



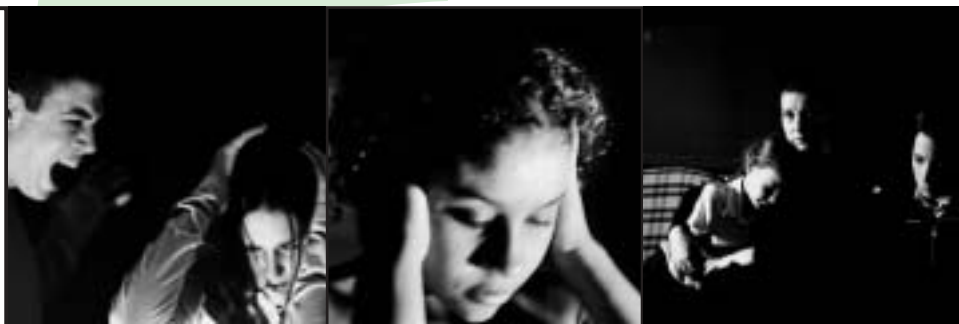
The Nottinghamshire County Council

Corporate Domestic Violence Policy Statement

January 2003



Nottinghamshire
County Council



Background

Domestic violence is a crime. Developing a corporate domestic violence policy represents a commitment to take all reasonable steps to prevent domestic violence and to overcome the impact of it.

The problem is serious and extensive:

- In England and Wales, every week two women are killed by their current or former partners.¹
- At least one woman in four experiences domestic violence at some stage in her life and it is estimated that between one in eight and one in ten women has experienced domestic violence in the past year.² Extrapolating from this it is projected that every year at least 31,010 women living in Nottinghamshire will experience domestic violence.³
- Domestic violence accounts for one quarter of all violent crimes reported to the police yet it is also the least likely violent crime to be reported - only one third of incidents resulting in injury are reported to the police.⁴

Children are also affected by domestic violence. Research sponsored by NCH Action for Children (1994)⁵ found that:

- 75% of abused mothers said that their children had witnessed domestic violence;
- 33% had seen their mothers beaten up;
- 10% had witnessed sexual violence;
- all of the children had seen their mothers crying and upset because of the violence.

There is also a strong correlation between domestic violence and child abuse – studies have found these types of abuse occurring together in between 40 - 70% of cases.⁶

Nottinghamshire Social Services Department recorded 424 domestic violence referrals during 2000/2001, but this is acknowledged to be a gross under-representation of cases involving domestic violence. Many cases will have been recorded under other categories of need.

Definition of Domestic Violence

Compared with men, women are more likely to experience domestic violence at some point in their lives, more likely to experience repeat victimisation, more likely to be injured and to seek medical help, more likely to experience frightening threats and more likely to be frightened.⁷ For this reason, this report refers to victims as women. However, the County Council recognises that men are sometimes abused by their women partners and that domestic violence also occurs within same sex relationships.

There are many different definitions of domestic violence. In keeping with its commitment to partnership working the County Council has adopted the Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum's definition of domestic violence:

Domestic violence (physical, sexual, emotional and/or other abuse) occurs between current or former partners, for the purpose of gaining power and control. We acknowledge that abuse can occur in same sex relationships and to men by women they know, to older people and children. The overwhelming majority of domestic violence is experienced by women and children and perpetrated by men.

Nottinghamshire County Council recognises that domestic violence exists in all social classes, racial, ethnic and cultural groups and that it can be experienced at any age and irrespective of factors such as sexuality and disability. However, we are aware that because of various types of discrimination, these are all factors which can affect women's experiences of seeking help and success in protecting themselves and their children from domestic violence.

County Council Commitment

The County Council recognises the seriousness of domestic violence and that, as a direct provider of services and a large employer, it has an important role in reducing its incidence. Each department is responsible for devising a strategy for implementing the policy as appropriate to its particular services.

The County Council :

- Is committed to work to eliminate discrimination, promote equality in all aspects of its roles and responsibilities and will strive to make services appropriate, accessible and sensitive.
- Will provide a co-ordinated and consistent response to domestic violence.

- Will strengthen links with local domestic violence forums and local crime and disorder partnerships.
- Will monitor and evaluate its response to domestic violence.

Underlying Principles

The County Council believes that:

- Domestic violence is unacceptable and that all individuals have the right to feel safe and be safe in their own home.
- Inaction is not an acceptable response to domestic violence.
- Children will be adversely affected by experiencing domestic violence.
- The safety and empowerment of women and children experiencing domestic violence should always be the priority in any response.
- Abusers are accountable for their behaviour.
- Preventive strategies should be integral to our response to domestic violence.

For further information about this policy and departmental strategies contact the **Domestic Violence Policy Officer on Tel: (0115) 9773864**

References

- ¹ Homicide Statistics (1998) cited in Cabinet Office (1999) Living Without Fear: An Integrated Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women London: Women's Unit of the Cabinet Office
- ² British Crime Survey (1998) cited in Cabinet Office (1999) Living Without Fear. An Integrated Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women London: Women's Unit of the Cabinet Office
- ³ 1 in 10 women based on 1998 population statistics for women aged 15-85 living in Nottinghamshire.
- ⁴ Mirrlees-Black C, Mayhew P & Percy A (1996) The 1996 British Crime Survey England and Wales Home Office Statistical Bulletin 19/96 London: Government Statistical Office
- ⁵ NCH Action for Children (1994) The Hidden Victims: Children and Domestic Violence London: NCH Action for Children.
- ⁶ Hughes H, Parkinson D & Vargo M (1989) Witnessing Spouse Abuse and Experiencing Physical Abuse: A "Double Whammy"? Journal of Family Violence 4 (2) pp197-209. See also Bowker L, Arbitell M & McFerron J (1988) "On the Relationship between Wife Beating and Child Abuse" in Yllo K & Bograd M (eds Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse, London: Sage.
- ⁷ Mirrlees-Black C, Mayhew P & Percy A (1996) The 1996 British Crime Survey in England and Wales Home Office Statistical Bulletin 19/96 London: Government Statistical Office.

Copies of this statement can be made available in various formats e.g. Tape, Large Print and Braille.