

Inspirational Women

Audrey
Jones



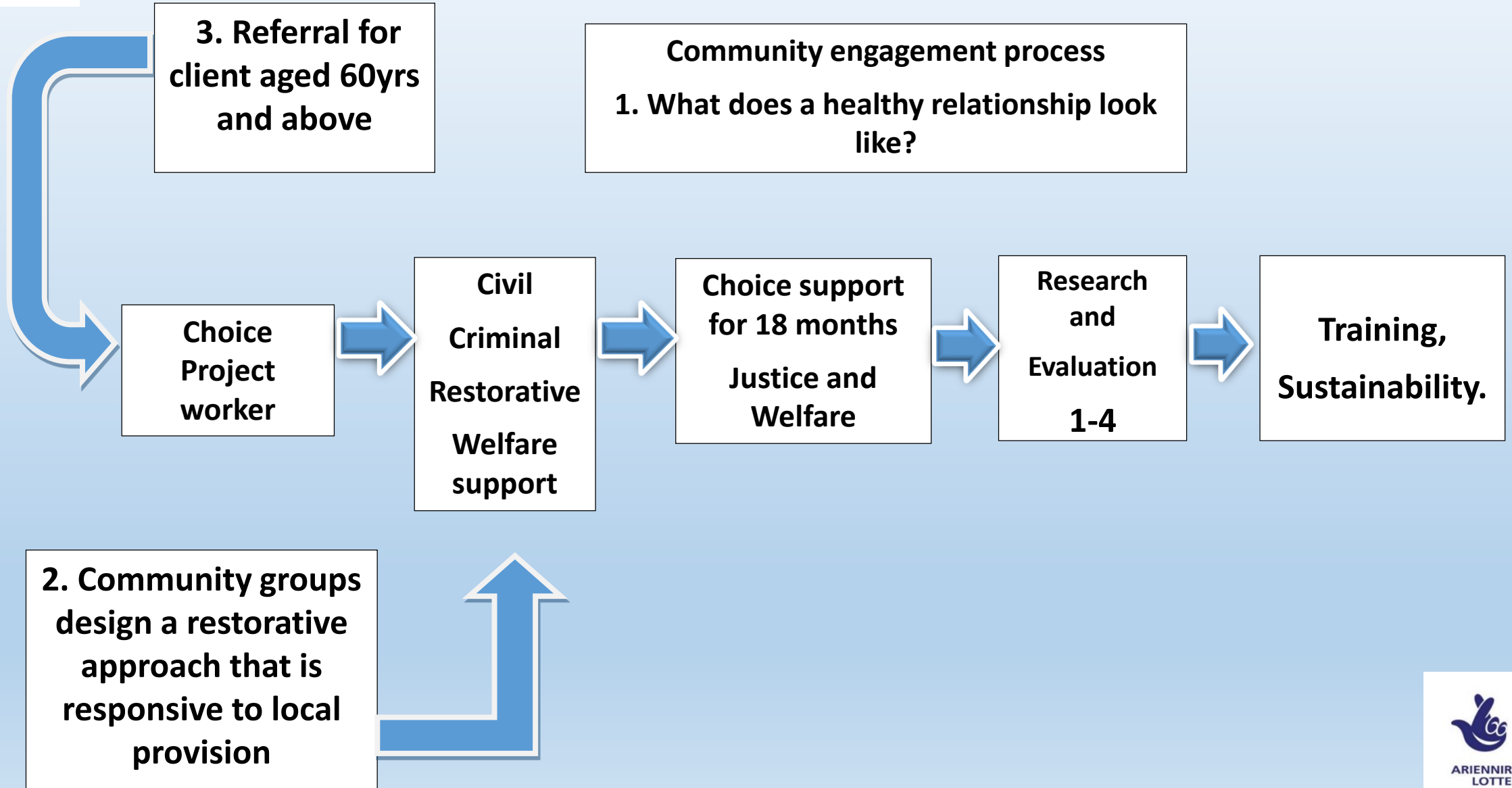
Undertaking transformative research with victim-survivors of elder abuse

A story of feminist praxis in Wales The Dewis/Choice Project

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What is the Choice Project?



Research Objectives – promoting inclusion and increasing our understanding

- To provide an insight into what influences decision-making in relation to justice provision given the victim-survivor's specific circumstances.
- To use participatory action research to work with both professionals and the public to design a new approach to justice based on restorative principles.

Why use the term 'Elder Abuse'?

- A broad term encompassing a wide range of harms experienced by people aged 60 years and over –predominantly women
- Elder abuse* which focusses on domestic abuse and unintentional abuse by family members in domestic settings
- As a political device to highlight the under-development of policy and practice aimed at supporting older victims

Elder Abuse is....

‘a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person’, World Health Organisation (2002a).

