“WHAT SUPPORT?”

Hammersmith & Fulham Council
Community Police Committee
Domestic Violence Project

An Exploratory Study of Council Policy and practice, and Local support Services in the area of Domestic Violence within Hammersmith & Fulham

Final Report March 1989

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RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The questionnaires which have been used in the research study have been deposited at the Hammersmith & Fulham Council Community & Police Unit and are available for perusal by interested individuals. Their copyright remains with the researchers, whose permission must be sought before they may be used by other researchers.
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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Following the introduction of the Metropolitan Police new force order in June 1987, Hammersmith and Fulham Council Community Police Committee and its support Unit (CCPU) began discussing responses to, and services for, those experiencing domestic violence in the borough. As part of this prioritisation, the Polytechnic of North London was commissioned to carry out an eight month study of the services available to women who have or are experiencing domestic violence in the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and for this purpose a researcher was hired on 23 May 1988 to work on a full time basis with two Consultants from the Child Abuse Studies Unit and the Community. Research Advisory Centre at PNL.

The research design for this study has been conceptualised as an action-research project, whereby the research team can feed back information to agencies throughout the research process, make recommendations for their policy changes and contribute towards creating a closer liaison between them.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

(i) To discover current policy and practice of agencies dealing with the issue of domestic violence both in the statutory and voluntary sector – including their service provision, recognition perceptions, skills, referral practices and training needs.

(ii) To chart the inter-relationships between these statutory and voluntary agencies.

(iii) To investigate the help seeking strategies of women who are experiencing/have experienced domestic violence.

(iv) To make recommendations for improved service delivery in the future.

The Study Design

The study was conducted in three stages, the first of which was detailed in the interim report of September 1988 and which is incorporated in this final report:

Stage 1

coor-dinate information on current policy and practice in the Local Authority Housing Department, co-ordinate information on current policy and practice in the Borough's voluntary sector, investigate the gaps in service delivery, identify help seeking strategies of women who have or are experiencing domestic violence.
Stage 2

co-ordinate information on current policy and practice in the Local Authority Social Services Department, co-ordinate information on police responses to domestic violence, investigate local courts and solicitors responses, assess the level and content of current training initiatives in the Borough, further explore issues revealed by women who have experienced domestic violence.

Stage 3

Analysis of data and recommendations.

Methodology

A multi-methodological approach has been adopted for this project in order to address the complexity of issues surrounding domestic violence and to chart the inter-relationships between the statutory and voluntary sectors. The study is limited to the investigation of women's experiences of domestic violence, although the 'screening' interview did produce some information on violence to girls/young women in families.

Our brief called for an equal opportunities approach to the research methodology and every effort has been made to ensure that our samples of women, agencies and individuals in statutory departments are representative. We have, therefore, been committed at all stages of the research design to focus on the specific experiences of Black and ethnic minority women, women with disabilities, older women and lesbians, as set out in the research brief.

The following research methods have been used to gain information from council departments, women, voluntary organisations, the police, the courts, solicitors and local refuges:

(i) Desk Research - analysis of existing reports and literature.

(ii) Questionnaire Surveys - a 'screening' of women in the borough to ascertain where those who have experienced domestic violence seek help from and what their assessment is of the help they have received.

- of community organisations in the borough to ascertain their level of support to women experiencing domestic violence, their policies and practices and their needs.

- of local solicitors to ascertain their level of support for, and policies and practices in relation to women experiencing domestic violence.
of local training departments in the Council, Health Authority, voluntary sector and police to assess both the level and content of current training.

- of the local law courts to ascertain numbers of applications made for injunctions, types of orders granted, numbers of prosecutions and outcome of cases.

(iii) Interviews

- in-depth interviews with members of the Housing and Social Services Departments to ascertain the implementation of policy, practice guidelines and attitudes to domestic violence.

- of members of the voluntary sector to further investigate issues revealed by their questionnaires.

- in-depth interviews with women completing screening questionnaires.

- in-depth interviews with women and workers in local refuges.

- in-depth interviews with the police to ascertain changes in policy and practice since the implementation of the new force order.

(iv) Monitoring instruments - were designed for use by the Housing Department.

The Final Report

Recommendations for changes in policy and practice in order to improve service delivery for women experiencing domestic violence in the borough of Hammersmith are presented at the beginning of this report, in accordance with the request of Hammersmith & Fulham CCPU. These are preceded by a brief outline of the nature of domestic violence. Obviously a number of these recommendations overlap but readers are advised to refer to the relevant recommendations as they read each section of the report.

The first section of this report deals with the issue of domestic violence as experienced by women in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. This includes: (i) the numbers and demographic details of women completing the screening questionnaire; (ii) the prevalence of domestic violence in the borough; (iii) where they sought help from; (iv) what kinds of support they received; (v) what types of support are needed; and (vi) analysis of interviews with workers and residents in the two local refuges.
The second section deals with the statutory sector's provision of support for women in the Borough, whilst the third section deals with the support provided by the voluntary sector. The fourth section of the report concerns the nature of legal and law enforcement responses for women and the fifth section discusses some of the interconnections between these agencies.
Families are represented in society as places of safety and sources of support; in the case of some women and children this is indeed true. For instance, the family can have particular significance for Black adults and children who find there a respite from the racism which they confront in the public sphere. It can also provide a protective environment for lesbian households who face heterosexism and families may be the only place where an adult or child with disabilities feels at ease and is able to control both their interactions with others and their environment. However, families/households are at the same time a major site of oppression for women and children. It is, after all, the home which is the most likely place for a woman or child to be physically and/or sexually assaulted. Therefore, to the extent that violence and abuse exist as part of the fabric of social interaction within the family, it cannot be viewed as an exclusively positive site.

The term 'domestic violence' was first used in the mid 1970's to refer to abuse and violence women experienced from live-in male partners. Whilst the terms 'wife/woman battering' and 'wife abuse', which make the gender specific direction of the violence clear, have also been used they exclude non-married partners and/or imply an exclusive focus on physical assaults. Whilst we recognise that the abuse of adult women by male partners is certainly not the only form of violence experienced in households, we would argue for 'domestic violence' to be retained to keep in focus a particular form of male to female violence.

These issues about 'naming' and language are not abstract arguments: how we define things determines what we look for, what we find, and how we arrive at explanations for our findings. We argue for this clarity in use of concepts for one major reason: it is only by exploring in depth the specific power relations involved in assaults, and how far they reflect structural inequalities within the wider society that we can arrive at appropriate theory and practice. In the case of domestic violence this requires focusing on the gender role and status of men and women in society, while in the case of child abuse we have to also examine social relationships between adults and children. Each form of violence occurring in households needs to be related to broader issues of structured social inequality. Collapsing all forms of violence that occur in households into the term 'domestic violence' (as in the recent report by Ealing Domestic Violence Working Party) is likely to result in confusion rather than clarity about both theory and practice. It is also our view that by examining each form of 'family violence' separately we are able to give due attention to the ways in which additional forms of oppression may affect the experiences of groups of women/children/adolescents.

Since our brief was 'domestic violence' we have focused our research on the abuse which adult women experience from male partners.
Whilst there have been no systematic incidence studies of domestic violence in the UK, we do have some indications of its prevalence.

- The Select Committee on Violence in Marriage in its 1975 report estimated that just under 1% of married women experienced violence from partners.

- The Dobashes' in their Scottish study found that violence to female partners was the second most common forms of assault reported to the police, comprising 25% of recorded assaults.

- Data on divorce shows that 90% of women's divorce petitions using cruelty as grounds contain evidence of violence (see Atkins and Hoggatt, 1984).

- In 1983 there were 11,300 applications in England and Wales for injunctions made under the Domestic Violence Acts (see Atkins and Hoggatt, 1984).

Whilst these figures suggest that domestic violence is frequent, they rely on reported cases, or cases where women take legal action. A series of self-report studies in the US, using a variety of methodologies, have revealed that between 10% and 50% of married/cohabiting women are abused. Studies of adolescents have challenged the notion of a 'lovers tiff' by demonstrating that the violence is directed from males to females, and that between one in four and one in two young women report experiencing some violence in a heterosexual dating relationship (see Kelly, 1988~ Chapters 3 and 4 for further details of incidence research). In Liz Kelly's study, of the sixty women interviewed only ten had never experienced violence in a heterosexual relationship.

These data suggest that violence is a routine part of many heterosexual relationships. In a proportion of these the violence will be serious, frequent and life threatening, and every week at least one woman in Britain will be killed by her violent partner (Cameron and Frazer, 1987). Furthermore, it is often only when the abuse is experienced as life threatening that women define it as violence, and begin to seek help (see Kelly 1988b).

Most research and statistics defines domestic violence narrowly, including only physical assaults, and possibly within that, marital rape. Women's experiential accounts reveal a much more complex picture which also includes threatened violence, destruction of property and a range of emotional forms of abuse. The threat of violence can have much the same impact as an actual assault, in so far as women adapt their behaviour in order to try and avoid being assaulted. It can also result in women (and children) living in fear.

Living with the threat and reality of violence has profound impacts on the lives of women and children. It is not only the physical and emotional consequences of violence which undermine women's sense of self, but also the isolation, shame and persistent criticism and humiliation that often accompanies assaults. As one of the local refuge residents put it: "mental violence can be worse than physical - there are no bruises to show, but you never forget it". Women and children's lives are also diminished by the
constant energy they have to put into coping with fear, and trying to 'manage' family relationships in order to minimise the violence. The relationships between mothers and children are frequently negatively affected by this.

Alongside the direct consequences of abuse, women also have to cope with social attitudes which blame them for the violence, and with responses from relatives, friends and social agencies which deny/minimise their experience and/or fail to offer meaningful support. Whilst the particular forms and combinations of denial, 'victim-blame' and minimising vary between cultural and class groups, they all result in women feeling uneasy or unable to speak about what is happening to them. The risks and costs of speaking out, however, are not the same for all women: migrant women may lose their 'right' to stay in Britain if they leave their husbands; women from some ethnic minority groups and lesbians (1) are far more likely to lose custody of their children if they leave a violent man; women from tight-knit and/or religious communities may have to give up contact with that community in order to escape violence (for example, travelling women); and women with disabilities may lose their 'carer' and have to leave the home that has been adapted to their needs.

The starting point in responding to women who are being/have been abused must be to recognise that whilst they have been victimised, to survive requires strength and determination and that to tell someone else demands a further level of courage. By the time a woman tells someone else she will have tried a range of strategies to stop, or at least control, the abuse. She will have had much of her self-confidence undermined, she may have been threatened with the consequences of telling someone about the violence, she may anticipate being disbelieved or blamed. If she is Black, has disabilities, or a lesbian she will also be aware of the further consequences of confiding her situation to others and may anticipate experiencing racism, ableism and heterosexism from those to whom she imparts this information. For all these and other reasons, it is never easy for women to divulge their experiences of domestic violence to anybody. Finally, it seems to us that the three 'rules' that are currently suggested to guide initial responses to children talking about

Individuals in helping agencies should:
- validate a woman's decision to tell, and acknowledge that they know it was not easy for her to do so;
- make it clear that they believe her;
- make it clear that they do not think it was her fault, and that no-one should have to live with violence.

(1) Not all lesbians are able to live openly as lesbians; many stay in marriages, often through fear of losing their children, and some of them may experience domestic violence, either as part of a long-term relationship or when they tell their husband that they now define themselves as a lesbian. Even where women keep their sexuality 'secret', changes in their self-concept and hopes for the future may be perceived as threatening by their husband and some men respond to the perceived threat with violence.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the project design has produced data from a range of sources, enabled some community outreach and networking and initiated change in some areas, eight months is too short a time for an action research methodology to fully bear fruit. The fact that change and development is most evident in the Housing Department is directly related to the fact that research took place there in the first phase of the project and some recommendations were included in the interim report. For that process to begin, have input from the research team and be tracked and monitored for other council services, as well as across the borough more generally, a longer time scale for the project would be necessary. We trust that Hammersmith and Fulham Council will give responsibility and resources to CCPC as the commissioning committee and its lead unit, to monitor the implementation of the research recommendations which follow.

The recommendations are listed under headings. Page references to supporting information in the full research report are given where appropriate.

Key to abbreviations
ALA - Association of London Authorities
B&B - Bed and Breakfast hotel
CCPC - Council, Community and Police Committee (of Hammersmith and Fulham Council)
CCPU - Council, Community and Police Unit (of Hammersmith and Fulham Council)
CDU - Community Development Unit (of Hammersmith and Fulham Council)
CRE - Commission for Racial Equality
EMD - Ethnic Minorities Department (of Hammersmith and Fulham Council)
HD - Housing Department (of Hammersmith and Fulham Council)
LAMS - London Area Mobility Scheme
SS - Social Services (of Hammersmith and Fulham Council)
WD - Women's Department (of Hammersmith and Fulham Council)

General Council Policy

1. That a working party be set up to monitor the implementation of this report within council services, and to produce a full and detailed council policy on domestic violence. This working party's brief should be specified from the outset - either on 'domestic violence' or on 'violence within households/intimate relationships'. This research report and the report from the Ealing Council Domestic Violence Working Party to be used as a framework. (Section 5)

2. CCPU to initiate an open forum on domestic violence issues, similar to that currently meeting in Tottenham. The forum would include council workers (CCPU, WD, EMD, HD, SS) and representatives from local refuges, the law centre, police, the health authority, CRE interpreting service and groups in the voluntary sector interested in developing services. The
forum should have at least two aims: to share, and then publicise, information on services in the borough and to develop links, co-ordination between, and expansion of local services. (Section 5)

3. Hammersmith and Fulham council to take an initiative to promote discussion on developing a London wide strategy on the housing needs of women escaping violence. We regard this as crucial in light of the implications of the 1988 Housing Act and the ending of LAMS in 1990. Without an innovative approach London refuges will find it increasingly difficult to rehouse women, and therefore, cease to be refuges at all. Representatives from London Women's Aid to be involved in any formal discussions. (36-8, 42)

4. Whilst we have made efforts to fulfill the equal opportunities brief given to this research project we are conscious that there are many areas which require further exploration before specific recommendations can be made. We suggest that the working party explore with voluntary agencies in the borough the possibility of small scale community research projects on the issues for older women, women with disabilities and lesbians.

5. The need for information and community based support, advice and counselling services staffed by women was the major need expressed by women in the borough. (34-5)

In the interim report we recommended that CCPU produce a multi-purpose information pack on domestic violence - to be used by workers, and made available to women. This pack was to consist of separate sheets covering: the nature of domestic violence; the impact on women and children; the law; the police; refuges; housing; immigration issues; issues for Black women; issues for elderly women; issues for women with disabilities; issues for lesbians; how to set up a support group; and listings of local resources/support. CCPU have since commissioned the researchers to produce this pack. A first draft will be available in March.

Whilst advice, support and counselling is currently being offered by some groups in the voluntary sector, provision is patchy and unco-ordinated. A major task for the forum must be to explore ways of consolidating and improving on this form of provision. Whilst the police helplines are a useful initiative, the fact that point of contact is an ansaphone, coupled with the level of distrust of the police which persists amongst women in the borough (28-9), means that this provision cannot be seen as meeting the needs women expressed. In our view three options can be explored separately or as an integrated package: enabling more voluntary groups to offer support through training, information exchange and relatively small resource inputs; integrating support work on domestic violence into the work of the proposed Sanctuary for survivors of sexual assault; an initiative linking social services, community workers and voluntary groups which aims to establish neighbourhood/community women's support groups.

6. The first priority of all workers must be to give support to women and enable those who want to escape violence. But it is clear that, with the possible exception of the police, no local services challenge abusive men. The fact that there are few consequences for abusive behaviour can only serve to reinforce men's behaviour. Whilst we would not suggest that
individual workers (especially female workers) should be required to confront abusive men, we do think that all agencies should discuss the consequences of ignoring the men. The working party should explore effective ways of excluding abusive men from households (see also Recommendation 35). Any suggested changes in practice in this regard should be discussed with the local refuges before being implemented. The forum could also discuss the possibility of educational initiatives with adolescents in schools and in youth work which focus on prevention. (34 5,37, 58-9)

Black and ethnic minority women

7. Information on domestic violence and local services to be available in all languages spoken in the borough, in written and taped form. These should not be literal translations of English versions, but should reflect cultural meanings in each community. Women interpreters and community workers from each community to be involved from the drafting stage. The leaflet produced recently by the WD to be used as the basis for developing appropriate information. (20)

8. The consolidation of a borough wide, accessible interpreting service, in addition to those provided within the council's own departments. This service should reflect the demographic make up within the borough and women interpreters should be available for each language. Where there is concern about physical or sexual violence towards a woman or a child a female interpreter should be used. Leaflets publicising the services offered should be produced. (20. 53. 61)

9. All statutory and voluntary sector workers to be made aware of Black and ethnic minority women's groups in the borough, and outside it, which will support women seeking help about domestic violence. This information to be made available to all Black and ethnic minority women approaching agencies.

10. Given the issues highlighted in the report on the problems some Asian women experience in B&B, the HD, through the ALA, to approach hotellers about making provision for their dietary needs. Once co-operation has been established Asian women should only be referred to B&B's where they can prepare their own food. (38)

11. Discussion to take place in the HD, in consultation with EMD and the WO as to whether a women only B&B for Black women should be sought.

12. The working party - see 1 above - to have as a priority, discussions as to how to support individual women workers in ethnic minority communities/groups currently working on domestic violence in isolation. Possible support to include enabling small scale research within communities and facilitating an ethnic minority sub-group of the open forum - see 2 above. (18-20)

13. Whilst travelling women are recognised as an ethnic minority by EMD, this is not reflected in policy and practice throughout the borough. All council departments to discuss the implications of the CDU Inter-Agency Group report 'Travellers Policy'. (20, 40, 50)
14. All housing allocations and transfers for Black and ethnic minority women escaping violence to be made with two further points in mind: the connection (if desired by the woman herself) with one's community and that the area not have a high incidence of racial harassment. (40, 50)

15. All training in the borough to directly address racist stereotypes and how they affect service provision.

16. EMD and the WD to explore the particular problems faced by migrant women, and within this the position of 'mail order brides' who are abused, in order to produce an information pack. Formal consultation to take place with the Asian Women's Resources Centre, which co-ordinated several recent successful campaigns against deportation of migrant women who left violent men.

17. The council to prioritise supporting the establishment of a Black women's project in the borough, similar to Southall Black Sisters, which focuses on Black and ethnic minority women's experiences of sexual violence. (20)

**Older women**

18. All council information on domestic violence to reflect the fact that women may decide to seek support, leave violent men at any age, sometimes after many years of suffering abuse. (48-9. 65-6)

19. All training in the borough to stress that older women's needs may be the same as younger women's - to escape violence. The fact that a woman has stayed with a violent man for many years should not be seen as a reason for treating her situation differently when she decides to leave. (40, 67)

20. The forum to enable a small scale community based research project on the experiences of older women in relation to domestic violence - see recommendations 2 and 4.

21. The forum to encourage discussion amongst those catering for, and working with, the elderly on the issue of domestic violence, particular attention to be paid to the needs of elderly Black and ethnic minority women. (65)

22. The existence and role of the special needs section in the HD to be publicised. (~-9)

**Women with disabilities**

23. All information produced by the council to be available on tape and in braille.

24. Interpreting services to include sign language.

25. All training to directly address the experience of disabled women, the ways workers may avoid focusing on violence in relation to women with
disabilities and the particular fears disabled women might have about talking about violence. (49)

26. The forum to encourage groups working on disability to develop advice and resources on domestic violence and to discuss a small pilot research project on the experience and needs of women with disabilities—see recommendations 2 and 4.

