



LDAN Briefing on Domestic Violence and Substance Misuse

Introduction

Domestic violence is defined as: “Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”¹

Substance misuse is defined as: “The use of substances (such as illegal drugs, prescription medicines or alcohol) in such a way that results in harm to the individual user or to the wider community. The range of harms includes problems for physical health, psychological health, *violence*, financial problems, family problems or social problems.”²

As shown by the statistics below, there are clear links between domestic violence and substance misuse. However these links are multiple and complex and the relationship with domestic violence is neither simple nor straight forward. It is important to address the underlying complexities of both the substance misuse and violent behaviour to fully support and protect the families and individuals involved.

Key Statistics

Substance misuse and survivors of domestic violence

- Almost two-thirds of women involved with domestic violence agencies with substance misuse problems reported that they began their problematic substance use following their experiences of domestic violence
- All those with problematic substance use involved with domestic violence agencies saw a link between their substance use and their experiences of domestic violence - the most commonly reported being to dull both the physical and emotional pain

Substance misuse and domestic violence perpetrators

- 93 per cent reported that they were problematic substance users before they became domestically violent
- In half of the cases, problematic substance use increased during incidents of violence
- Most interviewees believed that substance use was an excuse, not a cause of violence
- Most women with experience of domestic violence reported that they had also been abused when their partner/ex-partner was sober³

¹ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/domestic-violence/>

² The Stella Project, Domestic violence, drugs and alcohol: good practice guidelines (2nd edition), 2007, http://www.gldvp.org.uk/C2B/document_tree/ViewADocument.asp?ID=77&CatID=154

³ Mayor of London, Domestic violence and substance use: overlapping issues in separate services? http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom_violence/docs/dom_vi_sub.pdf

Research

There has been a large body of research on the links between alcohol misuse and the perpetration of violence including domestic violence, however there is a shortage of work looking at possible links between other forms of substance misuse and violence.

A survey of arrestees in 2005–06 found that 38% of respondents had got into a fight or used violence against someone after drinking alcohol.⁴ A British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire found that perpetrators of domestic violence were under the influence of alcohol in 32% of incidents, and of drugs in 5%.⁵ One National Treatment Agency (NTA) study that looked at the number of charges (all offence types) brought against a group of problem drug users in the year before and the year after starting treatment, found that there was a 53% reduction in violence, public order/riot and robbery after drug treatment.⁶ Another study that looked at the costs and benefits of drug policies suggested that a significant benefit of drug treatment is 'improved social and family functioning – including reduced violence and financial problems.'⁷

As well as the links to the perpetration of domestic violence, drug and/or alcohol misuse can be a response to domestic violence and can increase vulnerability to violence, for example, where alcohol or illicit drugs are a coping mechanism for people in violent relationships. Women's Aid cites research that women experiencing domestic violence are up to fifteen times more likely to misuse alcohol and up to ten times more likely to misuse drugs than women generally.⁸ One study suggested that of 60 women using crack cocaine, 40 % reported they had been regularly physically assaulted by a current partner and 75 % assaulted by a current or previous partner. Half had needed hospital treatment in the past year due to partner violence.⁹

There has been a significant amount of research into the relationship between substance misuse and the harms to children, including domestic violence. In 2003, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) following a three year inquiry, published 'Hidden Harm – responding to the needs of children of problem drug users'.¹⁰ It revealed the extent and nature of actual and potential harm to babies and children living with parental drug misuse, and the inadequate response in the UK to this problem. Another study found that physical violence to children is more likely where alcohol or crack cocaine is involved and some of the most serious cases of child abuse in Inner London involved crack cocaine.¹¹ 'Hidden Harm Three Years On', published in 2007, highlighted the importance of further work to 'understanding the complexity of the impact of parental substance misuse on children, seeing it as part of a far wider, multi-dimensional picture, which often includes domestic abuse, mental health issues and/or a range of deprivation factors' and the need for further research in this area.¹²

⁴ The Arrestee Survey 2003 – 2006 2nd edition <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/hosb1207.pdf>

⁵ Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors191.pdf>

⁶ Changes in offending following prescribing treatment for drug misuse, NTA November 2008 http://www.nta.nhs.uk/publications/documents/nta_changes_in_offending_rb35.pdf

⁷ Costing Drug Problems and Policies, Christine Godfrey and Steve Parrott the University of York 2007

⁸ <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domesticviolencearticles.asp?section=00010001002200280001&itemid=958>

⁹ An Examination of the Needs of Women Crack Users with Attention to the Role of Domestic Violence and Housing, Bury C, Powis B, Ofori-Wilson F, Downer L & Griffiths P (1999), London: Report for Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham Health Authority in collaboration with National Addictions Centre & Brixton Drug Project.