Or :

‘a violation of an individual’s civil or human rights by any other person or persons’, (National Assembly for Wales, 2000: 14).

Older People do not like the term ‘abuse’ they prefer the term ‘mistreatment’ (Smyth, 2011)

However older people do want age to be recognised as a barrier rather than an enabler when disclosing mistreatment by family members to services

Elder Abuse – a problematic term?

Definitional constraints influence resources

Age is a potential barrier when help-seeking

Are older women invisible, hidden, and subsumed under other definitions?

Domestic Abuse

any incident or **pattern of incidents** of controlling, **coercive, threatening behaviour**, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or **family members** regardless of gender or sexuality

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

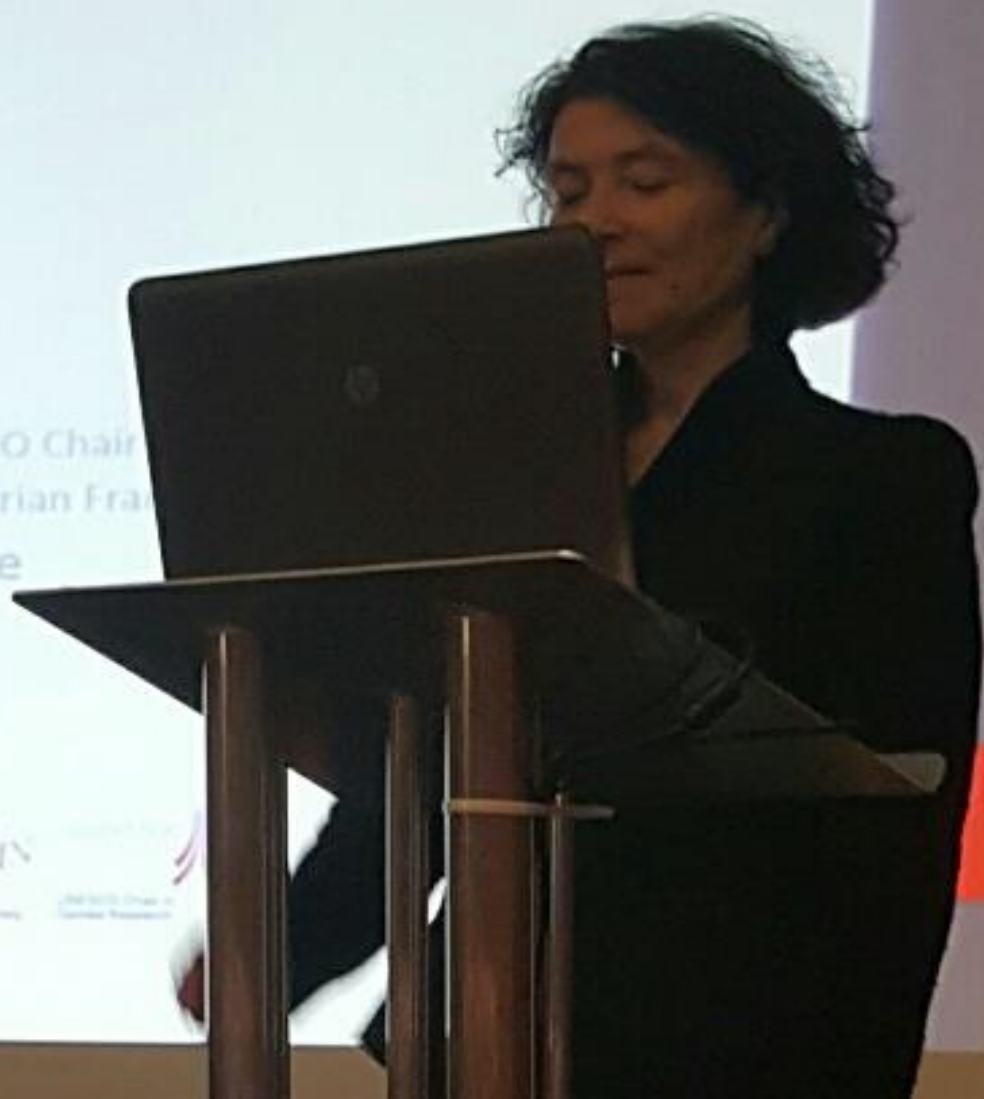


Is violent crime increasing?

Sylvia Walby OBE

Distinguished Professor of Sociology and UNESCO Chair
Research team: Sylvia Walby, Jude Towers and Brian Frazer
Violence and Society UNESCO Centre
Lancaster University

Lancaster University 



Why are the number of incidences of violent crime increasing?