27. Any disabled woman who leaves a violent man to be entitled to rehousing in accommodation of a similar nature to that which she left, i.e. adapted to her needs.

28. Any disabled woman leaving a violent man to be entitled to the physical and psychological care necessary to enable her to live independently.

29. At least one refuge in the borough to be made accessible. (40)

30. HD to ensure that at least one of the women only B&B's locally are accessible.

Lesbians

31. All training should include discussion of violence to lesbians by current or ex male partners, and to include discussion of custody issues (7).

32. The forum to discuss encouraging a small scale research project, based in and conducted by a voluntary group, on the experiences of lesbians in relation to domestic violence; particular attention to be paid to Black and ethnic minority lesbians and lesbians with disabilities—see recommendations 2 and 4.

33. Any lesbian approaching the housing department as homeless due to domestic violence to be given priority in relation to women only B&B provision.

Housing

34. All recommendations made at the interim report stage still stand and are reproduced here. See pages 53-54 for recent developments.

A. Unless the Housing Department can provide evidence to support the statement that violence is being falsely alleged to circumvent current limitations on housing options, this statement should be removed from the policy document. (44)

B. The strict interpretation of the letter of the law with regard to 'actual' violence, 'within the home' and 'within a relationship' should be reassessed, and areas where officers are permitted discretion should be given clear codes of guidance. (44-5, 53)
C. Whilst acknowledging the willingness of Hammersmith and Fulham HD to accept statutory responsibility in cases of domestic violence, the automatic use of bed and breakfast for women presenting and accepted as homeless because of domestic violence should be reviewed. The option of referral to the refuge should at least be mentioned to women, as should the existence of refuges outside the borough for Asian, Black and Latin American women. This is especially important where safety is a critical issue and women feel that their partner may pursue them and/or where there are issues concerning language and culture. Furthermore, it is questionable whether bed and breakfast is a reasonable option for women fleeing in crisis. There is no support, no-one present who can talk through options, let alone women's feelings about the abuse they have been subjected to. The location of the B&B may create practical problems in relation to schools, nurseries, doctors as well as isolating women from friends and relatives. The institutions do not have safety as a major concern and given that they contain a mix of homeless people, it is entirely possible that men discharged from prison or hospitals who have perpetrated violence to women and/or children will be co-residents. Given these facts, it does not surprise us that a large proportion of women, particularly those with young children, return home when B&B is the only alternative offered to them. The fact that women return should not be read as 'evidence' that they were not really being abused, or that they do not really want to get away from the violence. It is rather a reflection of the limited options for women.

Discussing alternatives, such as extending refuge provision or negotiating for 'women only' B&B with secure premises, may be a long-term project. In the short term some form of support from EHU for women placed in B&B because of domestic violence is an urgent priority. The type and form of support offered should be explored in consultation with social services and local refuges. (37-8, 46, 53)

D. The categories used by EHU for recording homelessness statistics should be reviewed in order to ensure no overlaps in the categories themselves. A clear guide should be produced which outlines which category should be used where there are a number of possibilities. (44-5, 52)

E. A training programme for all front line workers and their line managers in the Housing Department should be implemented along with accompanying procedural guides. The main focus of the training should be enabling officers to better understand the reality of domestic violence and its impact on those who are victimised and council policy and practice. The particular experience and needs of Black and ethnic minority women, women with disabilities, older women and lesbians must be highlighted. (7, 54)

F. The department must give a clear commitment to equal opportunities in relation to service delivery. This means reviewing current practice, with particular emphasis on response to Black and ethnic minority women (including travelling women) and clear recommendations must be forthcoming about how equitable delivery of service is to be achieved. (45-7, 52, 54)

35. The basis of HD policy should be recognition that women and children escaping violence should be permanently rehoused as soon as possible, and
that the recommendations made by Women's Aid Federation, England (see appendix 1) on good practice be the basis for the policy review. Once the policy review is completed and agreed tenants should automatically receive information on their housing rights in relation to domestic violence bearing in mind the recommendations made recently by the ALA Housing Committee. (36-7, Appendix 1)

36. That a clause be inserted in tenancy agreements making domestic violence evictable behaviour. The proposals made by the Ealing Working Party on this issue to be the basis of discussion. This would remove the current confusion over the legality of the McGrady ruling. (48-9)

37. Extending 'move on' offers to both local refuges to be seen as a matter of priority, in order that they can function effectively as crisis provision. (37-9)

38. A single female officer to be responsible for all applications from local refuges. One point of contact will facilitate access and communication and will hopefully result in consistent practice. (41)

39. The possibility of offering all women from the local refuges who want them local offers to be seriously considered. It is practice in other boroughs to do this. (39-40, 44)

40. All women approaching the department about domestic violence to be given the opportunity to talk to a female officer (see ALA Housing Committee, 18.4.88).

41. The department should, as a priority, install security devises, especially peepholes and door chains for all women tenants where violence is an issue.

42. Women only B&B provision to be expanded, alongside the exploration of alternative forms of safe emergency/temporary housing for women with and without children escaping violence. (37-41)

43. A survey of local B&B proprietors to be conducted to discover whether the buildings are secure, if they are accessible, whether they take Schedule 1 offenders, what provision they make for children, and whether they will accommodate Asian women who want to prepare their own food. Regular inspection of all B&B's used by the borough to ensure that women and children are not being sent to unsanitary, unhygienic and/or cramped living conditions. Records also to be kept of any complaints about sexual and racial harassment by proprietors. (38)

44. No women and children to be housed in B&B's where there is inadequate security, where Schedule One offenders are also housed or where there have been complaints of sexual and/or racial harassment. (38)

45. Statistical monitoring to be done on all housing enquiries which relate to domestic violence. This monitoring to be both compilation of statistical data and case analysis, so that cases can be tracked through the department, both to avoid double counting and to assess the following: number of enquiries; decisions made and accompanying reasons for decisions;
length of time transfers take; length of time families spend in B&B and/or temporary accommodation. (52-4)

46. The suggestion that EHU are no longer offering the statutory 28 days accommodation for investigations to women from other areas escaping violence to be investigated. (39)

47. Changes in policy and practice following this report to be monitored within the HD and by the working party.

Social Services

48. Policy discussions to take place in the management team, which take as their starting point the recognition that social services are used widely as a referral point and that work on domestic violence for social workers should be seen in a preventative context: preventing situations developing whereby social services have to intervene in relation to statutory obligations under either child care or mental health. Persistent abuse may adversely affect women's ability to care for their children, and their own mental health. (55-7)

49. A training initiative to be developed in the department which includes the following: alternative explanations to 'cycle of abuse' theories; detailed discussion of how racist stereotypes can inform practice; ways in which needs of older women and women with disabilities are understood; use of interpreting services. This initiative to make training available throughout the department, and possibly to include workers in voluntary sector groups which work closely with social services. (58, 60, 109-10)

50. The Research and Planning section in SS should include domestic violence as a specific category in all future monitoring exercises. Intake records to include the category 'domestic violence' and duty workers to be given clear guidance about use of this category. (56)

51. Recruiting more Black and ethnic minority staff is an urgent priority. But neither the lack nor availability of Black and ethnic minority workers should prevent white workers developing anti-racist policies and practice. (61-2)

52. When talking with women who contact social services all the possible options should be given, and full and accurate information on all relevant local agencies and groups should be provided. (63-4)

53. Information and posters, especially about London Women's Aid, specialised services for Black and ethnic minority women, and the local resource lists which will be included in the fact pact, to be produced out of this project, to be displayed in reception and waiting rooms. (63)

54. Representatives from local refuges to be invited to talk to each area team about their work. (63)

55. Women's past and current experiences of sexual violence to be a central focus in mental health development work. (69-70)
56. The B&B support team to have domestic violence specified as one area of particular concern in their work. (54, 71)

Refuges

57. In the light of the failure of central government to fund refuges, the tightening of the London boroughs grant criteria and the government's proposals on board and lodging payments, the financial security of both groups is threatened. The council should commit itself to securing the future of both groups financially, should other sources of funding disappear. (41)

58. The council to cover the costs of any security updating either group feels are necessary. This to include discussions with the police on the installation of a direct alarm but ton, similar to those in use in other refuges in Britain. (41, 98)

59. Immediate discussion should take place on increasing the refuge bed spaces in the borough, possibly through the development of second stage houses, which would in turn facilitate the increased use of the present properties as crisis provision. (37-8)

Law and law enforcement

60. In the absence of publicly accessible statistics, agencies in the borough, and the population more generally, have no way of assessing the changes which the police maintain have recently taken place in their response to domestic violence. This, linked to the marked reluctance of the local police to participate in any multi-disciplinary forums, means that past practice continues to inform public perceptions of police response. We suggest that it is in the police's interest to provide and publicise statistics, as has recently been done by police in Tottenham, and for them to join the proposed open forum. (28-9. 84. 91. 98, 100)

61. We further suggest that there is a need for independent research which evaluates how far changes in Metropolitan police policy in relation to domestic violence (and rape and sexual assault) are reflected in practice. A major component of this research must be interviews with women who have reported assaults. Until some independent evaluation is conducted, suspicion will remain. CCPU to investigate possible funding sources for such research, and whether other boroughs would be interested in co-operating with this project. (89-98)

62. We recommend increased consultation with, and liaison between the police and local refuges, and that the police issue (after consultation) clear instructions to officers about referrals to the refuges. (99)

63. Since our data confirm that the gender of who women can talk to is important, more trained women police officers should be used in domestic violence cases. Their training should enable them to suggest options to women without having pre-conceived ideas and expect at ions of how women should behave. (29, 95)
64. Increased training for all officers, probationers and in-service, on the issue of domestic violence and its impact on women. The training to include outside consultants, particularly Women's Aid. (95-6)

65. Record systems should enable officers to distinguish between a violent argument and repeated abuse. Officers attending domestic violence calls should be able to find out via their radio whether the police have been called previously to a similar incident. (93-4)

56. Further investigation is required as to why so few injunction applications are made to local magistrates courts. (101)

67. CCPU, in conjunction with the Law Centre and the local refuges, to organise a discussion with local solicitors to explore both why so few offer legal aid work and the level of local dissatisfaction with work on domestic violence. (102-4, 108-9)

68. The Law Centre's open women's session to be publicised, and the issue of making the Centre accessible seen as a priority. (106-7)

Voluntary sector

69. Community groups to have access to the results of the research, in order to publicise work that is being undertaken and to highlight gaps and possible areas for development work. (77)

70. Community workers to participate in the open forum. (74-5)

71. The local authority, through the forum to facilitate networking between voluntary groups and to publicise the network locally. Resources to be made available to ensure information exchange and co-ordination of services can be achieved. (74-5, 78, 82)

72. A multi-disciplinary joint training initiative to be launched including workers from the voluntary sector. (82, 84-5)

73. Hammersmith and Fulham to investigate the possibility of funding a 24 hour crisis support service for women and children who have experience abuse or assault. This service to be integrated with the proposed Sanctuary. (34-5, 41, 84)
SECTION ONE

THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A screening questionnaire was devised in order to discover the prevalence of domestic violence in a representative sample of women in Hammersmith & Fulham. Further questions addressed where women experiencing domestic violence seek help from, what responses they receive, and what services women would like to see in the borough. At the same time a section was included for women who have not had this experience so that we could investigate the myths which exist about where women in the community think anyone experiencing domestic violence gets support. The questionnaire was completed by 281 women. The initial decision to use doctors surgeries as contact points was adapted during the project to include two women's health projects and ethnic minority women's groups. Our decision to include a contact sheet at the back of the screening was supported by the fact that over 50% of women completing the questionnaire took it away with them.

During analysis some minor problems with the questionnaire design became apparent, and we would recommend adaptations before further use. For example, following suggestions from the research steering committee we included an additional question on physical or verbal threats from a 'member of your household'. The majority of women answering 'yes' to this question were referring to an abusive partner, covered by a later question. Whilst a coding frame was used to ensure no double counting in analysing the data, these two questions need to be clearly distinguished from one another.

Despite these minor drafting issues, we feel that the screening enabled us to reach a broad cross-section of women in the borough, although disabled women and lesbians are under-represented. We did out reach work to all ethnic minority women's groups in the borough to ensure that their experiences were reflected in the research. Alison McGibbon met with eight groups during the project as well as a number of women interpreters to discuss the research, the screening and problems surrounding domestic violence more generally. Whilst every worker/group felt that domestic violence was an important issue for women in their community, and many were anxious to have an input into the project, issues emerged which prevented the use of the screening in most of the groups. Workers were concerned about participation when their work on domestic violence could not yet be openly discussed within their own project/community. Being too open at this stage might prejudice their careful step by step approach to raising the issues in their workplace, and within their community more generally. For example, one woman was very keen to share the experiences of the women she worked with, but on reflection felt she could not explicitly contribute to the research. Women who participated formally were also wary, and felt that the specific experiences of individual women and the community they worked with had to be confidential. Detailed field notes were kept on all these meetings, and in two cases workers agreed to be interviewed. We summarise here the information that emerged from these discussions.
Issues for Black and ethnic minority women

All the women we talked to said that domestic violence was an important issue for them, and that the specific needs and experiences of Black and ethnic minority women should be highlighted and taken account of in all policy making and resource decisions. Most of them also said that whilst they supported women who were experiencing violence, they had no definite sense of how common it was in their community nor of the ways in which women sought help. Resources for community based research, conducted in parallel with the support work already taking place was a priority.

Each of the workers was struggling to find a balance between their awareness of, and concern about, the specific problems faced by women in their community and the potential problems that might accompany their making this information public. If they were unsuccessful in creating the right balance they feared this would hinder the possibilities for change, jeopardise the work they were doing, and leave women further isolated, with no option but to stay in violent relationships.

Women from ethnic minorities have similar fears to white women in relation to making the violence they are experiencing public - losing their children, financial security - but they face additional consequences and losses. For some ethnic minority women, their status without a husband, is a pressing issue since leaving can result in exclusion from the community. If a migrant woman leaves within the first year of marriage she has no residence rights and faces deportation. Even if she is not deported she cannot claim benefits in the first year.

Loyalty to partners, in the face of racism, also influences women's choices:

"[Women] don't want to show white society that things are failing."

As does racism in police and other agency practice:

"[They] are very reluctant to go, only if it was a life and death situation, because of images of Black women and the expectations of Black men by the police."

For Black women who are being abused by white men, there is a strong fear that the man will be believed rather than her. One woman cited a case where this had indeed happened.

Few Black and ethnic minority women saw social services as a potential source of support, like white women they were aware of the - power social workers had over children, and had reasons to be additionally fearful of intervention. Black and ethnic minority women's experiences of the health care services were also often negative. A recent survey amongst the Bengali community revealed that there were an inadequate number of Bengali speaking doctors in the borough, which has led to "oversubscription... overwork and a subsequent deterioration of the quality of care". The study makes the point that this is decreasing Bengali women's access to health care. The report from the Chinese women's workshop on domestic violence and health also raised an important point about doctor's and interpreters:
'GPs do not have the patience to listen to interpreters and some women believed they were discriminated against for not speaking English.'

Even where women speak English, they may be discriminated against on other grounds. We were told of an incident at a local doctor's surgery, where it was announced that since three travelling women had been seen that morning, no more would be seen by the doctor that day. The worker commented:

"Imagine the anger you feel and where you take that."

There was considerable awareness of problems experienced by travelling women, two workers suggested that the high incidence of tranquilizer addiction was related to the stresses of site living. They pointed to the urgent need for health facilities being provided 'on site'.

Particular concern was expressed about interpreting, and by the interpreters we spoke to. They wanted information that was accessible and relevant to each community, not literal translations of English leaflets already in existence; concepts, descriptions and referral points should be culturally specific. For this reason, translators should be involved at the planning and drafting stages. The interpreting services in Hammersmith and Fulham were felt to be poorly co-ordinated, and under used. In a multi-lingual community a comprehensive interpreting service is essential, and needs to be combined with outreach work into ethnic minority communities. This formal structure could do much to break down the isolation that prevents many ethnic minority women speaking about the violence they are experiencing.

Women from each of the communities we talked to emphasised the importance of having a base from which to develop their work; some women's groups did have space, but other's met in rooms in community centres. There was an awareness that there were no Black women's groups in the borough focusing on the issue of violence/abuse, and there was dissatisfaction that women had to go out of the borough for specialist support and information.

"Until such time as women have a place they perceive as a legitimate and safe space in which they can talk they will not be able to speak out about violence."

Some of the women's groups felt particularly strongly that they needed a base and resources to develop their work. They felt that some ethnic minority groups in the borough were currently ignored by the council.
The screening data

A. Demographic details of the sample

Table 1.1 - Where the screenings were conducted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP surgery 1</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP surgery 2</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health project 1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health project 2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black women’s group 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black women’s group 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Age of women completing the screening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst there is an age spread in the sample, it is skewed towards younger women - women between 20 and 39 make up over 60% of the sample. This may in turn skew the prevalence figures for domestic violence, since for younger women it may not yet be part of their experience.
Cross-tabulating the data in terms of race revealed that far more Black women defined themselves as single: 53% of Black women compared to 26% of white women. The differences in relationship patterns, particularly amongst Afro-Caribbean women has been documented elsewhere (Bryan et al, 1986). There are difficulties, however, in self-report definitions of this kind, since we do not know how many women who ticked the 'single' box actually have a partner, but do not live with them.

Table 1.4 Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women with children</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women without</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high percentage of women with children under 5 (22.2%) in the sample is a product of the use of doctor's surgeries, including pre- and post-natal clinics and day time health project meetings.

Table 1.5 Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa/Caribbean</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table five summarises the data on ethnicity and nationality. 70 (25%) of the women completing the survey defined themselves as Black (2).

Table 1.6 Disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women with a disability</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women without disability</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The forms of disability recorded ranged from medically diagnosed mobility restrictions, deafness, blindness and chronic asthma through to 'social disabilities' such as depression and drug addiction. Whilst we would expect to find women with some forms of disability in a sample drawn from women attending doctors' surgeries, different sampling methods would be required in order to reach women with serious mobility restrictions.

Table 1. Sexuality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celibate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-sexual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesbians are under-represented in the sample. Interestingly, 147 more women did not answer the question on sexuality than the one which followed it on partnership status. We do not know how many of the high non-response rate are lesbians who chose not to complete this section nor how many are heterosexual women who either did not understand the term 'heterosexual' or presumed that since they were heterosexual, and therefore 'normal', they did not have to answer this question.

(2) Within the broad categories the breakdown is as follows:
Asian (total 20) - Asian British (12), Japanese (3), Chinese (1), Bangladeshi (1), Indian (1), Mixed race (1), Sri Lankan (1);
African/Carribean (total 50) - Black British (24), West Indian (18), African (7), Guyanese (1);
Other (total 28) - Yugoslavian (7), Greek Cypriot (5), Australasian (4), Polish (2), Danish (2), German (2), Dutch (2), Mixed race (1), Portuguese (1) Spanish (1), South American (1).
B. Prevalence of domestic violence

In this section we present findings on the prevalence of the threat and reality of violence from partners, and other household members. The screening for experiences of violence included both direct questions on threatened violence and a grid which listed a range of violent behaviours which women had to fill in.