¹⁰ 'Hidden Harm – responding to the needs of children of problem drug users' Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/acmd/hidden-harm>

¹¹ Parental substance misuse and child welfare: A study of social work with families in which parents misuse drugs or alcohol.' Harwin, J and Forrester, D. London: Interim Report for Nuffield Foundation, 2002.

¹² 'Hidden Harm Three Years On: Realities, Challenges and Opportunities' Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/acmd/HiddenHarm20071.pdf>

Drug and/or alcohol misuse may affect someone's ability to access and engage with domestic violence (and other victim support) services, and vice versa. DrugScope's 'Using Women' report found that only one in 10 of the 450 refuges in Britain for women fleeing domestic violence had a policy of automatically letting in women with drug problems. Another study found that women's access to, and engagement with, treatment services is negatively affected by domestic abuse and that most service providers had not yet taken steps to identify and address this issue. Some of the barriers to accessing treatment that were identified included concerns over childcare, perpetrator control, lack of gender-specific provision and a lack of refuge access for women using substances.¹³

There is evidence that domestic violence issues may be overlooked by drug and alcohol treatment services. As Cathy Humphreys suggests, 'few perpetrator programmes or services for survivors address substance use systematically. Just as scarce are drug or alcohol services which respond to domestic abuse issues for either perpetrators or survivors. In the process of referral or help seeking, one or the other issues becomes lost'¹⁴

In 2006 a joint University of Bristol and Home Office study found that perpetrators approach GPs, drug or alcohol services and other health agencies to seek help with their offending behaviour. The study found that, out of 45 men attending perpetrator programmes interviewed about which agencies they were in contact with, 32 men stated that they had been to their GP for help to tackle their violence prior to beginning the domestic violence programme, while 5 had approached alcohol services, and 4 drug services.¹⁵

The Department of Health have produced a handbook for health professionals on responding to domestic violence¹⁶, however there is evidence that this has not been broadly implemented and many health professionals, including drug and alcohol workers, have not been trained to respond to domestic violence. One survey showed that 60% of respondents said NHS trusts are training health professionals on domestic violence. However, it was apparent that only selected health professionals were receiving such training—predominantly health visitors (trained in 96% of cases) and midwives (87%).¹⁷

The UK guidelines on clinical management around drug misuse (2007) state that a drug misuse assessment should identify social problems such as domestic violence, and this should also be included in a comprehensive care plan.¹⁸ The research suggests, however, that there needs to be improved training for both drug and alcohol workers around domestic violence, and for staff of refuges or perpetrator projects on substance misuse. A need for clearer referral routes between these services is also identified, as well as more investment in specialist research and funding for projects that address both of these issues.

¹³ 'The impact of violence and abuse on engagement and retention rates for women in substance use treatment', Sarah Galvani and Cathy Humphreys, April 2007

¹⁴ 'Domestic Violence and Substance Use: Tackling Complexity', Humphreys C, Regan L, River D & Thiara K (2005), in British Journal of Social Work, Vol 35 No 8, pp 1303-20.

¹⁵ 'House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and "Honour"-Based Violence, Sixth Report of Session 2007–08' <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmhaff/1165/116502.htm>

¹⁶ 'Responding to Domestic Abuse – A handbook for health professionals', Department of Health http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4126161

¹⁷ 'House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and "Honour"-Based Violence, Sixth Report of Session 2007–08' <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmhaff/1165/116502.htm>

¹⁸ 'Drug misuse and dependence; UK guidelines on clinical management' (2007) http://www.nta.nhs.uk/publications/documents/clinical_guidelines_2007.pdf

Responsible bodies

The Home Office is the government department that has overall responsibility for addressing both domestic violence and drug misuse. The Department of Health has overall responsibility for the standards set for drug and alcohol treatment services.

