concern for victims wanting to use the civil law. For example, solicitors representing victims are not always fully cognisant with domestic violence law and thus give inadequate advice; some solicitors fail to consult closely with victims throughout all stages of the legal process or pressurise them into making decisions without adequately discussing alternatives; the courts are often very distressing and potentially

dangerous places, with no facilities to enable women to avoid contact with their partners; and hearings can be extremely intimidating (eg. Barron 1990) (although steps are being taken to make courts less intimidating this following the Home Affairs Committee report). Moreover, legislation cannot ensure enforcement of orders and effective remedies against breaches.

Women's access to civil remedies generally is threatened by legal aid restrictions recently agreed by Parliament (*Guardian*, 1/4/93). These come at a time when solicitors are increasingly withdrawing from legal aid work and when women are increasingly being denied legal aid for injunctions (Home Affairs Committee 1993a: para 125). In some cases, refusal of emergency legal aid is apparently being rationalised by reference to recent policy changes in policing (Barron *et al.* 1992: Appendix 3). This ignores the fact that policy changes towards arrest and prosecution have not as yet been fully implemented and that criminal justice and civil remedies fulfil different functions and may need to be used together. Because of legal aid restrictions, the Home Affairs Committee expressed its concern that civil remedies will effectively be denied to 'a very large number of victims' (para 126) who seek 'simply the right to live [their] life without being molested' (para 127).

This right is also threatened by recent moves in family proceedings towards conciliation and joint agreements regarding children's welfare, supported by the Law Commission's (1990) divorce reform proposals and the Children Act 1989; and by the growing emphasis on paternal responsibility for continuing care and support of children following family breakdown, enshrined in the Children Act 1989 and Child Support Act 1991. Although the Children Act in particular is specifically concerned with the welfare of children and not the protection of women from domestic violence, the two are obviously related and a broad view needs to be taken in assessing the best interest of the child. The Children Act makes no mention of domestic violence, for example, and the Child Support Act allows for the duty of lone parents to supply information regarding the whereabouts of the absent parent to be waived if there are reasonable grounds for believing this would lead to risk of harm or distress, but does not indicate how this is to be proved. These two Acts may thus make permanent escape from violent men problematic for many women (see Home Affairs Committee 1993a: paras 123, 124). Cases have been documented where women have suffered further abuse, sometimes severe injury, as a direct result of their whereabouts being given to a partner in a contact order granted under the Children Act 1989 (Singh 1992). Moreover, residence orders have been awarded to violent men for children as young as ten months, sometimes on the grounds that a refuge is not a suitable place for a child. Some solicitors and Women's Aid groups, attuned to the dangers surrounding the Acts, are advising women not to attempt *any* civil action against their partners (personal communication, WAFE 1993).

Community supports for women

The international evidence demonstrates a clear need for an integrated range of services for women (see below). Women needing these services range from those

experiencing abuse for the first time, through those who have suffered it for years but feel they have no option but to stay; those on the point of leaving and needing somewhere to go, to those who have left and need further support of various kinds. Organisations which are provided by women for women (only) are best suited to take the lead in offering these forms of help (eg. Victim Support 1992: paras 6.14-6.21, 6.24). They have received the most positive evaluation from earlier research (Smith 1989) and have years of relevant experience and training (see publications of Women's Aid Federations in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).

Refuges

Refuges are a particular success story (Smith 1989). Run by women for women, they admit on an emergency basis and offer secure and confidential shelter for an indefinite period, thus providing safety for many thousands of women and their children who otherwise would be further abused or killed by violent men. In a USA-wide study covering 1981, 1982, and 1983, (Stout 1989: 25, 27) found a strong negative correlation between the rate of shelters (refuges) in a state and femicide: states with a higher coverage of shelters had fewer killings of women by their partners than did those with a lower coverage.

In the UK, there are about 290 local refuge groups of which about 200 are affiliated to one of the four national coordinating bodies – Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE), Welsh Women's Aid, Scottish Women's Aid and Northern Ireland Women's Aid (Barron *et al.* 1992: Appendix 1). Each year about 25,000 women and children use refuges and more than 100,000 contact Women's Aid for support (Barron *et al.* 1992: Appendix 2). London Women's Aid alone deals with over 5,000 callers a year looking for a place to go and 4,000 more wanting advice or information (undated factsheet: About London Women's Aid).