We urge caution in interpreting the figures in Tables 1.8 - 1.10, they should be seen as indicative, rather than accurate prevalence figures for two main reasons: firstly, since our primary concern was abuse from adult male partners we did not focus on abuse in childhood and adolescence. The responses detailing these forms of abuse should not, therefore, be taken as 'prevalence findings'. Secondly, using a short self-report instrument with only four questions specifically asking about violence will not produce accurate prevalence findings (see Kelly, 1988a, Chapters 3 and 4). Within the responses to the questionnaire there was evidence of confusion over definitions (some women saying they had never been abused in response to the direct question, yet checking off forms of abuse they had experienced, including 'threatened to kill' in some instances, on the grid over the page), and of how hard some women found it to admit to themselves, let alone record on paper what had happened to them. In any sample of women there will be proportions who, as coping strategies, are currently not defining the abuse they are experiencing as violence or are suppressing memories of past abuse, as these remarks from the screenings illustrate:

"I've turned back to change my answer - it's hard even to admit it to myself." (frequent forced sex)

"I'm sorry but it's too painful and difficult to explain. I can't even think about it..

"I don't get beat up every day."

We do not know how many of the 60 women who chose not to complete the grid did so because they found it too painful. Our findings, therefore, should be seen as under-estimates of actual prevalence rates. This should be borne in mind when looking at the tables which follow. It should also be borne in mind that the percentages in each table, unless otherwise stated, are the percentages of the whole sample. If we had worked out percentages based on the number of women responding to each question (i.e. excluding non-responses) the figures would be higher.

Our suspicion that some women would say 'no' to a direct question, yet check off forms of behaviour they had experienced on the grid was confirmed. For example, 101 women said they had experienced physical or verbal threats from a partner in response to the direct question, for which there were only five non-responses. Over thirty more women checked off at least one form of behaviour on the grid than responded affirmatively to the direct question. This confirms our view that a major problem in prevalence research is assuming shared definitions between respondents and researchers.
Table 1.8 Experience of physical or verbal threats from a member of household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 106 women responding 'yes' to this question, the person who threatened them was: husband/co-hab (n=46, 16%); father/step-father (N=25, 9%); boyfriend (N=18, 6%); mother (N=7, 3%); brother (N=4, 1%). The other categories cited only once or twice were lodger/family friend; daughter; son and mother's boyfriend.

Table 1.9 Experience of physical or verbal threats from a partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the vast majority of abuse here was from a male partner, several women chose to record abuse from other men, for example:

"When I was at college I suffered repeated threats and abuse from a co-tenants boyfriend - I think this is not unusual."

We have produced a composite figure from these two tables of women who experienced physical or verbal threats from either a household member or a male partner: 133 women ie ~25% of the total sample. Even though the totals in Tables 8 and 9 of women who did experience some form of abuse are 106 and 101 respectively, these figures do not always refer to the same incidents.

Because we had asked the age at which abuse began we were able to distinguish between abuse in childhood/adolescence and abuse in adulthood. Twenty-four women (9%) had experienced abuse only as a child. 88 (31%) only as an adult from a male partner and 21 (<7.5~) had experienced both forms of abuse. A total of 109 women (<39~) had experienced verbal or physical threats from a male partner, and for 75 of them (<27~ of the total sample)
this was a repeated experience. Just under half the first incidents occurred within the first year of the partnership, although for four women violence did not occur until after 10 years of marriage.

Table 1. 10 Frequency of forms of abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non</th>
<th>At least</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>% Response</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeatedly criticised</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened with violence</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punched/shoved</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaten up</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced to have sex</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened to kill</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened with a weapon</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked with a weapon</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals have not been calculated for this table, as it was a multi-response grid, totals of 281 and 100% can be reached by counting across each line.

We have ordered the table in terms of the most common forms of experience at the top and the least at the bottom. This table clearly illustrates what 1.1% Kelly has called the "continuum of violence" - that the threat of violence is the most common form of abuse experienced by women and that physical assault is more common than I life threatening' assault involving weapons.

On the grid women were asked to tick off whether they had experienced these forms of violence once, several times or frequently, in each case several times was higher than either once or frequently. Thirty percent of the women had experienced a physical assault at least once, and 23% on more than one occasion. A number of our small sample had experienced serious assaults frequently: 14 women had been beaten up frequently, 10 frequently forced to have sex, 7 frequently threatened with death and 6 frequently attacked with weapons. Whilst not a large number within what we feel is a representative sample this finding suggests that at least 2-5% of women frequently experience serious assault from a male partner and that at least 10-18% of women experience serious assaults from male partners at least once. We use serious here in two ways, firstly that the assaults would be criminal offences if reported, and secondly they are likely to result in physical injury ranging from bruising through wounds to death.

We do not intend to imply that the other forms of abuse are either not, or less, 'serious'. Quotes from women in the refuges (in the next section) illustrate how emotional abuse (of which repeated criticism is one form) can have an enormous impact on women. What we are emphasising is the extent of explicitly life threatening violence in women's intimate relationships with men.

Whilst these data give an indication of the form and frequency of violence experienced by women in the borough from male partners, we also want to
note that for each individual woman her experience was a combination of the forms we listed. Furthermore, face to face interviews would undoubtedly have revealed further forms of abuse women had experienced which were not included on the grid.

We would urge those who come into contact with women who are currently being abused to reflect on the levels of explicitly life threatening violence recorded here. Many women minimize the violence they are experiencing, and do not tell others the full extent of it, the variety of forms it takes and how terrified they often are:

"I did talk about it, but never in detail. You don't really want people to know all that - and you don't really want to look at it that closely anyway."

Previous research has suggested that it is the point at which women decide their lives are threatened and/or the man is also assaulting the children that they seek help (Binney et al, 1981; Homer et al, 1984).

C. Help-seeking

We asked women who had experienced domestic violence if they had told anyone when the abuse first began. Just under 60% said they did not tell anyone. What this also reveals is that, contrary to popular mythology, just over 40% of women did tell someone when the violence first started. For most of these women it took a much longer time for them to find the support they needed. This confirms our view that it is the combination of women being able to tell someone and the response that they get from that person which determines whether women feel able to challenge and/or escape violence. Only a third of the women who did not tell anyone, talked to someone as the violence continued. This leaves an alarming figure of 43 women who told no-one about the violence they were experiencing. A small proportion of this figure constituted women who resolved the situation for themselves, by leaving the relationship quickly. The majority, however, are women who coped/are coping with violence without support; several of this group explicitly thanked the researchers for the contact sheets:

"At least now I know there is somewhere to go."

This single finding points to the necessity of making information available and accessible to women. Women gave a number of reasons for not telling anyone either when the abuse began, or as it continued, as the following quotes illustrate: "I was too frightened"; "I didn't know who to tell"; "at the time I was unable to convey the incidents or my feelings to anyone"; "confusion, confidence undermined, such that you blame yourself"; "I was made to feel guilty and responsible"; "I didn't think it was that serious". Moreover, even when women did decide to tell someone, the response they encountered could immediately shift them back into feeling they had to cope alone: "No-one believed me when I told". Some women gave more detailed answers to this question which illustrated the ways in which each woman's particular circumstances and the anticipated and actual responses of others, play a part in whether and when women choose to tell someone.
"The violence became public so I didn't need to say a lot. I'm not sure why I didn't say, but I was a police officer at the time and I felt I should be able to deal with it alone."

"People just don't want to know violence exists… people are not that sympathetic (except good close friends) and I feel there is something shameful about me not him."

The most common reasons given for not talking to anyone were (in order of frequency mentioned): fear; no-one to tell/people are not interested/would not be believed; shame; did not want to involve others. As mentioned previously, seven women resolved the issue themselves and three women said the violence was 'not serious enough' to involve others.

Of the women who had experienced violence from a partner, 53 had left at some point. Where they went to, and how long they stayed away varied greatly, the most common escape routes being to friends (28) and relatives (25). Some women did not 'go' anywhere, their only concern being to avoid the assault:

"I just walked the streets."

"I'd go to the seaside."

The number of times some women had left (ten had left three or more times; three had left five or more times) pointed to their desire to live free from abuse and violence, but suggests that they were unable to find a viable way of achieving this.

Of the women who had never left, the main barrier was knowing that there was somewhere to go: "I had nowhere to go to". As later sections show many women do not want to tell family friends, or are concerned about putting their safety at risk. Where this is the case women's options for escaping violence, albeit temporarily, are severely reduced. For women with disabilities, women who cannot speak English and women who have few, if any, social contacts outside the household, the possibilities of leaving in a crisis are even more limited. Often when women run out of the house to avoid an assault they cannot take their children with them, this is a major reason why they return fairly soon after they have left.

We were concerned not only to discover which agencies women had approached and what their responses had been, but which individuals and agencies women would never consider approaching and why. The three major groups or institutions to emerge that a considerable number of women said they would not approach were: the police; family and friends and social services.

Whilst there were some differences here between women who had and women who had not experienced abuse, for both groups the agency most women said they would never approach was the police - 51%, 18% of the whole sample. Since this question was only answered by 150 women the percentage of women answering the question who cited the police was 38%. Not surprisingly more Black women said they would not approach the police than white women although the difference was not statistically significant. The quotes below illustrate the feelings of some women about the police:
"[I wouldn't approach] any agency likely to disbelieve, say it's partly my fault - I would not approach the police under any circumstances." (na) (3)

"[I wouldn't approach] the police, as I found them treating me in a very degrading way, as well as male doctors and counsellors. It was put to me very clearly that I should get myself out of the situation."

(for more comments from the screening on the police see Section Four. )

The belief that the police would not intervene was extremely common amongst this sample of women, borne out for a considerable number of them by their own experience. In almost 300 questionnaires only two women made comments about active responses by the police; one woman was happy with the response, the other felt that the hand-cuffing, arrest and binding over was "heavy-handed".

Whilst family and friends, particularly female friends, were a source of support for many women, a considerable number of others (44 - 18% of the whole sample, 297. of those responding to this quest ion) said they had not/would never seek support from people they were close to. The following quotations illustrate some of the reasons why:

"My parents - for fear of what they would do." (na)

"Brothers or father - I think male family would react with anger and possibly violence." (na)

"I'd never approach my mother in case she said' I told you so'. "

"Very close friends, I wouldn't like to be seen as vulnerable."

"Possibly a male friend, as I tend to think some men feel abuse (verbal or physical) is most of the time deserved. "

"Friends - I would never want them to know. "

These women, and the many others who said similar things, had two main reasons for seeing these potential sources of support as problematic: firstly the shame they felt and, secondly, that the response they got might blame them and/or if it was a male friend or relative the response might be one of anger and possibly violence.

Social workers were the next most frequently cited as someone women would never approach (by 12 women). Women's primary concern was the power social workers had to take away children, but there were some references to experiences of negative interventions. Although less frequently mentioned some women said they would never approach doctors, community and religious leaders:

"a religious leader for fear of being told my duties as a woman. "

(3) All quotes are from women who had experienced violence unless the letters na (no abuse) appear in brackets at the end.
As part of the screening two long grids were developed where women with experiences of domestic violence and women without were asked to record who they had/would seek help from. In the case of women who had sought help they were also asked to record their perceptions of the response using a scale - very helpful, helpful, unhelpful, very unhelpful. The findings from these two grids are presented in Tables 1.11, 1. lla and 1.12. In Table 1. 11 we have ordered responses in terms of the sources of support women most frequently used. Table 12 repeats this ordering to enable comparisons between what women actually do, and what women think they would do. Table 1. lla reproduces the findings from table 1. 11, but reordered into sections: statutory services; voluntary agencies; informal networks and other.

Table 1. 11 Who women approached and the support they got

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Support</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>Unhelpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Friend</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Department</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male friend</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens Aid</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samaritans</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAB/Advice centre</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious representative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law centre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health visitor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling group</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other council dept</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery worker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community worker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the percentages in this table are calculated in relation to the 133 women who had experienced some form of abuse from a male partner and/or a member of their household. No totals as question required multi-entry answers.
Table 1. 11a Who women approached and the support they got - reordered in sections: statutory; voluntary sector; informal networks and other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%* Helpful</th>
<th>Unhelpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Department</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health visitor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other council dept</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery worker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community worker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voluntary sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens Aid</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samaritans</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAB/Advice centre</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law centre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal networks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female friend</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male friend</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious representative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling group</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the percentages in this table are calculated in relation to the 133 women who had experienced some form of abuse from a male partner and/or a member of their household. No totals as question required multi-entry answers

These tables reveal a number of extremely important things about women’s help-seeking.

- The number and range of contacts women make when trying to end violence. Some women checked off between 5 and 12 contacts, and the Dobashes found amongst a sample drawn from Scottish refuges that most women had made ten contacts for support before being referred to the refuge.
The importance of informal networks, especially female relatives and friends. Most women seek out other women, at least initially, as their sources of support. It is this, coupled with what women said that they wanted, which leads us to stress that the gender of workers is often of crucial importance to women when they decide they want to tell someone about the violence.

The importance of police response, since they are the most likely statutory body that women themselves contact. This is because they are a law enforcement agency and run a 24 hour service. Women use the police out of desperation in crisis.

The fact that so few women contacted the housing department or social services demonstrates both that women prefer to use non-statutory services and that they are creative in resolving their own situations and escaping violence. Women have many more ways of ending violence than many action guides suggest.

The variability in the responses women got from those they approached. Certain individuals and groups were rated helpful or very helpful by most women who approached them - female friends, sisters, other family, solicitors, fathers, Women's Aid, Samaritans, Law centres. For others 40% or more of women who had approached them rated their response as unhelpful or very unhelpful - police, housing department, social workers, religious representatives, counselling groups, other council departments, and victim support (although in this last case only one woman had approached them).

Table 1.12 - Who women without experiences of domestic violence thought they and other women would approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would tell</th>
<th>%#</th>
<th>Other women would tell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female friend</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mens Aid</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Dept</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious representative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law centre</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health visitor</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling group</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M age friend</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other council dept</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery worker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community worker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens group</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages calculated in relation to the 148 women who had not experienced abuse.

Interpreting the findings in this table are rather more problematic, since we would require more information to make sense of some of the data. For instance, for most categories there was a higher figure for what women themselves would do, than for what they felt other women would do. One could explain this in terms of feeling more certainty about one's own actions than those of others, yet for a few categories the other women figure is higher - religious representative, community worker. We suspect this reflects an awareness of differences between the woman completing the questionnaire and other women. That does not, however, help us explain the range of differences in the table between 'who I would approach' and who other women would approach'. We suspect that some of the variability reflects stereotypes about 'battered women' and the fact that one is unable to have any deep understanding of how one might feel and behave in a hypothetical situation.

Some interesting things can be drawn out of the table however:

- Whilst there is some similarity between the chronology of tables 1.11 and 1.12, there are also important variations. The most obvious being that whilst the two groups are more or less similar numerically, the numbers for women without experience of domestic violence are much higher. Clearly women think they would tell someone, but this is not always reflected in what women do in this situation.

- Again we find a marked preference for female friends, female relatives and women's groups.

- In only one column are the figures higher in Table 1.11 - for the housing department. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that women often do not anticipate what may become matters of necessity.

- The far greater proportions of women in table 1.12 saying they would approach Womens' Aid, Law Centres, Women's groups and Victim Support may reflect a greater awareness of the alternatives available to women. Moreover, a number of womens responses about abuse they had experienced are likely to refer to some time in the past, when these groups either did not exist, or were not well known. It is also the case, however, that women may attempt to contact Womens' Aid or a women's group, but not be able to either contact them, or get the support (such as a place in a refuge, or a self help group) that they would like.
The quote from a woman below indicates how important a sensitive and individual response is for women:

"[what has made a difference for me is] a woman therapist who has offered insight, understanding, comfort and infinite support by also recommending Accept to me."

We also asked women if they had changed their coping strategies if they had had more than one experience of abuse. Women responding to this question either had or had not changed their response. Whilst we cannot 'prove' our observation statistically, what appeared to enable women to change was being able to tell someone and getting a supportive response.

"I still don't know where to turn to or where to go for help."

"I still keep it to myself."

"I did not seek supportI now live on tranquilizers because of my nerves."

"If more places like Accept were available or therapists at a lower cost, I would have sought help much earlier and would not have resorted to drink to 'forget'."

"I have learnt not to go to people who have either no personal experience of recovery from any form of abuse, or who will try to do it for me. I used to seek help from my partners – now I seek it for myself."

"After seeking help and advice from various people, I decided to stand on my own feet and fight my battle, but I would strongly recommend Women's Aid."

D. What services women want in the borough

Whilst there was a wide range of interesting and insightful recommendations three main themes predominated: an accessible, but confidential, support and advice service; agency and law enforcement practice which focused on removing abusive men from the household; and self-help groups and refuges.

"I think self-help groups are extremely important, there should be more hostels for battered women and a great deal more support from law enforcement agencies." (na)

"A well publicised' Samaritans' type hotline with follow up support and counselling." (na)

"An organisation that could remove the abusing partner from the home." (na)

"The law should be changed – remove the man from the home."

"A support centre for women."
"Women to talk to, a place to go that's open all the time."

"Walk in groups within shopping centres where no appointment is necessary, with creche facilities and no-one need know she has gone there."

"Group or one to one therapy, or even better self-help support groups - not 'rescue', but give women back their power to make healthy choices."

"More advertising of these 'help' groups, because until this questionnaire I didn't know they existed. I think they are vital."

In calling for the removal of abusers, rather than women and children having to leave, they are making a statement about injustice - that having paid the physical and emotional costs of the abuse, women and children should not have to pay further costs in losing their home and the disruption and distress that being homeless engenders. However, many were also aware that in practice removing abusive men may be difficult, and that it may not ensure safety, since he could return and harass them.

The recommendations women made reflect the stages of help-seeking that women go through when coping with domestic violence (see Cavanagh, 1978).

- Wanting a supportive response, someone to talk to who will validate feelings and perceptions, whilst accepting that at this point what women want is to stop the violence but save the relationship.

- If the violence continues women move to wanting a challenging response; intervention that makes clear to the man that his behaviour is unacceptable and/or provides temporary respite from the abuse.

- It is only when both these strategies fail that women seek support in order to end the relationship.

Whether or not women move through all these stages, and the time it takes them to do so, depends upon the options they feel are open to them and the responses of those they seek help from. In fact these two factors are connected to one another, as one crucially important response is to make the range of options known to women. Clearly access to information is vital in enabling women to make choices, and for some women the barriers to their getting access are greater than for others. If information is not available in all the languages spoken in the borough, certain women have no access. If a comprehensive interpreting service is not available, and made use of, some groups of ethnic minority women have no access. If innovative ways of making information available to women who are relatively, or totally, housebound are not found then many disabled, chronically sick, agoraphobic and elderly women have no access.

The need for an accessible support and advice service was also stressed by both refuge groups, and the responses in the screening highlighted the fact that the vast majority of women want this service provided by other women, and especially women who are having/have had experience of domestic violence.
"You get peace of mind. Time goes really quickly, I've been here a couple of months but I haven't noticed it. I really appreciate it, that there's somewhere to go."

Following consultation with workers at both local refuges - Hammersmith Women's Aid and Shepherds Bush Women's Aid - permission was granted for access to surveys recently completed for a research project on refuge provision in London undertaken by the London Strategic Policy Unit. We took the following data from these questionnaires which refer to the year April 1986 - April 1987:

- There are currently refuge places in the borough for 15 adults and 24 children, but no second stage housing provision.
- Each refuge employs three workers, of the six at this point three were Black and three Irish; both groups rely substantially on volunteers.
- Both groups are committed to developing anti-racist practice and to providing refuge and support for Black and ethnic minority women, older women and women with disabilities, although neither house is currently fully accessible.
- Both groups have part-time child care workers and a room for play activities.

