

Domestic Abuse in Later Life: Barriers to Disclosure

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Overview of the Literature

- ▶ Ignoring and excluding the voices of older victims (McGarry et al, 2011);
- ▶ Experience similar rates of victimisation as younger victims (Mouton et al. 2004);
- ▶ Awareness raising for services is targeted at younger people (Beaulaurier et al, 2007);
- ▶ Existing services are not suitable for older victims (Blood 2004).

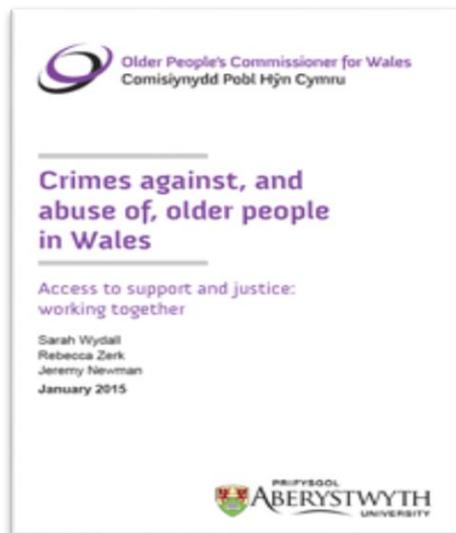
Literature Review- Barriers to Disclosure

- ▶ Feelings of helplessness and low self-esteem (Wolkenstein & Stermann, 1998)
- ▶ Fear of the potential consequences of reporting the abuse (Women's Aid, 2007)
- ▶ Age related dependency and fear of institutionalisation (Bealaurier & Taylor, 2001)
- ▶ Traditional attitudes towards marriage and gender roles (Scott et al, 2004)
- ▶ Generational factors (Zink et al, 2004, 2005)
- ▶ Perceived negative response from family

Crimes Against, and Abuse of Older People in Wales: *Perceptions of client disengagement and attrition in the referral pathway*

One of the objectives:

To explore professional agencies views and perceptions of why older victims of domestic abuse may disengage with services.



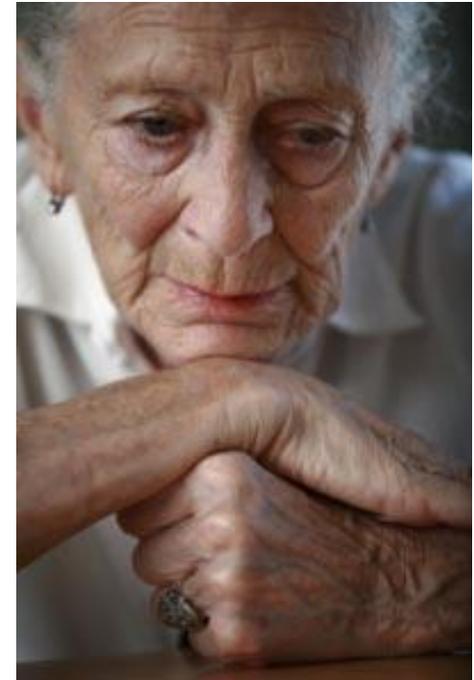
Data Collection:

31 qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with practitioners and managers from:

- ▶ 22 Local Authorities
- ▶ 4 Regional Police Services
- ▶ 2 Crown Prosecution Services

Why the victim may not disclose

- ▶ Fear of repercussion from the perpetrator;
- ▶ Fear of the negative family consequences;
- ▶ Feeling that they would rather live with the abuse than lose a family member;
- ▶ Feeling that they were somehow responsible – directly or indirectly – for the abuse;
- ▶ Age-related factors;
- ▶ Stigma attached to statutory agency involvement;
- ▶ Lack of knowledge regarding service provision.



Making Contact & Disengagement



Motivation by the victim to engage with practitioners was contingent on two factors:

1. Who made the disclosure;
 - family and friends.
2. How the recipient of this information responded to the disclosure;
 - believed, listened to & concerns taken seriously;
 - reassured they would be safe;
 - removing the threat.

Final thoughts

- ▶ Time and space for victims to explore choices
- ▶ Who would you go to if you were in this situation in your community?
- ▶ How can we break down the barriers for reporting?



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