Women typically do not find their way to refuges without enduring many years of violence. The women in Binney *et al.*'s (1981, 1985) survey – still the only nationally funded refuge survey in Britain – had suffered violence for periods ranging from a few months to 30 or 40 years, the average being 7 years. Their ages ranged from 17 to 70 (average, 31 years), the violence usually having started when the woman was in her early twenties. Most had wanted to leave from the first year of their marriage but had nowhere to go, having not heard of refuges at that time. Some told of spending the night in a telephone box, public lavatory or on a park bench. Two thirds tried staying with families or friends usually resulting in overcrowding, but were easily found and gave in to pressure (often involving physical force or threats to themselves or their hosts) to return home.

In that it succeeds in helping women escape from constantly repeated violent attacks, the provision of refuges is vital. In playing such an important role in their provision, Women's Aid plays arguably the biggest crime prevention role of any agency involved in domestic violence. Local groups running refuges are, however, seriously under-

funded and often there are not enough places. The figure still generally quoted as an absolute minimum is that of one family place per 10,000 of the population, which was originally recommended as an initial target by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Violence in Marriage in 1975. This figure has never come anywhere near being met. Binney *et al.*'s (1981: 27) 1978 figures showed that 150 groups were providing about one sixth of this number in 200 houses in England and Wales, and were unable to meet current demand. Many areas remained without refuge provision at all, and women from such areas rarely found their way to refuges elsewhere (p.27-8). The 200 plus groups existing by 1988 (1988 reprinting of same text, new foreword, pi.) cannot have exceeded a quarter of the recommended target figure. Indeed, WAFE considered that they represented no net improvement in provision since rehousing had become far harder to achieve and women were having to stay longer in refuge places. London Women's Aid was able to find refuge for (rely 40% of women requesting accommodation in 1990 (Barren *et al.* 1992: Appendix 2). The Government's view on this is that refuges (being essentially local organisations) are best provided in response to local need, and can and do receive help from local authorities. Nevertheless, by the end of 1992, there were still fewer than one third of the Select Committee's recommended number of refuge places (Barron *et al.* 1992: Appendix 2). It is a tribute to their commitment that they have been able to do so.

Women who have used them state that refuges are the only agencies which meet their needs (Smith 1989). Further, they are the only agencies which tend to be consistently positively evaluated in research; the only criticisms relating to factors resulting from inadequate funding, for example poor and overcrowded premises. Bowker and Maurer's US sample (1987: 39) rated women's groups and shelters as the most effective of all the sources approached for help in dealing with violence. Smith (1989: 99) lists tributes paid to the refuge movement by official reports from the Women's National Commission (Advisory Committee to the Cabinet Office), the Council of Europe, and the United Nations. The major problems are that only a minority of women hear about refuges or find out how to contact them, and more women could not easily be accommodated in existing provision.

Russell (1989: 39-43) points to the need to identify and target groups marginalised due to ethnic origin, disability and age. Specialist black refuges have not yet been established in sufficient numbers to make escape a real option for many minority ethnic women, and mixed refuges may operate in racist ways (Mama 1989), although they are working to counteract this (Inquiry interview). Women from particular ethnic groups (South Asian, Chinese and others) use refuges less than their numbers would indicate might be the case (Russell 1989: 41-2) because of limited provision, inadequately targeted publicity, language issues, and the additional difficulties for such women in even attempting to escape from violence. Disabled women are also less likely to see publicity on how to reach safety, especially if they are housebound or heavily dependent on their abusers. Furthermore, the age and state of most refuge buildings makes access and other provision for most disabled women a virtual impossibility. Specific funding for outreach staff and for purpose-built accommo-

dation would need to be the starting points of effective provision for this doubly jeopardised group of women (personal communication, WAFE, November 1992). Ironically, severe and repeated violence can be the cause of the very disability which then cuts women off from hearing about or receiving help.

Support Groups and Follow-Up

Groups, or house meetings in refuges, appear more effective than therapy in assisting women to rebuild their emotional strength (Rodriguez 1988:242). They also play a crime prevention role in teaching women they have the right to remain safe and how to go about doing so. Groups for Asian women, communicating in mother tongues where appropriate, can help women understand their own particular experience of abuse and the way this is compounded by welfare agencies' inappropriate responses – for example, rehousing to areas where racial attacks are common or demanding to see passports (Guru 1986: 162-3). Such groups can help women who are unlikely to be accepted back into traditional communities build a new identity and new support networks (Guru 1986: 163).