We reproduce below the occupancy monitoring conducted by Shepherds Bush Women's Aid for the year 1987/88.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Emergency (both)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 84 residents: 17 moved into permanent rehousing, 23 into temporary accommodation/B&B; 22 returned home; 12 went to other hostels; 3 moved to private accommodation and the whereabouts of 8 women is unknown.

Research conducted in both refuges was designed to build on this basic information. Group interviews were carried out with workers and residents; five workers and nine residents being involved altogether. Both groups of workers and residents included Black and white, younger and older women. These interviews were intended to complement the screening data by providing further qualitative data on the experience of domestic violence. Since the Women's Aid groups are the only borough organisations focused entirely on domestic violence, the interviews provided an invaluable way of exploring service provision with women who are currently seeking to escape violence. Some of the data from these interviews appears in later sections.

The quote at the beginning of this section reflects the general feeling amongst the residents about living in a refuge. Many of the women we talked to had also had experience of living in B&B and other hostels. They
clearly preferred the refuges. The supportive and open atmosphere in both houses was evident in the ease with which women participated in the interviews and the frequent outbursts of laughter!

The system of referrals to refuges in London is different to that in much of the rest of Britain. Elsewhere women tend to be referred to their local group, only moving to another refuge if there is no space, or if there is a major safety risk. A London wide referral policy is co-ordinated by the London office, and wherever possible, the practice is to not refer women to the refuge in the borough they have come from. This makes re-housing more complex, as women in refuges seldom have a local connection in the borough. Some boroughs, however, have accepted that this should not affect women's housing rights, since women from their area will be in the process of being referred to refuges, and re-housed in other boroughs.

The refuges had different policies about length of stay. In Shepherds Bush, the management committee saw the house as offering crisis support, and had an upper limit of six months. When women had been resident for six months the housing department was informed and women moved on, usually to B&B in the first instance, and then into temporary accommodation. Hammersmith had no upper time limit, but did inform housing once women had been resident for nine months. Temporary accommodation was usually found for women by the HD within the next three months. Women seldom went from the Hammersmith refuge into B&B. Both groups said it took an average of two to three years from initial application for women to be permanently rehoused.

Neither refuge, was in fact, able to offer the kind of crisis support refuges were set up to provide. The maximum stay suggested by Women's Aid in a policy statement in the late 1970's was three months. This time period was felt to be sufficient for most women and children to recover from the immediate impacts of violence, to have time to think about and discuss their future, and to make some decisions. That length of stay, combined with the fact that some women return to the relationship, or to the marital home with an exclusion order in much shorter periods of time meant that most refuges would have one or two places free each week. Since women are having to stay in a refuge - which has only six bedrooms - for between six months to a year, their ability to offer safety in crisis is vastly reduced. This situation could be resolved by faster move on for women, second stage houses, or a combination of both.

Several of the current residents told us of the long and complicated routes they had taken to get to the point where they were able to find a place in a refuge. One woman had been moved between B&B and temporary housing for four years, a Black woman with three children had experienced five changes in B&B in the three months before she found a place in a refuge. Neither of these women were at that point the responsibility of Hammersmith and Fulham, but their experiences are important in highlighting some of the difficulties women escaping violence have to cope with.

One of the major issues for the residents was the repeated, and in their view unnecessary, disruptions to their and their children's lives. In seeking safety and security for themselves and their children, they found themselves paying further costs. It is this reality which informed the
strong statements in the screening about removing abusers, rather than women and children having to leave.

Women who had also spent time in B&B pointed to the disruption to children emotionally and in relation to their schooling.

"The children are uprooted all the time. Even if they are in a hotel they settle down. Then the council come and say 'we need this room for someone else' and they are uprooted again. I was lucky - my kids are older and they could get to school on their own, but for little kids they have to change schools again and again - it messes up their education, it messes up everything."

These issues were developed by the workers in one group who had recently met with a support group for women currently in B&B in the borough. What had emerged was the variability of service - some made efforts to provide for families, others made stigmatising distinctions between homeless families and 'paying guests'. The fact that breakfast is provided, and in most B&B's the self-catering kitchens were not opened until at least 11am meant that many Asian women who wished to maintain their cultural practices regarding diet and food preparation went without breakfast, and so did their children. Few B&B residents, unlike residents in both refuges, had easy access to health services or local schools.

We followed up these observations by visiting the project ourselves, which is run by Shepherds Bush Baptist Church. In talking with some of the women currently resident in B&B in the borough because of domestic violence, the point we made in the interim report about safety was confirmed. Women felt that whilst they had escaped the violent man, they now faced harassment from male residents who bang on doors at all hours. Women who are on their own i.e. do not have a male partner living with them are targeted for this form of harassment. Men who have problems with drugs and alcohol were often housed in B&B's where women and children were also resident. The experience of many women was that the 'home' they now had in B&B also felt hostile and abusive. (Ray Wayre, a clinical psychologist working with convicted sex offenders, pointed out in a recent seminar the dangers to women and children in mixed hostels and B&B's, since many Schedule 1 offenders are housed there following their release from prison.)

Money and food is frequently stolen. One woman who called in the police was branded a 'complainer' because she refused to accept the harassment:

"Because you are in B&B, they think you are so desperate you won't do anything."

In this case the proprietors were told to install safety locks on the doors, but it was never done:

"They [the proprietors] are nowhere to be seen, they don't care and do nothing."

"They don't care if you are robbed, raped or murdered."
Discussions with refuge residents and workers produced some evidence of bad practice in the housing department and both groups felt that existing legislation was increasingly being interpreted restrictively. Whilst they recognized the resource pressure on the department, they nonetheless felt that some of the attitudes and decisions they had encountered were unacceptable.

For example, one woman had spent six months in the refuge and two and a half years in B&B, it was only after a refuge worker advocated on her behalf that she was offered appropriate temporary accommodation. She had previously been made two offers - both on the estate she had escaped from three years ago, and where the man still lived. There was concern expressed about the apparent lack of monitoring of how long women and children remained in B&B.

Refuge workers felt that women were increasingly having to 'prove' violence to get rehoused. Whilst the policy and individual officers state that women do not have to have 'evidence', a domestic violence sheet has to accompany each application. This sheet includes a number of questions about the last incident of violence which resulted in women leaving, whether they have ever taken legal action and whether they have ever been treated in hospital. As one worker put it: "what's that if it's not evidence!" As far as we are aware the requirement to fill in specific forms is not practice in all London boroughs. The fact that even with the support of a refugee worker women often went blank when trying to fill in this sheet, meant that the workers worried about how many women approaching housing on their own found themselves unable to fill in the form in the office. Moreover, workers had witnessed judgemental and unhelpful responses to women making their own case, whilst they had been accompanying a refuge resident to an interview in the housing department.

"If one of us goes it makes a difference, but we know of women who have gone on their own and they have been told more or less to get on their bike - go home, go back to Ireland."

"Some of the officers are alright. but some I've seen have been really, really judgemental and harsh - not usually on the first interview, but giving ultimatums to women in temporary accommodation."

One group had noticed a very recent shift from the practice of providing the statutory 28 days emergency accommodation provision in order to conduct investigations. Three women in the last month had been only provided with accommodation for one night. For example, one refugee worker had met a woman on the street, and as a result of hearing her story advocated for her with housing. The woman had arrived from the north of England with her two children. She had run away with her children having discovered that her husband was already married to a woman who could not have children, the two of them were planning to return to Pakistan with her two children. The housing department had confirmed her account by contacting agencies in the area she had come from but told her that there was nothing they could do and that she must return to the north. Even with the intervention from the refugee worker the woman was only given one night's accommodation and the refuge had no idea what happened to her subsequently. Another woman with
five children was given a travel warrant after one night to return to the
town in the Midlands she came from. In both cases there seemed to be a
prima facie case of homelessness and priority need and neither woman was
issued with a Section 63 or 64 notice.

In terms of rehousing women from the refuge, both groups felt that they
were facing increasing, and in some ways insuperable problems. They
scraped together places, particularly for women without children, through
LAMS, hostel move on and housing associations. The varying lengths of time
women spent in temporary accommodation also caused confusion and concern.
Most women were told by the housing department that they would remain in
temporary accommodation for one to two years, yet some women got
notification of permanent rehousing within four to eight weeks.

"It's devastating to get that letter, just when you have sorted
everything out and begun to feel settled - you have to begin all
over again. I don't think they have any idea of just what that
means, they just think women should be grateful."

We discussed provision for Black and ethnic minority women, women with
disabilities, older women and lesbians with both groups.

There was a recognition that racism was an issue that had to be dealt wit
continually, both in terms of the internal dynamics within refuges and in
relation to Black and ethnic minority residents and worker interactions
with other agencies. Both groups made information about Black and ethnic
minority women's refuges and groups available and would facilitate contact,
and, where appropriate, possible transfer of women. Hammersmith refuge had
persuaded the HD to accept the Polish centre as a local connection for
Polish women, but the same principal had not been accepted recently in
relation to a Moroccan woman who had come to the borough from the north.
The small staff groups meant that sometimes interpreters had to be found,
which was not always easy.

One group discussed the particular problems experienced by travelling women
in the borough. Travellers have very strong kin ties, particular codes of
honour and a highly developed communication network. Since few travelers
respect a woman's desire to not be in contact with the man she has left and
the borough has a relatively high travelling community, it is difficult for
travelling women trying to escape violence to keep their whereabouts
confidential. This group advised travelling women coming to the refuge to
move away from the borough, possibly to a refuge outside London.

Whilst neither house was adapted for disabled access, both groups had
housed women with disabilities. Neither could provide anything other than
emergency accommodation for women confined to wheelchairs.

One group had had three women of pensionable age seeking refuge in the last
year and felt strongly that older women were treated differently by other
agencies. Their need for safety, and their desire to leave violent men was
minimized, as was the serious nature of the violence. For example, before
coming to the refuge one of these women had been given bad advice by CAB, a
local solicitor and the housing department. The result, when her case came
to court, was that the judge ruled that she and her then ex-husband should
live in separate parts of their owner occupied house. The man continued to abuse the woman and was set on selling the house. This woman would spend most of each day in the local launderette, only returning home to lock herself in her bedroom when her ex-husband went out to the pub in the evening.

Both workers and residents felt that class prejudices and attitudes about domestic violence informed the responses of many agency workers in the borough:

"There's definitely a different response if women go in weepy, woebegone - looking like what they think a survivor of domestic violence should be, than if women go in together, well-dressed and mouthy. You have to look like a 'victim' not a survivor."

One black woman resident said that she had encountered much more of this kind of response, than racism.

30th groups gave advice to women who were not residents, and continued to support women after they had left the refuge - one group was still in contact with the first three residents who had lived in the refuge over ten years ago. They also engaged in a range of out reach and liaison work, including sitting on various council committees. These activities clearly strained the groups resources though: It the women living in the house think we neglect them sometimes." The ability to continue to support women was determined by where they were rehoused, and few women from either refuge were permanently rehoused in the borough. This also prevented friendship networks between women being sustained:

"Women build up their own support networks whilst they are living here, but they are smashed apart when they are scattered all over London. We want women to stay in contact, get involved in the group when they leave - but most of them can't even if they want to."

Workers and residents commented on the stark contrast there could be between the constant companionship and support that women got in the refuge, and the isolation they might move on to:

"In one way this is the easy part isn't it - when you go you are totally on your own." CA worker responds] " Yes, you don't think so when you first arrive, but it is."

Both refuge groups did not have secure, permanent funding, and both houses showed signs of suffering under constant multiple occupation. One group commented ruefully on the requirement to prioritise funding, to fulfill the monitoring demands of funders. This meant that far less of their time was available for supporting residents and doing outreach work locally.

When asked what changes they would like to see locally, four main issues emerged. Firstly, some emergency overnight refuge provision. Both refuges provided emergency single night places through the London Women's Aid rota scheme. But it put pressure on the refuge, families having to sleep in play rooms and sitting rooms and by the following day women and children often do not want to leave. Secondly, both groups felt that any woman seeking
advice should be told about refuges in order that they could make their own decisions. Thirdly, both felt a return to the previous practice of having a link worker in the housing department would lessen the variable responses they currently experience. Lastly, both requested a return to the previous policy of making local offers to refuge residents.
SECTION TWO

THE STATUTORY SECTOR'S PROVISION OF SUPPORT

Inter Departmental Co-operation

Liaison and consultation with Council departments has been a central concern for the research team, since the major focus of this study was council services for women experiencing domestic violence. Thus policy documents have been analysed, statistics sought and interviews conducted with a wide range of staff within both housing departments and social services. We would like to thank the staff in both housing and social services for their patience, co-operation and feedback throughout the project.

HOUSING

The housing department was the first Council department to be approached (for reasons stated below) and it should, therefore, be borne in mind that, since this study is of an action-research nature, the housing department were able to implement new policies following presentation of our interim report. We are, therefore, presenting below results of early departmental interviews, new data in the form of logs completed and details of the changes initiated in the housing department following the interim report. Other data relating to housing policy and practice in the borough appears in the sections on refuges (Section 1) and the law centre (Section 4).

Interviews were conducted in the housing department at the early stages of the research in recognition of the fact that the ability of women to either exclude an abusive partner, or be rehoused separately from them, is often the only way of ending violence. Furthermore, housing legislation is the only area of law where statutory responsibilities exist in relation to domestic violence. Although the 1985 Housing Act does not use the words 'domestic violence' explicitly, clause 58.38 states that the definition of homelessness includes 'where a person has accommodation but... occupation of it will lead to violence from some other person residing in it or to threats of violence from some other person residing in it and where that other person is likely to carry out the threat'. Whilst experiencing the threat of violence or actual violence is included in the definition of homelessness, local authorities only have a duty to rehouse when individuals can also be defined as in priority need i.e. the woman is pregnant, has dependent children, or is vulnerable due to old age, mental illness or handicap, physical disability or another special reason. When an applicant is defined as homeless and in priority need the council has a rehousing duty under the law. This is usually fulfilled by: providing temporary accommodation (often 8&8) whilst investigations are carried out; issuing a formal notification of the decision on the application (an s63 or s64); subsequent offer of permanent accommodation.

The Housing Act 1985, Part III (Housing the Homeless) specifies "that local authorities have duties to all homeless applicants. Where an applicant is
not deemed to be in priority need they are entitled to advice and assistance to enable them to find accommodation. In Hammersmith and Fulham this advice is usually given by Housing Aid. In cases where there is threatened violence which is not defined as homelessness (i.e. it occurs outside the home, or from someone who is not a member of the household) they will advise on legal remedies, refuges and alternative accommodation (such as hostels and accommodation agencies). The housing department have provided examples of how the legislation works in practice which are included in Appendix 2.

The research in the housing department has included obtaining all relevant policy and practice guidelines, conducting in depth interviews with officers in Estates Management, Housing Aid, Emergency Housing, Allocations, Special Needs and Training and the use of forms to log cases over a specified period. The interviews covered policy, procedure, factors influencing decision-making, statistical data, perceptions of the issues surrounding domestic violence, the ways in which different needs are met, tenancy agreements and training.

It became clear that there is very little statistical data on domestic violence cases. Allocations, Estates Management Teams, Emergency Housing and Housing Aid were requested to complete the "monitoring forms drawn up by the research team in order to log enquiries over a period of two months in order to provide more accurate data on the number of enquiries concerning domestic violence and the decision making process.

Provision for women experiencing violence exists either through Management Transfers or Homeless Persons Policy. The latter has recently been amended (Nov 87), from a previous new policy which had only been in operation for about a year. The 1986 policy was more open. The current policy specifies that priority need for rehousing in respect of domestic violence applies only to actual violence, within the home and within a relationship (currently interpreted as within a sexual relationship). The revised policy statement also contains on the first page the following statement: "there is some evidence that there is an increasing number of applicants who apply as homeless, alleging violence in order to circumvent the reduced housing options available to them". The research team have, as yet, found no evidence to substantiate this claim, but the statement clearly functions to validate the practice of some officers of questioning the truthfulness of women's accounts. For example:

"... play the tough guy first, then come down, hear story, realise this poor woman has got a problem. I think it's best that way round, not be offensive or rude or really harsh, just be a bit unmoved."

This move away from accepting a woman's word is further underlined by the fact that 'third party information' is increasingly being required of women to support their applications, particularly for housing transfers and the requirement that women fill in a "domestic violence sheet",

The restrictive interpretation (which in the opinion of the Emergency Housing Unit is more generous than statute/case law, but more restrictive than in some other London boroughs) of the clauses in the Housing Act 1985 referring to violence in the household has resulted in the limitation of
those women who are accepted by the council for rehousing as being both homeless and in priority need. 'Actual' violence means that it is recent physical violence which is accepted, other routes are suggested where violence is threatened and no independent priority exists, or there is mental cruelty. Within the home and within a relationship excludes most situations where the violence takes place outside the home, or where the violent partner is either not a sexual partner or not currently residing with the woman.

Whilst there are areas of discretion and interpretation available to officers these are not made clear but are covered by terms such as 'exceptional circumstances'. However, it is open to housing departments to define domestic violence or threat as 'other special reason' as evidenced by the 1987 letter from the assistant director (AAA) to the Single Homeless Working Party, which states that women with or without children, where there has been a recent assault, should be treated as in priority need. Furthermore, where violence was threatened but there are reasons to take the threat seriously, officers can define cases as priority need for 'other special reasons'.

Evidence from interviews with housing workers and from refuge workers suggest that practice is variable, and that having children means priority need. Furthermore, as the quotes which follow illustrate, where women have children, or officers define the violence as 'serious' the cases are seen as more urgent.

"... the fact that there are children creates more of a pressure to actually do something about it. More likely to be social work involvement, more pressure there really. The fact that they haven't got children and because resources are limited they've probably got to prove their case that little bit better."

"We don't help single women experiencing domestic violence enough, it's not seen as in priority need."

"physical is seen as the worst form of violence, mental is passed on to social services."

"... if it's that serious violence, people will go into B&B, if it's a question of life and limb, then yes. Neither of the two options are better, but take the one that offers security, if people didn't want that then it makes you question whether they are really in fear of their life."

The suggestion by the last officer that women must be 'in fear of their life' does not reflect the definition of homelessness included in the Housing Act previously quoted. It should also be noted that the new policy may have differential impacts on groups of women, given both the variation in household patterns (where partners may not live with women) and the variation in the person from whom abuse is experienced (EMD have raised the issue of violence from fathers in relation to young women); these issues are not referred to in the policy document. Current homelessness policy is based on a restrictive interpretation of the letter of the law rather
than a more open interpretation of its intentions as evidenced in the Code of Guidance issued with the Act.

The options suggested for responding to women who, whilst they are experiencing domestic violence, are not to be accorded a housing duty do little to ensure women's physical safety. Where violence is threatened, referral to a solicitor is recommended. The policy document fails to note that the Domestic Violence Act has also been increasingly interpreted restrictively, many judges now also require evidence of 'actual and recent' violence before an injunction will be granted. Placing women who are experiencing actual or threatened violence, but not inside the home or from a sexual partner, onto the general housing waiting list is unlikely, in the current situation, to make any material difference to her situation. We suspect that women will approach the department because injunctions are not being enforced, or have run out due to being time limited.

Detailed data, relating to the specific functions of sections within the housing department follow.

**Emergency Housing Unit**

It is the responsibility of the emergency housing unit to investigate any persons claim to be homeless. In the case of domestic violence this involves deciding whether a women is homeless under the policy and whether she is in priority need. If both apply then the department has a housing duty in relation to both her and any dependent children.