At a local level, the Metropolitan Police Service has responsibility to protect those who are experiencing domestic violence, which may involve accompanying substance misuse issues. Police Community Safety Units are the investigation teams for domestic violence, and also support survivors to keep safe. In certain high risk cases, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) may be involved, which share information to get a better picture of victims' and perpetrators situations and develop tailored responses.

There are a number of voluntary agencies that provide victim support services, such as refuge accommodation and support in the court process. Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Services (IDVA) can also attend court with a survivor. Domestic violence perpetrator programmes provide specialist services to perpetrators of domestic violence. These programmes are often provided by voluntary sector agencies. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) has funded domestic violence perpetrator programmes in all 42 Probation areas since 2006.

The Home Office sponsored Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) aims to get adult drug-misusing offenders, including those that may be involved in domestic violence, into treatment and other support. The DIP is delivered at local level, via Drug (and Alcohol) Action Team partnerships (D(A)ATs). These are bodies made up of key partners - police, probation services, prison services, statutory agencies and statutory providers which work together to address local treatment needs.¹⁹ Many D(A)ATs have now become part of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), which are made up of a similar range of voluntary and statutory bodies and work to create strategies to tackle crime, disorder and substance misuse in their area. This should include specific actions to address the issues surrounding domestic violence and substance misuse.

Drug Treatment is predominantly funded by the combined Home Office and Department of Health Pooled Treatment Budget (PTB) allocated to the D(A)ATS. The Stella Project found that specific work of projects that have been developed to address both substance misuse and domestic violence are funded from diverse sources including D(A)ATS, Supporting People, Primary Care Trusts, Local Area Agreements and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.²⁰

Legislation

The Misuse of Drugs Act (1971): This sets out the main laws and regulations for controlled drugs. Section 8 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 makes it illegal for those concerned in the management of premises to knowingly permit on those premises the production or supply of a controlled drug or the preparation or smoking of opium or cannabis. The law should not however prevent housing or refuge providers from housing drug users.²¹

¹⁹ <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/dat/>

²⁰ The Stella Project, Innovative Responses: New pathways to address domestic violence and substance misuse across London http://www.gldvp.org.uk/module_images/Innovative%20responsesFINAL.pdf

²¹ <http://handbooks.homeless.org.uk/hostels/risks/drugs>

Criminal Law: There is no specific crime of 'domestic violence'. There are a range of criminal offences that may occur in a domestic violence situation including common assault, assault occasioning actual bodily harm (ABH) and a range of sexual assaults

Family Law Act (1996) Part IV: Provides protection in the form of non molestation and occupation orders. An injunction is a civil court order which places legal restrictions on the perpetrator to try to prevent or limit any further violence.

Protection from Harassment Act (1997): This Act created two new offences of causing harassment and causing fear of violence.

Crime and Disorder Act (1998): With particular relevance to domestic violence perpetrator projects, under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act there is a responsibility to take 'reasonable' action to prevent a crime, including acts of domestic violence.

Sexual Offences Act (2003): Overhaul of the previous law on sexual offences including a new offence of 'sexual assault' to replace indecent assault and a new onus on the perpetrator to show that he took steps to find out that the victim was consenting

Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (2004): Some of the key features of this act were to amend the Family Law Act 1996 to make breach of a non-molestation order a criminal offence and to apply the law to same sex couples and couples who have never cohabited.²²

National Government Policy

National drug policy makes limited reference to domestic violence other than in relation to child protection, and conversely national domestic violence policy does not make significant mention of drug misuse. However national alcohol policy has identified domestic violence as a key area for increased funding and partnership working.

Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England (2004)²³: The first cross-government statement on the harm caused by alcohol included a focus on reducing alcohol related domestic violence. The Tackling Violent Crime Programme (TVCP) was introduced to support local efforts to reduce alcohol-related crime and domestic violence, and to improve the police's and other agencies' performance and partnership working around this issue. A variety of local projects have now benefited from this funding, for example sanctuary schemes to enable victims to make statements. The strategy included actions to embed services for perpetrators and victims of domestic violence within funding and commissioning strategies, such as the Models of Care Commissioning Framework and Local Area Agreements.