Through participation in groups, women's guilt and stigma are reduced. They learn that they are not the only ones to have suffered abuse and that it can only really be understood as a wider social problem (eg. Clifton 1985:51-2, Condonis *et al.* 1989: 8-9). Support groups in refuges and afterwards also combat isolation and empower women to take further preventive steps most suited to their own circumstances. For women to make the shift from being victims to being survivors, support groups are absolutely crucial. Removing the abuser from the scene and giving the women a personal alarm, for example, may assist the woman to summon help. But if it is the sole response, this action may leave the woman isolated and perhaps in permanent fear. Membership of a group, on the other hand, may well help her to find the courage to construct an entire plan for a future life lived in safety, perhaps even in a different area (Inquiry interviews).

The international evidence confirms this stance (eg. Pence 1987, Dutton-Douglas and Dionne 1991) and also suggests the need for coherent follow-up programmes and funded workers to run them. Based on research on readmissions to shelters in the USA, Wilson *et al.* (1989: 282) regard continual contact with former residents as a crucial supportive network in preventing women returning to further violence and in helping with reintegration into the community. This contact may be particularly difficult in rural areas where refuges are likely to need to take on a range of extra roles to cover the shortfall in support around issues like rape and incest (eg. Noesjirwan 1985: 84-5).

Interviews for this Inquiry confirmed the need, reiterated consistently by WAFE in its publications over the years (most recently as evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, see Barron *et al.* 1992), for funded workers to offer longer-term support. These workers would be available to help women locate local resources, groups and forms of

support needed to 'make a go' of a new life, and to assist women in negotiating with public agencies. A refuge worker interviewed for this Inquiry thought this kind of help could significantly cut the number of women who return to their husbands after being rehoused, only to leave again later; thus representing a real saving to the public purse by rehousing such women only once. One woman, described in an interview, had been in and out of a refuge eight times in three months because, after 25 years as a housewife, she found the hurdles of police, courts, housing, poll tax, schools, and the humiliation of going to the Department of Social Security too much to cope with. With adequate support, however, she is now rehoused and is doing voluntary work in her local community. Local refuge workers currently have the expertise but not the funded time routinely to offer this effective form of help (Inquiry interviews). Evidence from other countries demonstrates that advocacy schemes, operating independently of public agencies and linked to refuges and other women's organisations, constitute an effective way of offering such support in negotiating with legal and welfare agencies (eg. London Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic 1985, Pence and Shepard 1988: 290-1, Cahn and Lerman 1991, Edleson 1991).

A Range of Crisis Services

Mugford (1990: 4, citing research conducted for the Office of the Status of Women, 1990, Department of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in Australia) refers to the crucial need for 24-hour crisis intervention services. Existing health and social services are often not geared up to deal with domestic violence as appropriately as they should and are not available at the most necessary times. Helplines, with responses available in a range of languages, backed up with posters and other public education, also in a range of languages, and in appropriate media including the minority ethnic press, are a crucial crisis service. Russell (1989: 8) points to the need for disability organisations to have appropriate information and for outreach workers to contact abused disabled women.

Hanmer and Saunders (1987: 293) highlight the need for provision of drop-in centres or 24-hour safe houses where women can go for advice and help. Wharton (1987: 158) lists services for battered women as including crisis lines, counselling, and providing information about community resources; but always with a shelter as the central form of service that women need to know they can fall back on. Each refuge in New Zealand, being government funded, is able to run programmes for women and children in their own areas, provide training and education for local community groups, and give talks in schools and elsewhere (National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges Inc. n.d.).

Women's Aid groups in the UK undertake some of this work but are always hard pressed owing to insecure and inadequate funding. Notably, the coordinating body of the WAFE provides a National Helpline (and has recently been awarded £140,000 over three years by the Department of Health to support this). London Women's Aid operates an emergency telephone line during office hours and coordinates an emergency rota run by the refuges themselves at night.