EHU figures for March 1987 - March 1988 reveal that 13% of all cases presenting as homeless were classified as domestic violence (220 cases). A further 1.5% of cases (24) are recorded as 'domestic or relationship problems'. However, we feel these figures should be treated with some caution, as the categories used by EHU overlap, and without examination of each case record it is impossible to give an accurate estimate of the percentage of homelessness cases which involve domestic violence.

Of the 220, 127 included dependent children, and 178 of the 220 were placed in bed and breakfast. There were no records of what happened to the other 42 cases, nor does there seem to be any easy way of tracking what happens to women and children placed in bed and breakfast. The refuges in the borough do not seem to be used as a resource by EHU, even when women have to be moved from a bed and breakfast because they have been found by the violent man.

In-depth interviews with staff revealed inconsistencies in approach to domestic violence within EHU. Some workers were supportive, others left women to fill out forms by themselves. Some workers spent time talking through women's situations, whereas others were concerned to ascertain 'the facts'. Some workers suggested that it was easy for women to come in and allege violence, others recognised the barriers that prevent women from talking about abuse. For example:

"People are fussy, want to move and sometimes use domestic violence as a means to get moved. You have to question people's motives."
Some workers recognised that differences between women needed to be appreciated in their work. Others talked about 'treating everyone the same'.

**Estates Management:**

**Transfers**

It is here that council tenants may apply for a management transfer in crisis situations. Among the criteria which are accepted for transfers are actual and threatened violence and acute mental distress. In relation to domestic violence, management transfers tend to be used when women are being assaulted or threatened by a man not currently living with them.

Clear evidence emerged here of the importance of 'third party information' supporting a woman's application. Of the 15 management transfers awarded on the grounds of violence in recent months, 11 had supporting statements from doctors, social workers or the police.

It is the responsibility of individual estates officers to build and present the case for transfer, thus their perceptions and understandings are central to the process. Here too there was the suggestion by some officers that domestic violence was being alleged in order to get moved:

"Violence cases seem to be increasing, not because of more violence, but because it's the way to get rehoused."

In at least one case the woman was required to get an injunction, to prove the violence before a transfer was agreed to. There are further questions raised about where a woman is rehoused. A Black officer felt that stereotypes informed the ways white officers thought about appropriate rehousing for Black women.

Estates management offices are often used as a local information and referral point by tenants. None of the offices visited displayed any information about domestic violence, and there was no readily available information to give to women.

**Tenancies**

It is current policy in the borough to encourage joint tenancies. In cases of violence where the male partner is the sole tenant, the council are unable to assist the woman with any claims to the property. Her case would have to be considered through the homeless policy. If, however, there is a joint tenancy or if the woman is the sole tenant then her position is more secure.

However, housing officers and managers have pointed out that there are pitfalls for women in having joint tenancies. These are related to relationship breakdown in general and rent arrears in particular:
"I think joint tenancies are a minefield. Women are more protected on a sole tenancy - she won't pick up anyone else's debt for example."

There have been varying responses to the question of rent arrears. The situation where the woman is the sole tenant is straightforward in that any rent arrears will be her responsibility. If she has fled because of violence, and the man remains without paying the rent, she will be held responsible for the debts incurred.

The position is less clear where there is a joint tenancy. Some officers and managers have said that any debt 'unfairly saddled' onto a woman may not be looked at too severely. It is not viewed so casually by all staff. Women often find that they do have ultimate responsibility for debts incurred on the joint tenancy. Although a debt may often be 'held on ice' while, for example, a woman is in 8&8, it does remain with her. Tenants retain the same tenancy number and a debt may remain on their account for years.

Concern about this issue has been raised by some managers who think that this amounts to 'bad policy' for women in this situation. There have been attempts to interpret the policy sensitively but there was no general commitment within Estates Management to write off debts incurred in these circumstances. Officers aware of the implications of such debts placed the issue in the context of the other difficulties women faced:

"It is added aggravation. Having fled your home, having left your furniture which your partner may have damaged, you have got to set up home again, build up contacts again, resettle the kids in school again and pick up the former tenant's debt."

Rent arrears, however, do not become a barrier to rehousing, and it depends on each individual estates officer as to how much chasing up is initiated. However, rent arrears are to be given more close attention within the borough in the near future, which will have implications for women.

A recent ALA Report by the Women and Housing Forum to Housing Committee, entitled 'Relationship Breakdown Policy and Procedure' (April 1988) included the following recommendations:

"Women who leave their home on account of violence should not reasonably be expected to pay rent (joint tenants are Jointly and severally liable in law), and cannot do so, irrespective of violence if unwaged. Boroughs should take a similarly sensitive approach to rent arrears ....... Any requirement to pay rent arrears should take into account the historic and current financial ability of each partner to fulfill their rent obligations. Clear guidance should be provided for staff on apportioning rent arrears or writing off debt."
Terminating tenancies

Local Authorities lost the right to repossess tenancies in the event of relationship breakdown in the 1980 Housing Act. Recent case law (Greenwich v McGrady) has enabled authorities to resolve tenancies by accepting one party's 'notice to quit' as sufficient in the termination of a joint tenancy. This ruling is used by H&F to regain possession of a property when a woman has had to leave due to violence. As described by one estates manager it is:

"... a device whereby one partner can disenfranchise the absentee, and in some cases prevent a partner from a tenancy.

This procedure is instrumental in enabling women to take on a new tenancy. It also enables the council to regain properties that are frequently under-occupied by the remaining abusive partner. The council mayor may not decide to rehouse the man.

The previously mentioned ALA report (April 1988) commented on the usefulness of 'McGrady':

"However, this is a far from ideal 'solution' to the problem as it places the onus on the woman to serve the notice to quit and, particularly if the borough is unable or chooses not to rehouse the man, could place her at considerable risk of violence."

Recent problems over the use of Greenwich v McGrady have been identified by the council's solicitors. These centre on the legality of this procedure in the light of the borough's current tenancy agreements, which state:

"... if you are a joint tenant the term 'tenant' refers to both tenants or all of you."

It has been argued that it is, therefore, not legally possible for one party to serve 'Notice to Quit' and thereby terminate the tenancy for both parties. Other boroughs, however, are continuing to use the McGrady ruling and getting positive results. It was obvious that within the housing department there is considerable confusion about the current position, and this should be clarified. Some officers are continuing with the use of McGrady while others have said it's use has been temporarily suspended. Any changes regarding this procedure should be made with full attention given to the implications for women who are experiencing violence.

The problems faced by local authorities with regard to relationship breakdown and the effects on tenancies is now the subject of a DoE Working Party. The ALA, who are represented on the party, are concerned that the issues of equality and good practice are incorporated in the search for legal remedies to the repossession issue.

In the longer term we suggest that including domestic violence as a breach of both tenants rights and obligations be included in tenancy agreements, as recommended in the recent Ealing Domestic Violence Working Party report.
**Housing Aid**

Housing Aid functions as a screening point for all non-council tenant enquiries about housing. Individuals are then referred on, where appropriate to other sections of the housing department. Clearly workers here were experiencing difficulties with the new policy, and expressed concern about its implications. Housing Aid had the best referral policy within the department, where they felt women would not be defined as homeless and in priority need by EHU, they referred to the refuges and gave information about other options. They also referred some women through to the special needs section. There was a clear monitoring procedure for all enquiries. From December, 1987 to May 1988 a total of 80 domestic violence cases which would not be defined as priority need were recorded. However, we do not know how many of the one thousand and sixty one cases defined as being in priority need during the same period were domestic violence cases.

**Special Needs**

This section deals with any housing issues where the tenant/applicant has special needs, with particular emphasis on the elderly and people with disabilities. There was evidence of a supportive and sympathetic approach to domestic violence, one officer noting that some women's disabilities were the direct consequence of previous assaults. Furthermore, the nature of domestic violence - that it can include physical, sexual and mental violence and that it may be experienced from a variety of household members - was clearly understood. There was a strong recognition that within the department as a whole violence to elderly and disabled women was seldom considered a possibility:

"A disabled elderly person is as much the victim of dominance as a child and has got no means of escape. The options are nil. Where do you go?"

Despite the limited options, in the seven cases we examined in detail, women had clearly been supported and four had been rehoused in sheltered accommodation.

**Housing Logs**

Following the initial research in the department it was decided that the department and the project would benefit from having statistical data. A monitoring form was designed to log the incidence of domestic violence cases coming to the attention of different sections of the housing department. The log was to be completed by officers over a two month period in:

- Four Estates Management Teams (EMT)
- Emergency Housing Unit (EHU)
- Housing Aid (HA)
- Special Needs (SN)
- Allocations (AL)
Only two of the Estates Management Teams responded, both saying that they had had no cases during the monitoring period. The data from the other sections is presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Housing department logs for a two month period between October and December 1988.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EHU</th>
<th>HA</th>
<th>SN</th>
<th>AL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of cases</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recorded in a nine week period:</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific nature of cases:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence in the home</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence out of the home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>These can be broken down into:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened violence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With supporting evidence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without supporting evidence</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with children</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who were pregnant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women without children</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of children</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenure of applicants:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council tenants</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private rented</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner/occupier</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place in H&amp;F by another Borough</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Authority</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recorded</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residence when making application:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital home</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Family</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of the monitoring data is complicated by the fact that we do not know whether there has been any double counting i.e. cases being first seen by one section and then referred on to another section. Although the differences in the entries suggests that this was not true of all the EHU and HA cases. This highlights the problem with basic statistical monitoring - without at least a case name the possibility of double counting cannot be avoided. We do think, however that some interesting things emerge even if we look only at the EHU column.

- The vast majority of cases involved physical violence in the home.
- Less than a quarter of women seen by EHU had 'supporting evidence' (although this percentage increases greatly for Housing Aid, Special Needs and Allocaitons - this may be due to women acquiring evidence as they move through the housing system, or that only where there is supporting evidence can certain departments offer practical support).
- Whilst the majority of women had children (on average 2.5) just under a quarter did not nor were they pregnant. This means that two of the grounds for being in 'priority need' were not there for 11 of the women contacting EHU.
Just over three-quarters of the women were council tenants, and the largest other category of tenure was private rented.

Whilst over half the women applying through EHU were at that point residing in the marital home, a far greater proportion of women contacting HA, SN and AL were staying with friends, living in a refuge, or had some other accommodation.

The majority of cases were assessed as homeless and in priority need; only 2 were assessed as 'no duty' or 'just advice'.

The data on housing action taken is limited by the high number of 'not recorded' for HA, SN and AL (although in the latter case the prior answers suggest that all five cases resulted in management transfers). However, the majority of women approaching EHU were placed in temporary accommodation or private lets rather than B&B.

If these data reflect current policy and practice within the borough, then very few women reporting violence are being offered only advice, and alternatives to B&B are being sought.

Conclusions

Overall, no single pattern of response emerged, although the new policy guidelines do amount to a tightening of policy locally. From the limited sample of officers with whom we did in depth interviews, there were examples of good and bad practice. Some individual officers responded sympathetically and supportively. The attitudes of a number of the officers towards Black and ethnic minority women and travelling women are cause for concern - comments included suggestions that certain groups of women were more likely to be abused; that certain groups of women's accounts should be more thoroughly investigated; and that it was not necessary to take cultural factors into account when either talking with women or in making decisions. For example:

"Report writing is very subjective and that is the main channel for a transfer, it can be open to sexist and racist interpretations - 'is this woman bringing it on herself', 'does she deserve it' - you hear all those sorts of things."

"... (travelling women) are opportunists and take advantage of any system."

"I am sure there are genuine traveller women who are saying 'look help me' but at the same I imagine for everyone of those there is one who is trying it on."

There was no organised system for interpreting within the department. Whilst recognising that this cannot always be available in I walk-in' open access parts of the department, the fact that the current list of internal interpreting was out of date and no staff training addresses this issue, shows that there is considerable room for improvement. The possibility of having particular language interpreters available in Estates Management
offices and Housing Aid for specified and publicised half days a week should be investigated.

Whilst the sample of officers interviewed is limited, we feel that the evidence we collected points to the fact that certain groups of women may be being discriminated against. The attitudes and practice of some officers results in their not having equal access to resources and options under the homelessness policy.

The lack of training, the fact that procedural guides are often not made available to staff and the confusion created by the new policy, all result in service being variable; dependent upon the individual, their knowledge of the issue and their attitudes to domestic violence.

Recent changes

We are pleased to report both recent changes and future commitments by the housing department following the interim research project report in November 1988. The Director of Housing's responses to the report and its recommendations acknowledged the shift from a more discretionary interpretation of legislation in 1987 and the variability in interpretation and staff attitudes. The necessity of achieving a 'consistent and supportive response' and addressing the attitudes of some officers to Black and ethnic minority women and travelling women in particular were also noted. The Director committed the department to re-drafting internal guidance notes on discretion, an overall policy review and a training programme (now recommendations 34b, 34e and 34f). The department further agreed to remove the statement highlighted in the interim report from the policy document (now recommendation 34a). A working group has been established within the Housing Department to carry this work forward. A welcome precedent of a women only B&B (see recommendation 34c) in the borough in December 1988. The necessity of this form of provision was confirmed in the second stage of the research (see Section 1 pages 34-6) and developing this form of provision is being explored at the present time.

The importance of support for women and children in B&B was also noted (now recommendation 34c), and a proposal for three social workers based in the housing department has been agreed to. In light of the lengths of time some families remain in B&B and the findings of the recent ALA report on the effects of this on children, we regard this as a matter of urgency.

The following summary gives full details of the proposed changes to date (February 1989).

1. A group has been set up to consider the question of adopting a less restrictive policy regarding domestic violence. Its brief is to examine existing statistics and to design a form to monitor future cases. From this data the group will establish policy options and budget implications. Following the examination of the policy options the appropriate practice and procedures will be clarified and adopted. Steps are also being taken to improve the keeping of statistics to avoid overlap in the recording of cases.
2. Use of an eleven room hotel for homeless women has been negotiated; the department has been placing women here since December 1988. It is hoped through negotiations with local hoteliers to increase this provision so that all women accepted as homeless can be offered a place in a women only B&B.

3. The department is assessing how it can offer support to women in B&B and has invited staff from the two local refuges and from Social Services to be involved in the next meeting of the Working group.

4. In response to the need for training the department is currently devising a programme of 'Awareness/Sensitivity' training for staff. When the department has revised its policies, practices and procedures a more in-depth training programme will be implemented.

5. The department has committed itself to addressing the specific Black and ethnic minority women, women with disabilities, older women and lesbians who experience domestic violence.
**SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Introduction**

Although the problem of domestic violence is viewed as a minor one in relation to statutory commitments, the reality is that women do contact Hammersmith & Fulham Social Services and are frequently referred there by individuals, agencies and professionals. However, there is no written policy, and practice relies upon individual interpretation of cases.

The issue of domestic violence comes to the attention of Social Services most frequently through the Duty system in the area and hospital teams. It is here that the department aims to offer support and assistance to women. However, there are also other areas of social services provision which include working with women who are experiencing or have experienced abuse in relationships.

**Research**

Access to Social Services was granted following a meeting with their management team; four area teams were contacted and patch teams selected for interviews. Generic social workers have been the main focus in these interviews but there has also been input from elderly and mental health specialists, occupational therapists, home care teams, community workers, and a team leader in a hospital team. Contributions to the research also came from community based services such as mental health projects, day nurseries, day centres, a young women’s project, and a family centre by means of the community questionnaire. Workers from some of these projects were also interviewed.

The focus of the interviews has been to establish the nature of the contact with women and the kinds of support offered to them. Discussions have also taken place with management looking at current and future developments in the department, department priorities and how these may affect women in the borough who experience violence.

Because the structure of the department is complex and domestic violence can come up in a range of contexts, the data and discussions are presented under the following sections: statistics; Social Service involvement with domestic violence; social workers overall approach to domestic violence; abusive men; how women feel; Black and ethnic minority women; Interpreting; the duty system; statutory responsibilities; allocated cases; older women and women with disabilities; mental health; bed and breakfast support.
Statistics

The department collates no specific figures on the incidence of domestic violence cases coming to its attention. There is, however, scope to collect statistics in the future via the 'Intake Record' completed by duty social workers. Currently there is a category 'marital dispute' under the section 'referral mainly about'. A more specific heading would enable assessment of the amount of domestic violence cases coming to the attention of the duty system. It would require duty social workers to fill it out every time a case of this nature arose. Currently social workers do not use the 'marital dispute' category consistently. If there are various features to a case of which domestic violence is one, other categories are more likely to be crossed, for example, childcare, child abuse or financial.

The Research and Planning department within Social Services which is responsible for a number of monitoring exercises may be able to initiate change. They have not addressed the problem of domestic violence in any of their projects to date. A current project is focusing on the workloads of the duty and hospital social work teams. Unfortunately in breaking down the categories of referrals, domestic violence has not been included. It will, therefore, be recorded under the general categories of 'family work' and 'other adult cases'. Following on from this project we hope the department will explicitly incorporate domestic violence in future assessments and collection of statistical data.

Social Service Involvement in Domestic Violence

Cases solely about domestic violence will be dealt with through the duty system unless there is cause for concern of a statutory nature. Such concern would usually centre on issues about children, since abuse towards women in the home raises questions about the safety of children in the household. In talking to a woman the social worker must ascertain the current situation and assess how this is affecting any child/children; concern will be about children's physical safety as well as the psychological effects of living with violence. Social workers are usually directive when asking women about their children, but if there is still cause for concern then schools and doctors will be approached for information.

The question of how the abuse affects the woman's ability to care for their children seems central to the assessment of the need for further social work involvement. This, therefore, becomes the major focus of the case. The 'parenting' ability of the abusive partner seldom appears to be under examination. Although as this worker points out, it may be the violence which is affecting women's ability to care for their children:

"... so in fact, supporting the single parent (mother) was a good social work priority. . Because when she wasn't being abused and in a messy abusive relationship, she actually cared for her daughter a lot better."

This surely is a statement confirming the view that even though the statutory duty of the department is to look after children, when a woman is
in a violent situation, her ability to care for her children is affected and, therefore, the two issues cannot be separated. The welfare of children is the main and most frequent reason for continued social work involvement. Individual women's cases which may also be deemed to have statutory status, (such as elderly women or women with disabilities), rarely, come to the attention of Social Services through the duty system. Continued support for women without children, women whose children are not seen as 'at risk' and women outside of other statutory criteria is rarely forthcoming.

We asked social workers how women initially discussed domestic violence. Whilst there were varying responses, several workers stressed that women do not always mention domestic violence as the problem about which they are seeking help. Some said that women rarely or never directly focus on violence, but note a marked tendency to ask for assistance about another issue, for example, childminding, or a nursery place. It is through talking to the woman and picking up on her anxiety that the social worker can discover that there is more to her request. This was also referred to by a hospital social worker.

"A woman can come here justifiably being ill, relating problem to her illness. So that is what people tend to come with. They are ill and have got a housing problem and worried about when they leave hospital. Then underneath you find all the other stuff."

Perception, sensitivity, and allowing sufficient time make it possible for a woman to speak about the violence she is experiencing. An awareness of this was evident primarily amongst women social workers who commented that other workers may dismiss a client by saying that there are no childminders or nursery places available without trying to establish why a woman would be so desperate for such a resource. This practice of responding to the surface request means that many social workers are only aware of women seeking help and advice about violence when she explicitly mentions it.
Social Workers overall approach to domestic violence

There is no single way that social workers are required to respond to women experiencing violence. Understanding and attitudes are major factors affecting practice. The complexities facing women living with abusive men were clearly understood by some social workers:

"... for others it's hard, there is something in the relationship they need and feel quite positive about."

