

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**21st November 2019****REPORT OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR DERBYSHIRE****Challenge topic: Impact and prevalence of domestic abuse in rural communities****1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

This report provides a summary of:

- The findings of a rural survey conducted by the National Rural Crime Network (NRCN);
- progress made so far in terms of commissioning of DA services taking into account rurality;
- and options for future outreach and engagement including a summary of the Dragonfly project in Dorset and local options with the Farming community.

2. NATIONAL RURAL DOMESTIC ABUSE SURVEY

2.1 The survey was undertaken by a small private company called 'The Buzzz' who were contracted to do the work. The Buzzz are an independent market research company who are members of the MRS (Market Research Society) and ESOMAR. They have experience of working with victims of crime, Domestic and Sexual Abuse since 2014. A team of 3 researchers undertook this project.

2.2 The researchers found the following overarching national themes:

- Rural victims are half as likely to report their abuse to others.
- Rural victims' abuse goes on significantly longer.
- Rural victims cannot readily access support services.
- Rural victims live in a society that defacto protects the perpetrators.
- Rural victims are "isolated, unsupported and unprotected in a rural hell, which is purposefully 'normalised'."

2.3 The researchers identified the below **national** themes and recommendations. They suggest that:

- Rural life may foster a strong sense of male entitlement, which goes comparatively unchecked, alongside endemic ignorance about domestic abuse, deliberate or otherwise. It is taboo, with people deliberately turning their backs on victims, who are left physically and socially isolated, feeling deeply ashamed.
- Abuse lasts longer and is harder to escape from -there may be animals to care for, they might have skills that are difficult to employ in a new life, especially in an urban area. Services are also much harder to access and

societal structures make escape less likely resulting in rural victims being half as likely to report their abuse.

- Policing response may not be as good. There can be a lack of female officers to respond and difficulty accessing places to report.
- The more isolated someone is, the greater the risk of harm, less effective support and risk of repeat victimisation.
- It is almost impossible for a victim to seek help without it being known to others, or to call the police without further community questioning or even share their fears with others in confidence.
- Abusers deliberately 'recruit' the community to their cause, which unwittingly becomes a mechanism for controlling and isolating the victim yet further.
- Men tend to hold the positions of power in rural communities– they are usually the heads of the household e.g land owner, landlord, policeman, farmer. This patriarchal society makes women more vulnerable to coercion and control, prevented from speaking out and accessing support. Whilst there is evidence that this is changing slowly, it needs to be understood, confronted and challenged where it still exists.
- Refuges are not always the safety net they can be in urban settings, as the nature of rural domestic abuse results in victims not needing crisis support in the same way, as their abuse is longer, slower and has a less 'urgent' profile. Their needs are very different and should be distinctly understood by commissioners and others.
- Reduction in rural GP practices, limited broadband, problems with public transport all compound the ability of the abuser to keep control of victims' access to help.
- There is a fragmented landscape of service provision, which meant service providers are spending a disproportionate amount of time chasing funding, rather than supporting victims, or developing their services. In some areas, commissioners were not working effectively together, with overlapping services and inefficient use of precious resources. Demand-led services, like policing and domestic abuse support, are gearing their service towards urban areas and urban victims. There is simply less data on rural victims, resulting in less being done to address the problem effectively. The same is true for rural communities in the most general sense, with vast swathes of data and decision-making being based on an urban clientele.

2.4 The report recommends:

- Government needs to ensure rurality is specifically considered when developing policy and legislation, and that service providers and commissioners locally and nationally proactively consider the hidden demand and hidden risk before delivering a service.
- Police need to consider a more pro-active, intelligence-led approach, rather than relying on responding to reports. Importantly, much more needs to be done to ensure that police officers understand the rural context of abuse, such as the impact of physical isolation, the rural characteristics of coercive control, the potential role of the community in abuse, and the patriarchal power structure.
- Resourcing needs to reflect the hidden demand in rural communities and the nuanced needs of rural victims need to be better understood, including the gender of the response officer, training of rural officers and whether or not the officer is known to the victim and alleged perpetrator

- Support services need to improve their reach into rural areas, facilitating the exiting of abusive relationships and doing more to understand the true demand in the areas they work within. Refuges are part of the solution, but innovation is required as rural domestic abuse victims are one of the most 'hard to reach' groups in our society.
- Services and commissioners must analyse demand by postcode in future, using a common definition of rurality to develop a meaningful dataset, ensuring prevention and intervention work is also targeted at areas where there is apparently little demand – this report suggests there will be demand, just hidden.
- Those providing funding need to work together more, and to allow providers the time and space to develop their services. Commissioners should specifically consider rurality in their service specifications and hold providers to account for Recommendation 3, ensuring delivery better reflects the needs of rural victims and survivors.
- The government and local agencies such as Police and Crime Commissioners, criminal justice partners and Local Authorities must ensure their policies and services are 'rural proofed', no longer based solely on demand, but on need. This requires a deliberate strategy to ensure research, data and analysis is not skewed towards urban demands and is fully inclusive of rural communities.
- The study reveals a traditional society where women (and it is mostly women) are subjugated, abused and controlled, not just by an individual abuser, but defacto, by very the communities in which they live, too often left unsupported and unprotected. This is not at all unique to rural areas, but it is very significant, and change is slow.