There is growing recognition that other agencies who come into contact with women suffering the effects of domestic violence should develop their services in ways which complement, but do not attempt to duplicate, the work of Women's Aid and other women's organisations that have developed considerable expertise over the years (eg. Victim Support 1992: chapters 6 and 7). In particular, there is a danger in involving untrained or inadequately trained personnel – particularly volunteers – in life-threatening or complex situations. Consequently, organisations such as Victim Support are not well placed to play the primary role in this field of work. Nevertheless, they do have a role to play. Inter-agency forums and joint training initiatives may provide effective mechanisms for coordinating and expanding the work of a range of agencies.

Cocooning the Victim/Survivor

One interesting preventive initiative rated highly by women and which, it appears, has no full-scale equivalent in Britain is the Safe Space Project in Duluth, Minnesota, organised under the widely-known Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) there (Pence 1987: 101-2). It was designed for women whose male partners are on court-mandated batterers' programmes, but staff also contacted every woman with a protection order and every woman whose partner had been charged with a domestic assault related crime. The project aimed to extend into the wider community the attitude change achieved with the police and criminal justice system; that is, to encourage people to place the blame on the offender rather than the woman he abused. For example, three support group members who had the same employer as another member persuaded management to agree to call the police if her husband time near, and to screen her calls so that he could no longer threaten her. Another group explained to a social worker that she was being used as an instrument of the husband's harassment (in constantly checking on standards of child care because of his allegations, for example).

The Safe Space Project brought family and friends together to design for every woman a safe space plan in a structured way. This might involve the group in enlisting the support of a minister, doctor, employer, or whoever could help 'to strategize together on enlisting the cooperation of community members in protecting women'. It included follow-up meetings to review the plan. Each woman defined her own support system: e.g. friends, family, shelter and DAIP staff and volunteers, police, courts, church members. Any or all of these might 'help her establish safety and hold her abuser accountable to her' (Pence 1987: 102). This was in addition to ensuring that women knew how to use the courts if they choose to.

Conclusion

There is a very great deal which police at the local level can do – in conjunction with other agencies targeting domestic violence and civil law remedies – to assist women in becoming and remaining safe from men's violence. Such work is long-term, must

permeate all levels of the Service, and must always take the safety of women and children as its linchpin.

A coordinated approach, established by an inter-agency group, has been found elsewhere to be a key starting point. Inter-agency forums in the UK, however, are only beginning to be independently evaluated – a matter of great urgency since they are currently proliferating at a rapid rate. Existing women’s organisations, including in particular local Women’s Aid and other voluntary sector women’s groups, play a key role in such forums. They can offer the greatest expertise in advising, through training and other inter-agency contact, what forms of intervention are likely to prove safe. Special efforts should always be made to involve groups representing minority ethnic women.

It is also crucially important to listen to victims. The very fact that they know their abusers over many years makes this one area of violent offending where the criminal mind holds little mystery. The imposition of any blanket policy, when individual women do not consider it to be safe, is unlikely to prove helpful in the longer term.

This report has shown that the long neglect of domestic violence as a crime in the UK – true of police and government alike until quite recently – was badly misplaced and counterproductive. There is a pressing need for effective measures of prevention. They need to be accompanied by adequate resourcing and efficient coordination in order to build effectively on new evidence of a willingness to take men’s crimes against women seriously. The involvement of central government is essential for this to occur. Without such concerted and pro-active developments, the term-‘prevention’ will retain a hollow ring.

It is thus appropriate to end this report by noting that much needed action is now beginning to be taken at national level to combat domestic violence. A ministerial group on domestic violence has been established, headed by the Home Office – the newly appointed ‘lead’ department for coordinating work nationally. The Home Affairs Committee (1993a) has reported on an inquiry into domestic violence. Among its many recommendations are: ‘that the need to tackle domestic violence effectively is given appropriate priority by all Departments’ (para 132); ‘that the Treasury should be invited to participate in the Ministerial and Official Working Groups on Domestic Violence’ (para 135); and that ‘the first priority for Government action on domestic violence should be the establishment of a central, co-ordinated policy for refuge provision throughout the country’ (para 124).

These moves are warmly welcomed. They may herald, at long last, an era in which genuine attempts to improve policies and practice, by the police and others, will not be hampered through lack of an infrastructure of other forms of escape and support for women. They may also mean that those who exhibit a reluctance to change will be spotlighted as unacceptably out of step and out of date. These will be the ultimate tests of national pronouncements and local action.

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