However, understanding was not always reflected in effective work practice in the duty setting, since the lack of time for in-depth work and the resources available as a back up are limited. Much of the practical advice centred on either leaving the home or how to keep an abusive partner away from the home; advice which many felt was often inappropriate. Social work in relation to domestic violence was thus often viewed as depressing and frustrating.

The work was also viewed negatively by social workers who did not have a sense of the multiple difficulties facing women. These social workers were not overtly unsympathetic, but ill-informed and ill-equipped to support women. Whilst some recognised the enormous practical difficulties involved in leaving, many frequently raised the issue of women returning to abusive men. There was much concentration on what was termed 'cycles of abuse'. Continued violence experienced by a woman was seen by some workers as an inevitable pattern, with the implication that any support offered would neither stop the abuse nor prevent the woman becoming involved with another violent man. This produced a degree of apathy in relation to domestic violence by some who focused on women's role in 'choosing' violent relationships. An unquestioned link was also often made between domestic violence and child abuse.

Social workers were aware that theoretical understandings of domestic violence informed work practice, and some dissatisfaction was expressed about colleagues' negative approaches:

"It's happened before, there's nothing we can do about it."

The onus for change was, therefore, often placed on the women. The idea that women should be educated not to take the abuse was seen as the way forward by some social workers the possibility of stopping men being abusive was seldom addressed.

Members of the management team suggested that workers were often quite confused about domestic violence and how they should respond. Some, however, felt a shift to a less judgemental approach had occurred, possibly connected to the recent emphasis on child abuse.

Abusive men

When the issue of work with abusive men was raised, social workers said that the emphasis of their work was on women and children, their safety and they needs. They frequently had no contact with the man.
Some felt, however, that it was appropriate to talk to, and involve, the men. Such involvement was, however, only discussed in terms of 'family therapy': working with the man and woman to reconstruct the relationship. Some work described by social workers on domestic violence concentrated on why people 'choose' each other, looking at how partners 'operate' together, and how the partners can work to change the situation. Such work was also sometimes conducted when working only with the woman. The implication being that women did not understand why the abuse had occurred and needed to be 'helped' to explore these issues.

Some workers thought a more directive approach with abusive men might be helpful, and, in fact, a few had acted in this way on occasions. However, this was not viewed as a matter of course and it was difficult to determine when and why social workers chose this form of intervention.

There were also some negative reactions to the idea of approaching abusive men. The reasons for not doing so centered on practicalities: the limited time available was better spent supporting the woman and any children. The point of seeing men was also questioned, and few workers had any sense of what it might achieve. A minority clearly did not view it as their role, although members of the management team stated that it was probably appropriate in most cases of domestic violence to confront the male partner, but since needs of the woman and children took precedence this possibility got by passed.

How women feel about approaching Social Services

The majority of social workers were aware that women found it difficult to seek help about domestic violence and some felt that approaching Social Services in particular might be problematic. Many were aware of issues raised by women in the screening (see pages 27-28) - that the social work emphasis on children's safety would prevent many women approaching the department for help:

"Social workers are more concerned about children. It is high profile stuff. So coming here does have implications for people."

Despite these fears, however, women do frequently contact Social Services and some social workers saw this as a first step: that the department could provide information on options, such as how to contact refuges directly. Some workers also recognised that, for many women, contact was made in desperation; Social Services were a last resort, particularly, in the view of many, for Asian women.

Black and ethnic minority women

There was an overall recognition amongst the workers interviewed that it is more difficult for Black and ethnic minority women to approach Social Services; since the department would be viewed as a white institution. This acknowledgement was not, however, reflected in an understanding of the specific needs and concerns of Black and ethnic minority women, although
most had some awareness of the different experiences and needs of Asian women.

Frequent reference was made to the barriers for Asian women in seeking help about violence and that they rarely approached Social Services. Although there was an impression that Asian women were more frequently contacting the department about mental abuse. Issues about language and culture were seen as partly responsible. Awareness of interpreting facilities was often vague, and general statements about close family ties hindering women seeking support were common. The most constructive thing workers offered was information and transportation, if necessary, to an Asian women’s refuge. This severely limited the options offered to Asian women. The involvement of the Asian Women’s Cultural Organisation would sometimes be sought.

Most attention to Black and ethnic minority experiences focused on accessibility to Social Services; the changes in social work practice which would facilitate access were, however, seldom addressed directly. Whilst Social Services management are taking initiatives in relation to the needs of Black and ethnic minorities, several Black women social workers commented that the specific needs and experiences of Black women were not being highlighted. Moreover, some workers noted that initiatives for change from above took a long time to filter down and inform practice.

The lack of Black staff was frequently mentioned, were workers felt that they desperately needed to make the service more accessible. One Black worker said that a woman had particularly asked to speak to her about violence, and would not have discussed her problem comfortably, if at all, with a white worker.

Most of the social workers interviewed were sensitive to the general difficulties faced by Black and ethnic minority women, and management were aware that many white staff feel ineffective in attempting to support Black and ethnic minority women:

"Important issues for social services are race and language. Also the sex positions in that are very difficult to see your way through. Staff frequently feel a tremendous sense of helplessness not being able to get through to a woman, not being able to get on a level where they understand her position so that they could really think about how to help her".

The management initiatives on race are encompassed in the council's general equal opportunities policies. Race Awareness training is being conducted for all staff and Race Action Plans are to be produced by all departments in the near future. The departmental response to the needs of Black and ethnic minority women experiencing abuse was described as 'extremely embryonic'. A member of the management team thought that Black women were often the subject of stereotypical assessments. Other workers also made reference to the ways racist assumptions informed practice.

"You hear people saying that Black men do that sort of thing and Black women know that, so what's the problem".
Whilst Black and ethnic minority representation within social work teams is an urgent priority, white workers must also be urged to move beyond either racist responses or immobilisation. Black and ethnic minority social workers have to work effectively with white clients; white social workers need to tackle what an anti-racist social work practice would consist of.

**Interpreting**

There needs to be an interpreting service available to social workers for those women whose language is not English. However, discussions with Social Services personnel suggested that the system for arranging such a facility was disorganised, so that some workers were quite unsure of procedures. The procedures and length of time it took to find an interpreter were unclear. Dissatisfaction about this issue was also raised by Social Services management. Despite attempts by social workers to secure the services of appropriate interpreters, the expertise and the resources were not always to be found, nor could they guarantee acquiring a woman interpreter. The need to address this issue was recognised. Some social workers said that there was a need for permanent interpreters, who were always easily and quickly available. But discussions were generally lacking concerning the role of interpreters during interviews, their future involvements in a case and their general position. Issues about interpreting centered on actually 'getting' an interpreter. Good communication with the interpreting service provided by the Council for Racial Equality was not evident. There is clearly a need for closer liaison with such a provision.

It was only a minority of staff who understood the complexity of interpreting, and who recognised the need to ensure the independence of interpreters from the client. In discussing the language, culture and gender barriers that sometimes prevent effective responses, the case of an Asian woman and her child, both experiencing abuse, was noted. In this particular case the social worker did not secure the services of an interpreter and was forced to use her husband for this purpose. It soon became clear that this was inappropriate and a further male interpreter was found who unfortunately sided with the husband. It was also considered that interpreters should be independent from the Local Authority in order to view cases and interview proceedings from a different perspective, and, therefore, to be free to comment and criticise when necessary. This issue must be addressed to ensure that women from language minorities have access to social work support.

**The Duty System**

There are no written guidelines in the department covering social work responses to domestic violence. The interviews did, however, reveal an informal and unstated procedure which includes variable combinations of the following:

- listen and ascertain the situation the woman is in, hear the facts and her perception of the problem and her needs;
- assess the risk to any children in the household;
- look at the possibility of any ongoing involvement;
- listen to what the woman wants to do, assess her resources and support networks;
- discuss options that may be open to her:
- advise and give information about the options and any additional resources.

These then are the areas that social workers feel they should address in their duty capacity. How the above are put into practice, however, varies enormously.

Listening

Social workers stressed that women needed to talk about their situation and many felt that listening was the most important function they fulfilled. Through listening to what the woman wanted the social workers could tailor their response to her stated needs, e.g. only discuss leaving if the woman had decided to leave. Some, however, did not let the individual woman's circumstances and responses completely determine their own responses.

Women's own networks

Social workers encouraged women to look to their own resources and network before seeking outside support. Given that some women find it unthinkable to approach their family or friends about the violence they are experiencing, such emphasis on personal networks is not always appropriate and should not be at the expense of giving women information about groups and organisations that she may wish to contact now, or in the future.

Options

Social workers are aware that many women come to them not only to talk but for information and advice. Laying out 'the options' that may be available was seen as central to the support that social workers could offer. Legal remedies were the most frequent option discussed and women were always advised to go to a solicitor. Most social workers had a general idea about injunctions, and a list of local solicitors is available for women to take away. Solicitors, rather than the Law Centre's weekly women's session were usually recommended. Only a minority of social workers discussed the importance of women getting more thorough advice from the Law Centre or the Legal Advice Centre before approaching a solicitor. Even fewer mentioned actively supporting a woman in seeking legal redress, although some said that they offered to make an appointment for a woman.

Similarly when discussing alternative accommodation some social workers would telephone the Emergency Housing Unit or Estates Management, whereas others would just direct a woman to them.. Some were very aware of the strain of talking through circumstances again and again to various
departments and felt they could, and should, limit this for a woman, by taking on the role or mediator if this was acceptable.

"It is her decision but there are some practical things that can be done that don't take away from the woman, like making a phone call."

Refuges are also discussed as an option; when and how was dependent on each woman's situation and each social worker's knowledge, experience and attitudes to refuges. Many workers admitted they knew little about refuges and would like more information. However, over-riding negative impressions were held by social workers concerning refuges. Images of cramped surroundings and material inadequacies took precedence over the support that they recognised was provided. In balancing the pros and cons about refuges, social workers may make assumptions that affect the advice given to women.

Some social workers only mentioned refuges when a woman asked about them, others when she clearly wanted to leave the home and some always mentioned refuges as a matter of course. There was some knowledge of refuges for minority women, particularly for Asian women. Some social workers had helped women pick up their belongings and travelled to a refuge, sometimes with involvement from the police.

Generally there seemed to be little contact with the local refuges and what there had been was often described as quite negative, confusing and disappointing on both sides in terms of expectations and results. Some social workers suggested that more involvement with the refuges would be very valuable.

In laying out the options for women, information should be full, accurate and available for a woman to consider and make her own decisions about in her own time.

**Information and advice**

When social workers have discussed various options they follow this up with information for women. But specific information available on duty about domestic violence is very limited. The information systems appeared disjointed and disorganised. The council and voluntary sector information directories seemed to be the major source of information and one particular voluntary group directory in use was out of date.

Information about resources and options had to be gathered from a variety of sources: the voluntary sector directories, from books and pamphlets around the office, colleagues, information in people's heads and past experience. If a woman requires the number of Womens Aid the social worker first has to locate this and then write it down for her. There was a limited display of posters about domestic violence support in the Area receptions. Getting information together, therefore, was quite haphazard. Several of the teams felt that easy access to information generally was something they were either addressing or should address. Apart from the solicitors list there is nothing to give women.
Detailed information and knowledge of appropriate community groups and organisations seems to be individualistic as opposed to departmental. The referral process, however, is crucial since in many cases on-going support will not be offered. Such support should reflect the awareness social workers had that longer more in depth' counselling' was frequently requested by women along with the possibility of talking to women who had had similar experiences. Currently some social workers did not look beyond a woman's immediate practical needs and great variance was evident in the importance attached to the use of community resources. Thus consistent information and possibilities are not offered. Some social workers seemed quite committed to the idea of referral to, and making links with, local groups. However, "there was limited immediate knowledge of local resources."

The most commonly mentioned referrals on, particularly for counselling were the Family Welfare Association (FWA), Fulham Parents and Children (FULPAC) and the White City Mental- Health Project. None of these have a central focus on domestic violence and none are services run by Black women for Black women. These organisations would have to be 'looked up' by most social workers, presumably only following direct requests.

Social workers pointed out that some women contact Social Services, often during a crisis, four or five times a year. In these cases (as well as others) if further support cannot be provided by the department all efforts should be made to find some alternative support. Even if the woman may not want to immediately follow this up she should be given information about local resources.
**Statutory responsibilities:**

**Allocated case practice**

Social workers were asked about their practice methods when they suspected a client might be experiencing abuse in the home. Most workers felt women should be asked directly and informed that they were available to talk to. Again the risk to children had to be assessed. The seriousness of the abuse and its consequences were the key elements to further involvement:

"... depends why I suspected that and why I was concerned about that. People do have violent and aggressive relationships and I don't see it's my role to get involved in that just because they are violent and aggressive.' So, I would imagine that if that was of concern to me it would be for particular reasons that I would bring it up."

Workers felt that the more extreme cases tended to be dealt with by the police and/or hospitals, and also suggested that women found it more difficult to discuss mental, emotional and sexual abuse. Some cases of violence to mothers by their children were being brought to the attention of Social Services.

In allocated cases social workers stressed that they would support a woman in the decisions she made. If she decided to leave they would help to organize this, or support her if she stayed. However, if workers believed the woman had made the 'wrong decision' they would say so and discuss why they thought this.

Allocated cases rarely involve domestic violence in isolation. The abuse is, therefore, looked at in terms of its effects: effects on the mother's ability to care 'properly' for the child/children. Social workers clearly evaluated women's decisions in this context: a family context. Practice linked with the other factors which accounted for the case being allocated in the first place.

Confidentiality was treated very seriously by all the workers interviewed. If there was concern about revealing a woman's whereabouts, this would be recorded in her file. How this was put into daily practice was difficult to determine, and some social workers did say that practice could be tightened up in this respect.

Having discussed practice in relation to the duty system and allocated 'family' cases, we now turn to other areas where domestic violence also comes to the attention of Social Services.
Work with elderly women and women with disabilities

"...no one has ever spoken to them about it, no one allowed them to speak about it."

Domestic violence work with elderly women and women with disabilities arises through allocated cases. Staff who had worked with women from these client groups showed awareness and sensitivity to their needs. This experience and understanding was not reflected in the overall approach to domestic violence in Social Services.

The important points raised by a few social workers highlighted the need to recognise and address these issues. Older women do want and need to talk about past experiences of abuse from partners or family members. For many women it is the first opportunity to discuss their experiences; now they can finally talk about their feelings.

The responsibility for providing an opportunity to talk lay with the social worker and several workers noted the relief women felt in telling about what had been hidden for years.

"My contribution is usually at the end of that cycle. Usually the first person who is allowing them to actually 'confess' to someone else what they've actually put up with all their life".

This 'breaking silence' always came about through talking with social workers about other problems: practical needs such as bath aides; DHSS problems; or items for the home.

"It's being able to pick up on not what is said but how it's said in different contexts. You can be going in to do all sorts of things for the elderly person, but you've got to take time to sit down and listen to what is actually being said."

Older women do not often choose to talk about the abuse that they have experienced. Some social workers attributed this to low self-esteem, doubts about being heard, the sense that they are low priority and the concentration on their physical needs. All these factors contribute to women staying silent. Social Services is also not seen as approachable other than for practical issues. This was particularly true for elderly Black clients, many social workers pointed to the very limited contact they had with older Black clients.

"...negative, very negative view of Social Services. The perception is that Social Services are there to intervene or else are there to provide money in a crisis. Basically it is negative and inappropriate. ...in the two years I've been here I have served three elderly Black clients. That speaks volumes."

One particularly perceptive social worker, having talked about several cases that had come to his attention and his feelings about this issue, made telling connections with the current emphasis on child sexual abuse:
"... you don’t have to wait to follow through current cases of abuse when we already have that under our noses. It seems to me that if you want to know about what that means, if you want to see the consequences, just approach the elderly – it's there. If you want to see the damage done over years, look at the elderly – it's there. But it's not salubrious it is not as good as child care and that's a big problem – but it's there. It's not confronted.”

Discussions about the needs of older women and women with disabilities were not just restricted to past experience. Ongoing violence between partners is a problem that comes to the attention of some social workers. Where workers notice a tension between partners on visits, they must be seen separately if women are to be given the opportunity to discuss problems they may be experiencing. The difficulty of identifying mental abuse was also raised by social workers. Most workers recognised the difficulties” elderly women and women with disabilities had about telling an outsider about problems.

"People that age, however much they suffer, they hate admitting it, they really do. "

The mixed emotions felt towards a partner who is abusive were understood by social workers who had worked with elderly/disabled women. There was far more understanding in this context than was voiced about women coming through the duty system who expressed similar mixed feelings.

Cases where violence was something that had 'recently' started were also noted. Advancing age, illness (senile dementia was frequently mentioned) and increasing disability resulting in a growing dependency of one partner on the other; violence was not restricted to abuse by the less dependent partner nor by men to women. Several workers described cases where the women, who had been abused by their partner for many years, became violent to the man when he became increasingly dependent on her through illness or disability.

Abuse within elderly couples is increasingly recognised by social workers and by management. However, the explanation offered focused on violence being the outcome of stressful circumstances. In beginning to address the problem of violence between elderly and disabled partners all the complexities and histories of the cases, and the social context in which they occur must be taken into account. Older women and women with disabilities have particular concerns when telling about the violence they are experiencing.

"They are afraid, if there is any official intervention the carer will leave"

Cases of violence to younger women with disabilities were also discussed, violence by partners as well by carers. Social workers saw ‘opportunities’ for violence in such situations and were aware of how easily such violence could be hidden. It is hard to imagine that a man who is having a relationship with a woman with disabilities or anyone caring for them could possibly be violent to them. Again efforts must
be made to talk to people separately if there are concerns about violence. One social worker spoke of having to be quite devious to achieve this; returning when he knew the carer would be out.

There was generally little awareness amongst staff of the particularly difficult issues involved for women with disabilities who experienced abuse. Where this was acknowledged the approach taken was similar to that in relation to elderly women: a non-judgemental, non-directive approach. Workers would encourage people to bring the problem into the open; facilitating this may involve legitimising the violence through talking about the pressures that individuals are under and 'ups and downs' in relationships. Intervention tended to focus on looking for the 'triggers' that precipitate the violence and attempting to remove them through offers of respite care, home helps and other practical support.

The barriers to women wanting to leave abusive relationships centered on housing. If the woman wants to leave the relationship, sheltered accommodation was seen as the only option, yet it is very limited and domestic violence cannot be used as grounds for such allocation.

"Obviously they sometimes want to leave the relationship because it's not the one they started off with. But there are so many complications."

The problems faced by elderly people are sometimes experienced, and viewed by social workers, as too long standing to resolve. But elderly women do leave violent men, as shown by the cases dealt with recently by the Special Needs department in Housing and it is clearly vital for the department to formulate policy on how they can deal with such problems.

**Mental Health Work**

Domestic violence also comes to the attention of Social Services via mental health work; connections were made by some staff between women's mental health and the abuse they experience/or have experienced. Some social workers said that women are often depressed, not coping and are quite desperate for some additional support. And it is then, if given the opportunity, that women will talk about violence in the home.