3.0 DERBYSHIRE FINDINGS

3.1 The survey findings were based on a very small number of respondents from Derbyshire , in total 35 for the whole, so caution must be taken in relation to the findings, although general themes may be considered.

- Derbyshire was one of only two areas using ONS postcode classifications to define rurality. This has resulted in their focus on rurality to be reflective of the most isolated rural areas.
- Derbyshire are also commended for using data analysis to inform commissioning strategy – in collaboration with the council therefore we have a platform to continue to use performance data to support the commissioning of future victim services.
- In Derbyshire, the importance of localised service provision was underlined throughout.
- Derbyshire is the only area sampled other than Lincolnshire who uses the ONS defined categorisation of rural and urban areas. It is recommended that postcode analysis to use in the planning and commissioning strategy to ensure a more equal distribution of resources between urban and rural areas.
- Specific initiatives need to be targeted at rural areas to compensate for the under-reporting and as the implications of this study start to show themselves within the terms of contracted services.

- From a referral perspective, the role of GP's is underlined in the picture for Derbyshire and could play a more prominent role in terms of outreach.
- In Derbyshire, it appears that the small numbers of rural victims responding to the survey could all access support services within 30 minutes which may support the current distribution of smaller localised partners.
- In Derbyshire, there were few (4 in total) responses from victims aged over 55. However, the national findings suggest this may be an overlooked group across the UK.
- In Derbyshire the researchers found concerns around fragmentation of service.
- The policing response for Derbyshire shows a mixed picture. However, the sample size was small with the result that 3 in 5 victims responding to the survey had contacted the police from urban areas compared to just 2 in 5 for rural areas and the more remote rural areas the numbers contacting the police dropped again. This reflects a national picture.
- Interviews with victims in Derbyshire referenced a common factor of a dominant male in the relationship more than any broader societal influence.
- In Derbyshire, the researchers found a significant fear amongst victims that calling the police would lead to an almost automatic involvement of Social Services.
- While present in both rural and urban Derbyshire, the overriding sense from our interviews with rural victims was the feeling of embarrassment/shame they felt by admitting to the small world they lived in that they were a victim.
- Appropriate locations need to be found for people to attend courses such as Freedom programme due to the reliance on failing rural transport

3.2 The researchers recommended the following for Derbyshire:

- Obtain a more comprehensive data set amongst victims of Domestic Abuse in Derbyshire
- Conduct a reassessment of current strategic commissioning for the rural areas
- Improve current service provision – distributed too thinly, under resourced and under duress
- assess the police service's ability to respond and the level of training and gender balance of officers needed to attend to Domestic Abuse incidents

4.0 OPCC RESPONSE

- 4.1 The sample size of the NRCN survey means we must treat the survey with caution (only 35 people responded). We may need to do further testing of the findings to understand if these are really playing out in the communities of Derbyshire as we cannot be assured of the statistical validity.

4.2 The current commissioning strategy for all victim services is founded on an open and transparent procurement process based on service specifications written according to need and following extensive review. Procurement of medium risk Domestic Abuse services in the County between the OPCC and local authority has been consolidated under a single consortia provision covering the geographical requirements of the county. The high risk service in the City and County is contracted to one single provided and an aligned specification. Both specifications account for rural outreach, accommodation and access for people from rural communities. There is also a county-wide advice/helpline to increase access. Bespoke cases studies were used during the tendering process to elicit responses to provide assurance around effective engagement and targeted interventions for rural victims.

4.3 Work is developing with Rural Action Derbyshire who have strong and trusted links with the rural and farming communities across Derbyshire. Discussions are taking place to scope some key activities to further inform and enhance our understanding of Domestic Abuse and design services appropriate to the rural context. This may include some of the following:

- Developing networks with women in farming around the county and holding informal focus groups.
- Undertaking surveys at farming and social events with women in particular around the issue to gain a better understanding of the issues.
- Developing funding bids in partnership.
- Developing training products to roll out awareness raising training next year to groups such as young farmers, women's groups such as WI and Mothers Union, and men's groups where they exist
- Further developing rural Digital Hubs and champions to be able to provide access to advice and a safe place where people can access information and services.
- Identifying positive male role models in rural communities who can have these conversations, such as male chaplains and farmer volunteers.

4.4 We will work with the Force to explore together how rural communities are effectively policed including the PPU and the vulnerability teams. It is not clear if the issues about visibility and response times relating to DA are truly reflective.

4.5 We have commenced a scoping exercise on a volunteer outreach programme modelled on a service provided in Dorset called Dragonfly. The Dragonfly Project started in 2016 in Dorset to identify victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) who are isolated within their own communities. This was based on a recognition that some people are not able to access services, or are not even aware that these services exist. The following describes the service offer which is essentially about communities supporting communities. It has resulted in both an increase in rural referrals and elderly referrals to the commissioned services. They:

- Train Champions living and working in communities so they are able to receive and respond to disclosures of DVA

- Work together to end misplaced stigma to enable people in our communities to access support and help for themselves if they are experiencing DVA
- Empowering communities to support and help those who are being affected by DVA
- Educating communities to work together to raise awareness of DVA
- Make support easily accessible in isolated areas
- Increase early identification and intervention to prevent any long term adverse effects of DVA
- Offer ongoing links for all Champions to a specialist DVA Worker

Contact details in the event of enquiries	Name: Dawn Robinson External telephone number: 0300 122 6004 Email address: pccoffice@derbyshire.pnn.police.uk
--	---