Safe. Sensible. Social. The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy (2007)²⁴: The latest alcohol strategy also has a focus on domestic violence. It reports that offenders were believed by victims to be under the influence of alcohol in nearly half of all incidents of domestic violence. It commits to expanding the number of Tackling Violent Crime Programmes across the country and reiterates the importance of increased funding for domestic violence and substance misuse projects. This strategy has a new focus on harms caused to children through parental alcohol misuse, including domestic violence, abuse and neglect.

Drugs: protecting families and communities (2008)²⁵: This strategy includes a focus on preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by drug misuse and

²² The Stella Project, Domestic violence, drugs and alcohol: good practice guidelines (2nd edition), 2007, http://www.gldvp.org.uk/C2B/document_tree/ViewADocument.asp?ID=77&CatID=154

²³ <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/caboffice%20alcoholhar.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/alcohol-strategy-2007>

²⁵ <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/drug-strategy/drug-strategy-2008>

delivering new approaches to drug treatment and social re-integration. The only reference to domestic violence within the strategy and accompanying action plan relates to preventing harm to children. It states that children of parents who have problems with substance misuse can have 'a greater risk of experiencing domestic violence'. Responses include intervening early to prevent harm to children, prioritising parents' access to treatment where children are at risk and providing intensive parenting guidance.

National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan (2008)²⁶: This delivery plan does not reference substance misuse other than highlighting the importance of TVCPs in addressing alcohol-related domestic violence.

Saving lives. Reducing harm. Protecting the public. An Action Plan for Tackling Violence (2008-11)²⁷: This action plan highlights that abuse of alcohol is a particularly strong risk factor for both violent offending and victimisation. The strategy references the importance of TVCPs and the targets related to violence included in the Alcohol Strategy.

Together we can end violence against women and girls, Home Office consultation 2009²⁸: This consultation document currently makes little reference to the links between violence and drugs and/or alcohol. DrugScope responded to highlight these issues.²⁹

Public Service Agreement 25: Reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drugs³⁰: This states that 'alcohol is a factor in around a half of violent crimes. Problem drug use and harmful alcohol use destroy families and contribute to a cycle of deprivation and lost opportunity.' The 'development and well-being of young people and families' is a core priority.

Public Service Agreement 23: Make Communities Safer³¹: Priority action 1 of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 23 is to 'reduce all violence with injury and tackle the most serious violence, serious sexual offences and domestic violence'. The PSA 23 guidelines document outlines that 'early intervention by statutory Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP), partner agencies and the third sector with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence is crucial to prevent escalation to the most severe manifestations of this violent crime.'

Local Government Policy

A high proportion of local authorities have chosen NI32 'Repeat incidents of domestic violence' to be a priority in their Local Area Agreement: 79 local authority areas nationally (53%); in London it has been chosen in 10 boroughs (30%). Unfortunately no local authorities chose NI34 'Domestic violence – murder' and very few chose NI26 'Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence' or NI70 'Reduce emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people'.

NI40 'Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment' and NI39 'Rate of hospital admission per 100,000 for alcohol related harm' have both been high priorities nationally (49% of authority areas). In London, the drug treatment indicator was chosen in more areas than the alcohol target (64% of boroughs compared to 21% for alcohol). See appendix one for more details on relevant LAA targets.

²⁶ <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence069.htm>

²⁷ <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violentstreet/violentstreet008.htm>

²⁸ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2009-vaw/vaw-consultation.pdf?view=Binary>

²⁹ http://www.drugscope.org.uk/Resources/Drugscope/Documents/PDF/Policy/DrugScopeResponse_violenceagainstwomen.pdf

³⁰ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_psa25.pdf

³¹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_psa23.pdf

Other local strategies that can include actions relevant to substance misuse and domestic violence include Community Safety Strategies/Crime, Disorder and Drugs Strategies, Domestic Violence Strategies, Alcohol Strategies and Drug Treatment Plans