Where staff identify this they recognize the isolation experienced by women in these situations, their lack of family and support networks and the pressure of also coping with children. Because of the limited help that Social Services can give women, some social workers believed that women's problems escalate. Lack of support when women are low and depressed can lead to more severe mental health problems; which may in turn lead to psychiatric involvement. One worker said:

"Men grind women down to a certain extent and their self esteem goes. You often only pick this up when it gets to the extreme stage or when a woman is sectioned. We don't cater for women in these situations at all."
Workers' input is frequently of a 'patching up' nature, although the lack of, and necessity for, preventative work was stressed by many social workers.

The White City Mental Health Project was praised by a number of staff. It was seen as a valuable resource and filling an area of great need, many wanted a similar resource for clients in their areas - women who need support but do not meet the criteria for ongoing social work involvement. The innovative Social Service project of nine years standing has an empowering philosophy towards its women clients. Women referred to the project have a variety of problems, of which abuse, past and present, is frequently a feature or a cause. Their approach is to combine focal psychotherapy, group work and a range of psycho-social therapies alongside self-help and empowerment through participation in 'Women's Action for Mental Health' - an autonomous survivors group. The project has close liaison with other agencies and does outreach on the estate, although most referrals at present come from social workers. The project focuses particular attention on the needs of Black women, national minority women and women in mixed race relationships and families.

**Mental Health development**

Developments in mental health work in the department reflect an increasing awareness of the specific experiences and need of women and Black clients. However, abuse and its consequences have not been identified as a central issue within the department.

"We are simply at the stage of people recognising that these are issues that need to be picked up."

The present in-service mental health training (for which the department has received much outside acclaim) includes recognition of the issues involved for women and Black clients. The training is currently only available to approved social workers, but there are plans to extend the training in an introductory form throughout the department. Training is a priority issue for management and there is commitment to a full training programme to ensure quality and retention of staff.

The need for training input for working with women who are depressed is increasingly being recognised, following requests from community based services such as nurseries. Three nurseries said that they were either occasionally, or frequently approached by women, and they were able to offer them help through counselling or group work. Women are also referred on to the Law Centre and refuges as well as other local groups. If the nurseries did not already display information about domestic violence they said they would like to. They would also said they would like to offer more support to women (preferably by having a trained worker on the staff group whose job was to work with parents) and receive training about domestic violence. The nursery workers were aware of the particular needs of Black and ethnic minority women:

"More advertised support services which are easily accessible and offer specific services to minority groups."
"Try to provide a black worker for support and possibly refer to a specialist Womens Refuge."

Some day centres and projects have set aside particular days, mornings or afternoons for Black people only and women only. For example, one project provides a day facility on a drop-in basis and recognised that violence was often an issue for women using the drop-in. Some members of the team would like to develop work on violence to women. They currently provide counselling in the form of a keyworker session to clients but since between 25-30 people attend daily and there are only six staff the time allocated is limited:

"If someone needs sessions once a week or more on a longer term basis than a very few weeks we are so pushed because of the demand on our time we cannot generally undertake it."

Various mental health forums in the borough are also addressing the issues. All these initiatives are viewed by the department as a beginning in identifying particular mental health needs.

One project in the borough working with young women had recently set up a group to support young women who had been sexually abused. They soon recognised that the mothers of these young women also desperately needed support; a mother's support group has just been established. Workers suggested that some of the mothers may also have been abused by the man.

Management have identified such community based projects as an important area for developing services; especially the role they can play in facilitating the development of local resources and self-help groups.

**Support for families in B&B**

Many of the social workers interviewed voiced concern about the problems faced by women and children in B&B accommodation. The isolation, lack of support and lack of childcare facilities, on top of the unsuitability of the accommodation cause untold stress. A few social workers also pointed to the issue of violence between partners starting or heightening in B&B, but again the central concern for them in such circumstances is the safety of any children.

The department has responded by planning social work support for homeless families in B&B. This initiative is currently being finalised and the team will probably be situated in the housing department - close to E. H. U. There has been no attention, as yet, paid to the specific needs of women who are in B&B as the result of fleeing domestic violence.

**Conclusion**

Despite their fears women approach the social services department, and many women are referred for social work support, even though long term support cannot currently be offered solely on the grounds of domestic violence. As the section on mental health demonstrated, not responding
effectively. even where there is no current statutory duty, often has implications for future involvement of Social Services.

Domestic violence comes to the attention of staff employed by the department in a variety of ways, and a range of work situations. This range of work which is carried out to support women who have been/are being abused needs to be recognised and co-ordinated. Currently there is lack of cohesion which results in a haphazard service to women.

Whilst there was evidence of good practice. exciting and innovatory work in the department, there were a number of causes for concern:

- a tendency to see domestic violence in a generalised way, which meant that the specific experiences, needs and concerns of particular groups of women were not understood. This means that Black and ethnic minority women, older women, women with disabilities and lesbians were not being well served by many staff.

- a low level of awareness about community groups in the borough, and a general lack of an integrated up to date information retrieval system.

- a tendency to use simplistic 'common sense' explanations when discussing why domestic violence happens, and what the appropriate forms of intervention might be.

All of these issues need to be addressed in policy, practice and training
SECTION THREE

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR’S PROVISION OF SUPPORT

Community Questionnaire

A questionnaire focusing on support, advice and referral was designed and sent to one hundred and twenty five voluntary organisations in the borough. Apart from the obvious advice agencies and women’s groups, those organising around issues of ethnicity, disability and old age were also targeted. Following discussions with social services, a further ninety one questionnaires were sent to statutory groups, such as those working with the under fives, projects which support families, day care centres, advice centres and youth groups. Five questionnaires were sent to groups outside the Borough who might be contacted by ethnic minority women within Hammersmith and Fulham because of their specific focus. In total, therefore, two hundred and twenty one questionnaires were distributed. Eight organisations for ethnic minority women within the Borough were also sent information about the screening with the community questionnaire, asking if they would be willing to discuss conducting the screening with their members.

The questionnaire aimed to ascertain which organisations had been asked for help by women experiencing abuse, how often women approach them, whether they are able to offer support, what kinds of support they offer, what knowledge they have of the law, the police, housing and women’s aid refuges when giving advice, what their policy guidelines are, where they refer women to for more help, what kind of liaison exists between themselves and other agencies concerning this issue, whether they have the resources to follow up cases, whether they display or circulate any information publicising available resources and what resources they have for women with special needs. Further questions concentrated on how much training has been made available within or to the organisations, what barriers exist to prevent them from doing more effective work on domestic violence, what would enable them to offer more help and what they consider to be the most urgent priorities for developing services for women who have been abused.

From this data we aim to make recommendations on where and how development work can take place in order to extend the range of support available to women in the Borough, especially for black and ethnic minority women, women with disabilities, older women and lesbians.

Results

The response rate to a postal questionnaire averages 20% to 25% and although the response rate from our survey varied between the statutory and non-statutory sector, as shown in Table 3.1 below, the overall response rate of 34% significantly exceeds this figure. The response rate of 40% for the voluntary sector is considered a particularly reasonable response bearing in mind its transitory nature; for even though a large number of groups may be listed in anyone Borough, it does not mean that they are all active, nor that they deal with the issue of domestic violence.
'Community support, education, housing and health' feature as the most significant issues with which organisations are concerned; 'social support, advisory support, service provision and training' are their main functions; and the main groups within the community supported by them are 'the community in general, women, ethnic groups and children'. Tables 3.2 - 3.4 give these results in full - (please note: totals will not add up to 75, nor 100% since respondents were able to give more than one reply to each question):

Table 3.1. Response to Community Group Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Surveyed</th>
<th>Responded</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local voluntary groups</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Groups</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Borough Groups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Organisations' main target groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The community in general</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic groups</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly people</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class in particular</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>151%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>111%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual minorities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>226%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3. Main issues Organisations are concerned with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Support</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/Crafts</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>175</td>
<td>236%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4. Main functions of Organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Centre</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centre</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure Group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>183</td>
<td>253%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the seventy five organisations responding to the questionnaire, thirteen of them (17%) said they had frequently been contacted for help by women who had experienced violent relationships; twenty four (32%) had occasionally been contacted; fifteen (20%) had infrequently been contacted; and twenty three (27%) had never been contacted. The reasons given by those organisations who had never been contacted were twofold: (1) they felt their organisation was not considered appropriate, and (11) they felt that women experiencing domestic violence were fearful of conveying their secret.

In total, therefore, fifty two (69%) of the seventy five groups had been contacted in some war or another by women experiencing abuse in relationships. Of these groups, seventeen claimed that they kept records of enquiries, whilst thirty five did not.
Table 3.5 gives details of estimated enquiries received in the period of one month prior to the completion of the questionnaire. Here we can see that of the twenty six organisations who were able to make an estimate, one organisation had as many as forty enquiries in that period, another had twenty four enquiries, two had twenty one enquiries, and three had twenty enquiries. In total an estimated two hundred and thirty one enquiries had been made in a period of one month to the twenty six organisations.

Table 3.5. Estimated No. of enquiries from women who are experiencing abusive relationships in a period of one month - Autumn 1988.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of enquiries</th>
<th>% of total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No estimates/or no enquiries</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One enquiry</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two enquiries</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three enquiries</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four enquiries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five enquiries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight enquiries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten enquiries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven enquiries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty enquiries</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty one enquiries</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty four enquiries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forty enquiries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most usual way for women to approach voluntary agencies was for them to drop in to the office - thirty five of the agencies (47% of the sample) had been approached in this way - only eighteen (24%) of them had received phone calls or letters from women. whilst a surprisingly high figure of fourteen agencies (19%) had been given referrals. (These figures will not add up to fifty two. since some agencies will be approached in two or three different ways). Of those groups who had been contacted for help by women. forty four of them (59%) said they had been able to offer help. only ten of whom (13%) had a clear policy for assisting women who contacted them.

Respondents were asked whether there were particular groups of women who approached their agency for help more frequently than others concerning domestic violence. Table 3.6 gives the results to this question but should not be taken too seriously, bearing in mind that only fourteen organisations claimed that they did respond to the needs of a particular group of women. It should also be borne in mind that those organizations who serve 'young women', for instance. will only be approached by them.
Table 3.6. Particular Groups of women who more frequently contact Voluntary Organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particular Group of Women*</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young women</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black women</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Three of these agencies were approached by two different groups of women.

Lesbian women have not been referred to in the above table, which perhaps is not that surprising since there appear to be no specific lesbian voluntary organisations in the borough. Of the three groups in the borough who have sexual minority women as one of their main target groups, two of them have been frequently contacted by women experiencing violence and the third has been occasionally contacted. Each of these groups were able to offer help.

The forty four organisations who had been able to offer help or support to women experiencing violent relationships were asked about the nature of this service. Table 3.7 gives details of their provision (some offered a range of services, therefore, the table does not reflect individual organisations – for instance, an organisation offering advice, emotional support and rehousing would appear three times in the grid).

Table 3.7. Type of support offered to women by voluntary organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Offered*</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General/emotional support</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice/information</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehousing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling/therapy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing advice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal advice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal advice from police</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not appropriate/non response</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 'other' types of services provided by respondents included referral (by as many as ten organisations), help in tenancy transfers, accompanying women to the police or solicitors, assertion training, help with immigration problems, rehabilitation in a therapeutic community and welfare rights advice. The majority of these latter services were only mentioned by one or two groups.

Respondents were also asked whether they were able to accompany a woman to the hospital, police station, courts or local council offices if she needed to go and wanted support. Of the forty four respondents, thirty five of them recorded that they were able to assist in this way.

Although this survey does not in any way represent all of the work being carried out on domestic violence by the voluntary sector in Hammersmith and Fulham, it does indicate areas of concern and highlights possible gaps in service provision. The above table suggests, for instance that the voluntary sector are more adequately equipped to offer general advice, emotional support and counselling than they are to offer legal or housing advice, and very few are able to offer interpreting services.

This is borne out by data in Table 3.8, which shows that voluntary workers have more knowledge of Women's Aid refuges than they do of the law and the police.

Table 3.8. Knowledge of staff concerning the law, the police, housing and Women's Aid Refuges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very knowledgeable</th>
<th>not particularly knowledgeable</th>
<th>not at all knowledgeable</th>
<th>could advise on rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The law</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Aid/Refuges</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, it seems clear that the voluntary sector do have a fair amount of knowledge as to where they could gain further specialist information when the situation demands it, as shown by Table 3.9 (figures will not total 75, nor 100% since it is a multicoded response). What is particularly significant in this table is the fact that legal issues are the most dominant pre-occupation for voluntary groups:
Table 3.9. Specialist agencies who may be contacted for more information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialist Agency</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law centre/solicitors</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Aid/ Refuges</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.A.B.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.A. Social Services</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.A. Housing Aid</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Associations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on issue</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not appropriate/non response</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of other organisations to whom community workers turn for advice are Welfare Rights Advice Centres, Private Tenants' Rights, Mind, Bishop Creighton House Settlement, Rape Crisis Centre, Lesbian Line, Women's Mental Health Project, the Women's Department the Women's Centre, the police and Victims Support. Again most of these organisations were mentioned by only one or two respondents.

Groups were also asked whether they referred women to other agencies for further help and advice, even though they had been able to offer them help. Of the forty four offering help, thirty eight organisations (51% of the original total sample) also referred women on to other agencies and twenty two of them claimed that they continued follow-up work with their client following such referral. Table 3.10 below gives details of these referrals:

Table 3.10. Organisations to whom referrals have been made by respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Aid/ Refuges</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.A. Social Services</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Centres, Legal Advice Centres</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice Agencies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Aid Solicitors/solicitor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.A. Housing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Associations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Agencies</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not appropriate/non response</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of other organisations to whom referrals were made are Incest Survivors. Rape Crisis. Citizens' Advice Bureaux, the Women's Centre. Victims Support. Of the forty four groups offering help, twenty four of
them reported that they liaise with other agencies in the Borough about the problem of domestic violence. The most frequent liaison takes place with London Women’s Aid and the two local refuges, followed by social services, local authority housing departments and local law centres.

In accordance with our research brief, a section of the questionnaire referred to the abilities of organisations to respond to the needs of black women and women with disabilities.

Twenty five of the groups in the original sample identified themselves as focussing on ethnic minority groups in the borough. Of this number, eight of them had frequent requests for help from women, nine had occasional requests and three had infrequent requests. Five of them had never been approached for support. In total nineteen of these groups stated that they had been able to offer help to women.

Of the forty four organisations offering help (which, therefore, includes the nineteen groups referred to above), twenty six reported that they would respond to the needs of black women in the same way as to all other clients; six said they would respond positively and sensitively; six recorded that either they had not been approached or that it did not apply to their organisation; six said they had black women to offer support; and two of these organisations added that they were in the process of reviewing their policy. Thirty one of these organisations claimed they had a black member of staff in their organisation who was available to talk to black women who had been abused.

The number of organisations who state that they can help women whose first language is not English is quite high: twenty seven of the forty four organisations claimed that they could help in this way, although this response rate dropped to twenty when they were asked which languages they could actually help with. Replies to these questions suggests that the voluntary sector have staff members who are able to speak as many as twenty one languages between them. Other groups were able to find interpreters from the CRE, the Greater London translation unit and other community groups and volunteers. Bearing in mind that the voluntary sector seem to have a number of workers from many different ethnic backgrounds, it is perhaps surprising that they had not offered interpreting as a support service (see Table 3.7).

Table 3. 11 overleaf gives details of organisations to whom the forty four groups would refer black women.
Table 3.11   Organisations to whom black women may be referred.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>% of total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific black group</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Aid/refuges</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Women's refuge</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It depends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor/Law Centre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southall Black Sisters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not appropriate</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although seventeen organisations said that they would refer to specific black groups. few of them mentioned any names. apart from the Asian Women's Cultural Association, Black Amalgamation of Self Help Co-ops, Ethnic Counselling Network, Asian Women's Refuge, the Rastafarian Advice Centre and the CRE - most of which were only referred to by one or two organizations, with the exception of the latter two organisations which were each recorded four times. This suggests that although there might be a number of black organisations who could offer more assistance to black women if they were given more resources, knowledge of their existence seems fragmentary by the voluntary sector throughout the borough.

The results concerning organisations' responses to needs of women with disabilities are somewhat similar, although as Table 3.12 illustrates, knowledge of organisations who can offer specific help and to whom referrals can be made for women with disabilities is even more minimal than those for Black women.

Only eight organisations from the original sample identified themselves as working with people with disabilities. Three of these occasionally had requests for support and five never had women approaching them for help with domestic violence.

Twenty of the forty four organisations offering help also reported that they responded to disabled women in the same way as to all other clients; fourteen of them, on the other hand, said that the situation had never arisen; six of them argued that they did not have any facilities; two were honest to report that they did not respond well enough; two were in the process of reviewing their policy and only one reported that it depended on the situation.

Table 3.12 overleaf gives details of organisations to whom the forty four groups would refer women with disabilities.
Table 3.12. Organisations to whom women with disabilities may be referred.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>No.of Responses</th>
<th>% of total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It depends</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith &amp; Fulham Action for Disability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has not arisen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Mental Health Project</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisations</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not appropriate</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The organisations mentioned in the 'other' category are the White City Mental Health Project, Mind, CRE Disability Project, Local Authority Disability Unit, Look Up, Social Services, Health Visitors (each of which was mentioned by one group respectively) four other groups said they would refer disabled women to the same organisations as for all women.

Of the total sample of seventy five organisations, only twenty five of them said they displayed or circulated information publicising resources in the community for women experiencing domestic violence – only three of which displayed their own material. Examples of specific information displayed from other organisations were Women’s Aid posters, information concerning the 24 hour crisis line at Chiswick Family Rescue and the local police domestic violence unit. Only two organisations, in fact, recorded that they held information from the latter two resources. There is clearly a need for more literature to be made available to the voluntary sector, for encouragingly, fifty five of the respondents to the questionnaire stated that they would be willing to display information if it was made available to them.

Regarding the issue of training, only twelve organisations (16% of the total sample) had been provided with any training facilities – nine of these had been inside training courses or had had speakers brought in and three of them had been outside courses. Clearly this is another area for improvement, especially since thirty two organisations felt that training in this issue was necessary for them.

To summarise the main findings so far; fifty two out of the seventy five organisations had been contacted by women, forty four of whom had been able to offer help in some way.

One section of the questionnaire was reserved for organisations who had not offered any help to women regarding domestic violence. It is gratifying to find that of the eight organisations who had been contacted but who had not
been able to offer help, six of them had referred women elsewhere. The organisations used by them were Womens Aid, social services, the law centre, the housing department and the women's centre. Only two of these organisations, however, did any follow up work following referral.

Of the thirty one organisations not being contacted (and therefore not offering help) only four of them liaise around the issue of domestic violence with other organisations such as Womens Aid, law centres, the Church and women I's support groups. Their knowledge of other organisations working in this field is also very limited.

All of the seventy five respondents were asked whether they felt they should or would like to offer women who have experienced domestic violence more help and support. Of those already offering help (forty four organisations) thirty five of them felt they would like to offer more support to women experiencing domestic violence. Of those who have not offered help, nine of them felt they should be doing so whilst seventeen felt they should not (there were five non responses to this question). In order to provide more support, thirty two of the respondents argued that they needed more resources, either in the form of funds or training. Fourteen requested more training on the issue, including legal support, and seven called for more information, posters and lists of contacts. Again it is surprising that although in a previous question as many as thirty two organisations felt that training was necessary for their organisation, only fourteen of these followed this up in a supplementary question. This is, no doubt, a function of questionnaire design, where either respondents are being less reflective in a self completion questionnaire than they would be if they were interviewed, or they feel that they have already expressed their view in an earlier reply.

