

# Domestic Abuse in Later Life: Barriers to Disclosure

REBECCA ZERK (NEE BOALER)

PROJECT RESEARCHER

ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY



@rebeccazerk  
@choiceolderppl  
#choiceop



# 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).

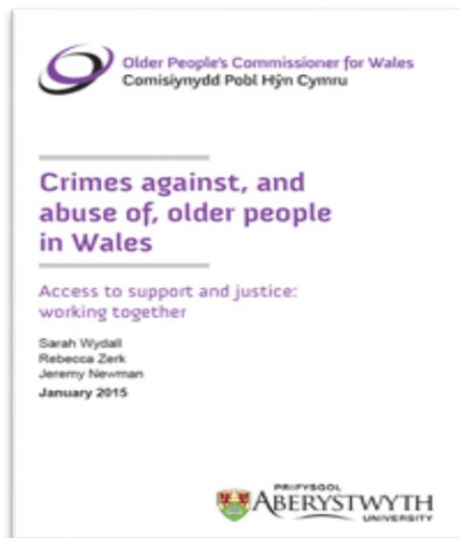
# Literature Review- Barriers to Disclosure

- ▶ 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.



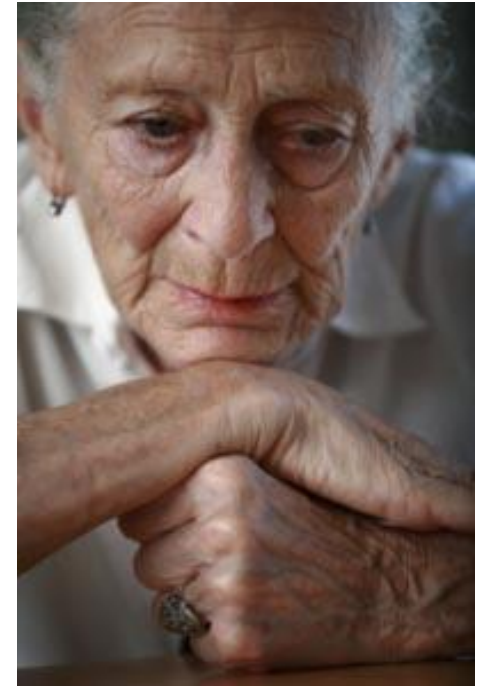
## Data Collection:

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

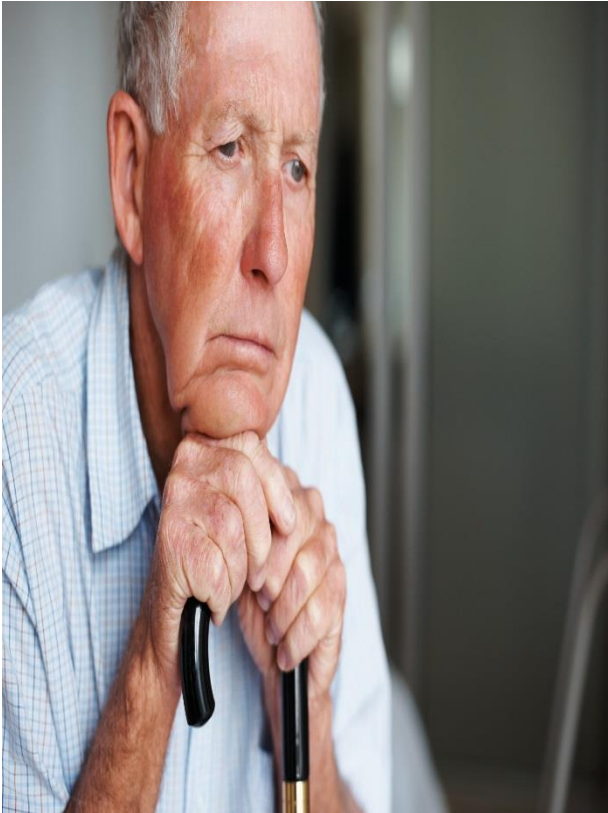
- ▶ 22 Local Authorities
- ▶ 4 Regional Police Services
- ▶ 2 Crown Prosecution Services

# 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?



# References

- ▶ Beaulaurier, R., Seff, L., Newman, F., Dunlop, B. (2007) External barriers to help seeking for older women who experience intimate partner violence, *Journal of Family Violence*, 22 (8), 747-755.
- ▶ Beaulaurier, R.L., Taylor, S.H. (2001). Dispelling fears about aging with a disability: Lessons from the disability rights community. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 35(2).
- ▶ Blood, I. (2004) *Older women and domestic violence*, London: Help the aged.
- ▶ Brandl, B., Hebert, M., Rozwadowski, J., Spangler, D. (2003) Feeling safe, feeling strong: Support groups for older abused women. *Violence Against Women*, 9, 1490-1503.
- ▶ Brandl, B. (2003) *Where were you 30 years ago? Where are you today?* Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WWCADV).
- ▶ Clarke, A., Wydall, S (2013) 'Making Safe' A Coordinated Community Response to Empowering Victims and Tackling Perpetrators of Domestic Violence' *Social Policy and Society* volume 12, 3, pp. 393-406.





# References

- ▶ Fugate, M., Landis, L., Riordan, K., et al. (2005). Barriers to domestic violence help seeking. *Violence Against Women*, 11(3), 290-310.
- ▶ Greenan, L. (2004) *Violence against women a literature review commissioned by the national group to address violence against women*. Safer Scotland: Scotland.
- ▶ McGarry, J., Simpson, C., Hinchliff-Smith, K. (2011). The impact of domestic abuse for older women: a review of the literature, *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 19(1), 3-14.
- ▶ Mouton, C.P. et al. (2004) "Prevalence and three year incidence of abuse among post-menopausal women" *American Journal of Public Health*, 94 (4), 605-12.
- ▶ O'Keefe, M., Hills, A., Doyle, M., McCreadie, C., Scholes, S., Constantine, R., et al. (2007). Prevalence survey report, UK study of abuse and neglect of older people. London: Comic Relief/Department of Health.

# References

- ▶ Scott, M., McKie, L., Morton, S., Seddon, W., Wosoff, F. (2004) *Older women and domestic violence in Scotland: '... and for 39 years I got on with it.'* Produced for Health in Scotland by the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (Edinburgh: Health Scotland).
- ▶ Wolkenstein, B., Sterman, L. (1998) Unmet needs of older women in a clinic population: the discovery of possible long-term sequelae of domestic violence professional psychology, *Research and Practice*, 29 (4), 341-348.
- ▶ Womens Aid (2007) *Older women and domestic violence: An overview of the literature.*
- ▶ Wong, S., Jonge, A.D., Wester, F., Mol, S.S.L., Romkens, R.R., Lagro-Janssen, T. (2006) Discussing partner abuse: Does doctor's gender really matter? *Family Practice*, 23(5), 578-586.

# References

- ▶ Zink, T., Jacobson, C., Regan, S., Pabst, s. (2004) Hidden victims: the health care needs and experiences of older women in abusive relationships. *Journal of Women's Health*, 13(8), 898-908.
- ▶ Zink, T., Jacobson, C., Regan, S., Pabst, s. (2005) The prevalence and incidence of intimate partner violence in older women in primary care practices. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 20, 884-888.