Research into substance misuse and domestic violence in local London policies was conducted by The Stella Project between December 2007 and June 2008, which mapped the strategies across all 33 London Boroughs. The research found that 31 London Boroughs, over 90%, showed an awareness of the links between domestic violence and substance misuse in their plans or strategies, but only 18 showed evidence of formal working with monitoring systems to address the link. The research revealed that integrated work was most evident in those boroughs with a history of partnership working between DAATs and domestic violence leads.³²

Pan-London Policy

In 2005 the Mayor of London published a report entitled 'Domestic violence and substance use: overlapping issues in separate services?'³³

The report suggested that the high number of service users with these dual issues who were accessing substance use, domestic violence survivor and perpetrator agencies suggests that these issues need to be dealt with in a more holistic way. It states that 'to date, the complex issues of safety have been given too little attention, and the role of substance use in the armoury of strategies through which violence and abuse is perpetrated has been minimised'. The report claimed that 'political will, better resourcing and a much greater acknowledgement within the policy framework' are all required to improve and support joint substance misuse and domestic violence projects.

In 2005 the Mayor of London also released The Second London Domestic Violence Strategy.³⁴ The strategy committed to further develop and promote cross-sectoral work between the domestic violence and substance abuse sectors and to promote the inclusion of children's services as an integral part of responding to domestic violence within substance abuse and mental health services.

Good Practice

Hope House

Hope House substance misuse service in London, which recently expanded to a 23 bed residency in Clapham, provides an intensive, female-only environment in which to address not only women's addictions, but also the issues underlying them such as domestic violence.³⁵

The Nia Project

The Nia domestic violence project has a substance misuse worker who works with women with drug and alcohol issues and develops links with external drug and alcohol services.³⁶

³² The Stella Project, Innovative Responses: New pathways to address domestic violence and substance misuse across London http://www.gldvp.org.uk/module_images/Innovative%20responsesFINAL.pdf

³³ Mayor of London, Domestic violence and substance use: overlapping issues in separate services? http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom_violence/docs/dom_vi_sub.pdf

³⁴ Mayor of London The Second London Domestic Violence Strategy http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom_violence/docs/2nd-dv-strategy.pdf

³⁵ http://www.actiononaddiction.org.uk/news_and_campaigns/news/141_action-on-addiction-expands-women-s-treatment-service-to-meet-growing-demand

³⁶ <http://www.niaproject.info/>

The Stella Project

The Stella Project works across all 33 London boroughs 'for positive, sustained improvement in the way services are delivered to survivors, their children and perpetrators of domestic violence affected by problematic substance use'.³⁷ They have produced good practice guidelines on working with those affected by domestic violence, drugs and alcohol.³⁸

Respect

Respect is the UK membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services. See their website for details of good practice in this area.³⁹

Contact

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³⁷ http://www.gldvp.org.uk/C2B/document_tree/ViewACategory.asp?CategoryID=73

³⁸ The Stella Project, Domestic violence, drugs and alcohol: good practice guidelines (2nd edition), 2007, http://www.gldvp.org.uk/C2B/document_tree/ViewADocument.asp?ID=77&CatID=154

³⁹ <http://www.respect.uk.net/>

Appendix I

The number of National Indicators that relate to domestic violence or substance misuse, which have been included in Local Area Agreements nationally and in London.

National Indicator	No. of LAs in England	No. of LAs in London
Domestic Violence		
32 Repeat incidents of domestic violence	79	10
34 Domestic violence - murder	0	0
26 Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence	3	0
70 Reduce emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people	5	0
Drugs		
40 Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment	74	21
38 Drug-related (Class A) offending rate	19	4
42 Perceptions of drug use or drug dealing as a problem	5	3
115 Substance misuse by young people	34	1
Alcohol		
39 Rate of hospital admission per 100,000 for alcohol related harm	74	7
41 Perceptions of drunk or rowdy behaviour as a problem	8	4
Criminal Justice		
18 Adult re-offending rates for those under probation supervision	25	2
30 Re-offending rate of prolific and other priority offenders	85	11
Other relevant national indicators		
141 Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living	73	17

There are many other National Indicators within the list of 198 set by central government that have links to domestic violence and/or substance misuse. See IDeA's 'LAA Tracker' to find out which indicators have been chosen in your area or region.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=8399555>