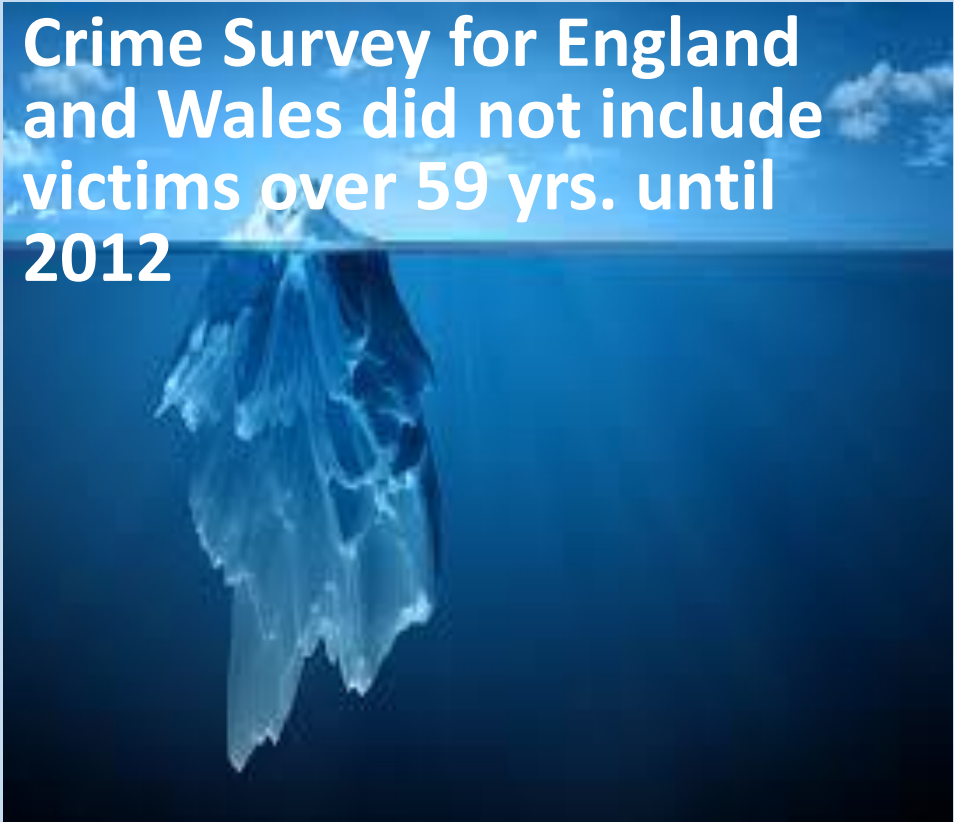
Prof. Walby points out that violent crime increased from 2009 in line with the economic crisis. It is important to note that the frequency of crimes against the victim increases, not the number of victims.

'There is a need to mainstream repeat victimisation which involves family members and acquaintances where the crime is gendered and women are predominantly the victims'

Prof Sylvia Walby

Eve Saville Lecture April 2016

Older victims being listened to.....?

An image of an iceberg floating in the ocean. The small tip of the iceberg is visible above the water surface, while the much larger, jagged mass of the iceberg is submerged below the surface. This visual metaphor represents the text's point that the visible part of the crime survey data (the tip) is much smaller than the actual number of older victims (the submerged part).

Crime Survey for England and Wales did not include victims over 59 yrs. until 2012

So what do we know ?

1/3 million older people (O'Keefe *et al.*, 2007)

Access to Justice (Clarke *et al.*; 2012; Wydall & Zerk 2015)

In *two-thirds* of all relevant cases in the sample, there was ***no evidence*** in the case records that criminal or civil justice options had been discussed with victims

So what do victims of elder abuse want from justice when experiencing harm by a family member?

- Most domestic abuse victims do not want to criminalise a family member
- But they do want consequences for those that harm them and they want the harm and abuse to stop
- More choice...





Restorative approaches – an other option?

McCold and Wachtel (2002:113) define restorative justice as

‘a process where those primarily affected by an incident of wrong-doing come together to share their feelings, describe how they were affected and develop a plan to repair the harm done or prevent re-occurrence.’

According to Walgrave (2011:96) this process ‘is primarily orientated towards repairing the individual, relational and social harm caused by the offence.’

Victim-centred Justice?



Restorative principles:

- **Restoration**
- **Voluntarism**
- **Neutrality**
- **Safety**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Accessibility**

Learning and adapting along the research process

Pennell and Burford's 2002 safety conferencing

- Grassroots feminist service
- Emphasis on children's safety
- Post sentence
- Family model - not polarising parties

How we learn



Feminist Praxis – Participatory Action Research

Davies et al 2009 - Highlighted the lack of service user involvement in research:

‘practitioners and researchers in adult protection need to find ways to improve access to research with service users and to minimise the concerns of wary gatekeepers that can inhibit research that promotes the voice of vulnerable adults.’

Professionals and Public volunteers



A process prioritising informed choices which is responsive to the local community

The Ethos of the Research Process

Community

Voice

Integration

Power and Dignity



Any questions?

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