In conclusion, the final question in the survey asked groups what they considered to be the most urgent priorities in developing better services for women who have been abused. Only those organisations previously offering help answered this question. Table 3.13 gives details of responses, which will not total seventy five since it was a multi-coded question.
Table 3.13. Urgent priorities for developing better services in the Voluntary Sector for women who are/have been abused.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>No.of Responses</th>
<th>% of total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publicised &amp; Trained network/ Service co-ordination</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of housing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More refuges/better conditions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed &amp; faster response from the police</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice &amp; information on rights</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax benefits/ financial Resources for women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women development worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response/non appropriate</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>105</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is most encouraging that respondents produced some very relevant and possible means of developing services. They did not, for instance, just argue for more resources for their organisation but felt that co-ordination of existing services was most appropriate as a starting point. Thus the most popular means of developing services was to produce a publicised network, whereby those groups already offering provision of services could be put in touch with each other. Respondents frequently mentioned that workers within these organisations should have relevant training for dealing with the issue.

Comments in this section of the questionnaire often referred to the most immediate problem experienced by women who have suffered abuse - that is how they can acquire immediate alternative housing or shelter when they have made the decision to leave their existing homes. They referred to poor service provision from housing departments and argued for more
sensitive approaches and means of acquiring more properties for use as temporary refuge. Criticisms were also forthcoming regarding responses from the police. Clearly a number of the organisations are unaware of changed police policy under the new force order.

Other ideas included a new voluntary project with a twenty four hour service specifically for women experiencing abuse and for their children; training for the statutory sector; and a greater commitment on behalf of statutory and voluntary organisations to giving domestic violence a high profile in their every day work.

Conclusions

The response rate to this questionnaire was fair especially bearing in mind that (i) the community sector is in great flux at the moment; (ii) this sector is often under-staffed and inundated with questionnaires which they find difficult to complete due to lack of time; and (iii) the issue of domestic violence is not necessarily seen to be important to all respondents.

A number of conclusions can, however, be drawn from the survey. There are clearly a number of community groups currently helping women who are/have been experiencing domestic violence who are providing different kinds of services; the most important of which would appear to be emotional support. Their knowledge of legal and housing issues is, however, weak. This is an area which could be developed through focused training sessions. Since the law centres are so highly thought of we have followed up with in-depth interviews with their workers, details of which appear in Section four.

The voluntary sector do refer and liaise with other organisations (if somewhat arbitrarily), mainly with Womens Aid and the statutory sector. There is, however, no significant networking or information exchange between voluntary groups themselves and it is recommended that this is facilitated by the provision of more resources by the Local Authority.
Questionnaire for Trainers in the Borough

The intention of designing a survey for training departments in the Council, local Health Authority, local community groups and local police was to assess both the level and content of current training and to explore potential areas of development in the future. The possibility of multi-disciplinary training and a working group to discuss and co-ordinate training in the borough on domestic violence are raised in the survey for comment.

Joint meetings between refuge workers and representatives from CCPU, as well as between Chiswick Family Rescue and workers from both local refuges have also taken place to discuss training initiatives in the local police force. Questionnaires were sent to training departments in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Departments</th>
<th>Nos. sent</th>
<th>Nos. returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Council</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 on behalf of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Authority</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family GPs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Police</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H &amp; F Association for Community Organisations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Unit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Training Forum &amp; Training Umbrella Group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one of these departments have carried out an in-service training course specifically on domestic violence (social services), although seven of them cover the subject in their more general training programme - three of these were from the housing department in relation to the training of all emergency housing officers - housing aid officers in relation to the law with regard to homelessness through relationship breakdown - and housing benefit officers with regard to payments on two dwellings at the same time; two were from the Health Authority - one of which concerned courses for pensioners in relation to home safety; another from a GP
trainer for all GP trainees; and one from the women's training officer in the local authority. Eight of the respondents, therefore, did not offer any training on the issue at all.

Even though questions four to nine were designed only for those respondents who were providing in service training, five of the respondents provided answers. Courses are run rarely in the housing department, although new emergency housing officers are spoken to by a senior officer about domestic violence cases on employment - eight officers had participated in some form of training in the course of the last year. Both housing benefit and emergency housing use internal trainers and have had no contact with outside speakers. Their training amounts to approximately one hour, although most of it is learnt 'on the job'. Housing benefit concentrate their training solely on welfare benefits through the use of lectures, workshop discussions and case studies, whilst emergency housing concentrate on the need and practice of interviewing members of the public sensitively with due regard to special needs they may have. The latter use the case study method to cover the prevalence, definition, experience and impact of domestic violence, issues confronted by children living with violence, the law, housing rights, welfare rights and working with abusive men.

The GP trainer covers domestic violence in a series of tutorials and has trained one trainee GP in the course of the past year. The experience and impact of domestic violence is covered as well as the law, working with abusive men and the specific needs of black and ethnic women and children living with violence. Case studies and required reading are used as back-up to the tutorials.

The Health Authority ran courses for thirty pensioners on improving home safety in the last year with the use of internal and outside trainers. Their courses cover the definition, experience and impact of domestic violence, the specific needs of older women and women with disabilities, their housing rights, welfare rights and working with abusive men. Workshop discussions, structured activities, role play and information packs are used for this purpose. They are at present preparing and piloting their own information pack and audio tape around this issue. They plan to distribute packs to two hundred women and provide training for other workers. They have now been given funding by CCPU to distribute packs to all pensioners in the borough. A pensioners safety day was held in December. This would appear to be a very useful resource which the local authority would be advised to investigate further.

The Women's training officer in the council's training and development unit run courses four to ten times a year on assertiveness training and self -fence for all women employees with the use of a combination of inside and outside trainers. They estimate as many as two hundred women have attended the courses in the past year. An hour of each course is devoted to domestic violence (5-10% of the course), when they cover the experience of domestic violence, racism, the specific needs of Black and ethnic women and working with abusive men. Methods which are used include lectures, workshop discussions and role play.

Social Services have conducted an in-service specific training courses on domestic violence for staff who work with women. A combination of inside
and outside trainers were used for this purpose and two days is spent on the issue. The course has been run once in the past year with the attendance of nineteen workers. Quite a number of methods, including handouts from Womens Aid are used to cover the following subjects: prevalence, definition, experience and impact of domestic violence, the specific needs of Black and ethnic minority women, children living with violence, the law, housing rights and welfare rights.

Reasons given by respondents for not providing in-service training include 'lack of resources, peripheral relevance to everyday work, more prevalent problems to deal with, the issue has never been on any agenda, staff would not be requested to deal with such problems and more concerned with violence in the workplace'. This question, significantly, was not answered by a number of people. One questionnaire from the Health Promotion Service stated that now the issue had been raised, they would enquire whether their managers go elsewhere for such training or see a need for it. The emergency housing department stated that they were awaiting finalisation of their policies. The latter were planning courses on their new policies once complete, which would include legal remedies and practical advice to domestic violence victims within the context of those policies. Only five others were considering developing training, although not all of them were specifically in the area of domestic violence.

Although two respondents felt there should not be more training in the area of domestic violence and four felt they would need to investigate the issue more fully before making that recommendation, the majority of departments felt there was a need for more training. In the local authority, for instance, - the housing department considered they needed to develop skills in: (i) being more aware and understanding of the problems, (ii) implementing council policies with full regard to public service orientation, and (iii) assessing the needs of women and their children after they had been interviewed, such as problems associated with moving into temporary accommodation and acquiring permanent accommodation. Social services also considered it to be a priority in terms of women's rights, and assessment of needs and resources available for women facing violence. The women's training officer in the council's training and development unit thought that low-income, disadvantaged women (especially Black and ethnic minority women) and women who feel they are in abusive relationships would benefit from some training.

The health authority considered: (i) a priority issue was to make people aware of warning signs and evasive action of potentially violent situations as well as to make them aware of available supportive services such as women's refuges and marriage guidance, (ii) safe practice should be encouraged for isolated pensioners without inducing too much fear, (iii) these issues should be discussed during in-service training for nurses, (iv) more training should be offered for staff working in acute services such as day and psychiatric hospitals, and (v) courses should be provided on the causes of domestic violence, identification of 'at risk groups', symptoms and signs and psychology of victims such as guilt, low self esteem and shame. It was felt that all service-oriented voluntary sector groups could benefit from training, especially women's groups and health groups.
Unfortunately not all Departments considered that it was relevant for them to be conducting these courses. Five considered that barriers to development were created by lack of resources and knowledge of the area. Whilst the remainder felt that either they were never confronted by the issue or that they had other priorities.

Finally, quite an encouraging response was forthcoming regarding the issue of multi-disciplinary training, for ten departments completed their questionnaire in the affirmative; three others, however, said 'no' and three were uncertain. One respondent was sceptical that other groups of workers were sufficiently involved with the issue for joint training to be a useful exercise. Generally, however, it was felt that social workers, doctors, health visitors, district nurses, community workers, the police, housing departmental staff in housing aid, emergency housing and applications, as well as employees such as home helps should be involved in multi-disciplinary training.

Three departments claimed they would not be interested in developing a borough wide strategy for training, six said 'may be' and seven felt that their department would be interested in developing a borough wide strategy for training. The latter offered the following skills and resources which could be fed into joint training: knowledge of Part III Housing Act and housing provision, possible use of outside speakers (from the Mental Health Unit), names of outside speakers specialising in assertiveness and self defence training, knowledge of GP responsibilities and present methods of management, an appreciation of the perspectives of pensioners regarding safety issues; nothing was forthcoming from the remaining ten respondents.

Conclusion

Again the response rate to this questionnaire was not exceptional. No questionnaires were returned from the voluntary sector joint training forum, for instance. And bearing in mind that community workers were calling for more training in their questionnaire, there is clearly a dearth of available courses for them. The results were generally disappointing in that they suggest very little training is conducted for employees who deal with domestic violence. Social services were the only employers to provide their workers with in-service training, and yet only nineteen people had attended a course in the past year. Most other courses contained only a very small module on domestic violence.

Now that the issue has been raised, it is hoped that a borough wide multi-disciplinary strategy for training can be co-ordinated which will build upon the good will and limited resources already available.
SECTION FOUR

LEGAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSES

In 1984 the Metropolitan Police responded to the findings of The London Domestic Violence and Policing Study (1984) as well as to the concerns highlighted by organisations like Womens Aid by setting up a multi-agency Working Party to examine police responses to domestic violence. Their report examines police practice in relation to record keeping, policy, training, 'victim' support as well as public and police perception of police response. Following recommendations made by this group in 1986, the Metropolitan Police in June 1987 issued new guidelines on how the police should handle domestic disputes and domestic incidents involving violence. This new force order (Police Order No 11) acknowledges that 'victims' of domestic violence are in a very much more vulnerable position than victims of other assaults since they are subjected to violence in the one place in which they expect to be safe, namely, their own home.

The new force order aims to overcome two of the main difficulties previously encountered when dealing with domestic violence. Firstly, there had been problems concerning the availability of statistics, since official sources did not contain a category for identifying domestic violence. Secondly, many reported incidents of domestic violence were placed under the category of 'common assault'. This meant it was impossible to expect a reluctant witness to be compelled to give evidence in a court of law. As will be shown in the following discussion, the new order cannot hope to overcome this second problem.

Instructions contained in the new force order require the maintenance of records or reports relating to domestic violence. All incidents have now to be reported in an Incident Report Book or on a Crime Sheet and improved practices relating to the storage of injunctions have been introduced. The force order stressed that new police recruits should receive increased training and emphasised the new police role in arrest, referrals to other agencies and in prosecutions. The need for an improved and sympathetic service was stressed, where officers are now required to provide support and comfort and to interview 'victims' separately from the assailant. Police officers are further required to be more knowledgeable of available local facilities in order to refer to other helping agencies and may provide transport to convey 'victims' to places of safety when there is an urgent need and when resources allow. At the same time the more formal mechanisms of police intervention are also encouraged.

The main point of the force order is to stress that an assault which takes place within the home is as much a criminal act as one which occurs in the street, and officers should, therefore, respond accordingly. Even in cases where a non-arrestable offence has been committed, e.g. common assault, police can make an arrest in accordance with The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) s.25 in order that a child or any other vulnerable person may be protected. In cases where the 'victim complainant' is
reluctant to continue with a prosecution for whatever reason, criminal proceedings are encouraged, providing there is the necessary evidence and it is in the victim's or the public interest to proceed (cf s.80 The Police and Criminal Evidence Act). However, since 1986 the Crown Prosecution Service has the task of deciding whether there is sufficient evidence to bring a case of prosecution to the courts. The main reason for this change in practice was to separate investigation of crimes from the decision to prosecute.

Practical Implementation of the Force Order

Implementation of the new force order has varied across London, with some stations refusing to acknowledge its existence and others responding with a high level of resources. The responses of the three police stations in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, namely, Fulham, Shepherd's Bush and Hammersmith - have been quite dissimilar.

In April 1988 in Fulham, for instance, a Domestic Violence Unit was established and serviced by five officers on a part-time basis (one of whom is a woman police sergeant). They undertake the work in addition to their existing duties and operate on a shift system. A specific room containing an answer phone has been allocated for the purposes of interviewing women. A 'referral system between police and social services, legal aid centres and hospitals' is also maintained, even though there was no prior consultation with relevant local agencies. Officers are requested to complete at least an Incident Report Book for every domestic 'incident' and if it involves a criminal act they are supposed to complete a Crime Report, both of which are recorded in a Domestic Violence Register. Incidents where the victim subsequently withdraws or refuses to substantiate the allegation are registered/recorded as 'No Crime'. Where an arrest relating to an incident occurs, it is logged on a Custody Record. Following each incident, the Unit officers attempt to contact the woman either indirectly (through a friend, relative or neighbour) or directly by letter, when they will offer what they consider to be relevant information and referral advice. Unit Officers will also take a woman to other helping agencies and intervene on her behalf.

In Shepherd's Bush four sergeants, one for each relief, have been nominated as a point of reference for officers on domestic violence cases. Their general function is to oversee each relief. brief officers on incidents, give guidance and advice on procedures and ensure that officers are aware of powers available to them. A nominated woman police constable conducts follow up and referrals and maintains a register in addition to her usual home beat duties. An incident recording system similar to that in Fulham is in operation.

Hammersmith station has not undertaken any 'special' initiatives but officers are issued with procedural notes on attending domestic violence incidents. (A copy of the guidelines given to Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush officers is shown in Appendix 3).

Even though the new force order requires the maintenance of statistics for domestic violence, the only figures that are available to us come from the
Fulham Domestic Violence Unit and are very limited in their analysis. There had been 189 referrals to the Unit between the period of 5 April and 15 September 1988; twenty arrests had been made, there had been another forty one allegations of crimes which were not substantiated by the victims' and currently there were thirteen injunctions in force. The CCPU have discussed with officers the possibility of making domestic violence figures available across the three stations in order that comparisons can be made and also to provide a breakdown in much the same manner as the Tottenham police domestic violence unit. The latter's statistics give details of 'violence' and 'dispute' reports, case classification, number of cases not proceeded with, results at court and referrals by police. To date, no figures are available from Shepherds Bush and Hammersmith.

**Interviews with the Police**

Although initially gaining access to Hammersmith & Fulham police was not easy because of their direct subordination to the Home Office, eventually interviews did take place with Chief Superintendent Briggs of Hammersmith and Chief Superintendent Sheridan of Fulham. It was, however, unfortunate that we were not given permission to interview officers at any of the stations in order to gauge how they themselves were actually putting the new policies into practice and the difficulties that they might be confronting.

The main objectives of discussions with the police were to ascertain what changes in police practice had taken place since the new force order had been issued and what impact the new guidelines had had locally. In discussing changes, the two senior officers felt that a vast improvement had been effected by the introduction of the force order. The main principle of change for the police was felt to be that officers 'never knew where they stood before'. Prior to the introduction of the new regulations, the overriding difficulty, according to them, concerned legislation. This had created problems in the definition of domestic violence and the provision of credible evidence which could be taken before the court. Ambivalent situations were thus created for officers to deal with. For instance, the fact that a man previously had the right to be present whilst officers were taking details of evidence, meant that women were often extremely reticent in providing it. Also, men previously had to be cajoled by officers to leave the premises and this not infrequently resulted in nasty incidents particularly with those under the influence of alcohol. "Officers felt it was dangerous to intervene". An additional problem was caused by women not attending courts to substantiate their complaint.

According to the senior officers, their police officers feel more secure since the introduction of the force order and "now know where they stand ... it makes life simpler". The new force order encourages officers to remove men from the scene and arrest them if necessary. It is considered that even if these men are transported to the police station only for a short time in custody, a cooling off period is provided which might result in 'swinging the balance' and giving the women space in which they can make their own decisions. The custody officer makes the decision as to whether to accept a charge where it can be justified. Most domestic violence
arrests are made for 'actual bodily harm' which they consider is being stretched to its limits for domestic violence. These crimes would otherwise tend to be treated as common assault in other circumstances. The numbers of domestic violence arrests by each station have risen considerably since the introduction of the new order but there is no way of proving this statistically since previous records are non-existent. Shepherd's Bush station claims that 80-90 per cent of men in incidents of domestic violence are hoisted and brought to the police station.

A major worry of the senior officers concerned the use of custody as providing a cooling off period, since, whether the man is guilty or innocent, the police have to justify their actions. No other offence is handled in this way. They stated that even though they are in full agreement with the new policy, they feel that police officers are "putting themselves out on a limb" and fear that one day they could be sued for their actions. A specific incident was cited where a man was kept in the station for nine hours and the police knew within one hour that the woman would not follow it up. They considered, however, that the woman needed time to collect her things and make arrangements to go elsewhere. According to them they are giving men who have been involved in domestic violence incidents a tougher time than those had up for casual assault in the street.

According to the chief officers a major beneficial change has resulted from the directive to interview women separately from the assailants. Interpreting is available for non-English speaking women in the same way as for all other 'victims' of crime. If there was a question of a formal statement or formal interview they would call an interpreter but there is no provision for a woman interpreter to be available. The problem still remains, however, that if women drop from proceeding with the case, their evidence cannot be used against the defendant. For it is up to the CPS to ensure a 'prima facie' case where sufficient evidence on paper exists and where that evidence must be later cross examined with the witness in a court of law.

Since there can never be a situation where one person's account is accepted without question, officers are encouraged to listen to all that the woman has to say and to their children if appropriate. Their judgements will be formed not only by what has been said but also by signs of damage in the house, signs of obvious physical injury and cognisance of the emotional state of the woman concerned. Equally, men are also given time to talk if they are capable of doing so. In the vast majority of cases details are taken from the woman when the police officers arrive at the scene, even though they are sometimes criticised for doing so because it is at this point that the woman might be in an emotional state. On the other hand, if they wait until the next day she has often "got over it". According to the senior officers the policeman deals with these cases without adequate powers.

Transport can be provided for women to return to their home in order to pick up their belongings if there is reason to fear for her safety, and police officers would accompany a woman to a local refuge; but this is dependent upon its availability.
The length of time it takes for a police officer to arrive on a domestic violence call is considered to be "no better or worse than any other call."
The response time varies and often depends on what the person on the other end of the telephone conveys to the station. The senior officers suggested that it took from five to ten minutes. But at all times, they claimed, officers realised that such a case could extend along a continuum from verbal abuse, to physical abuse, to abuse with knives to murder.

This raised the very real problem of providing a definition of domestic violence which the Metropolitan police have now done:

'A domestic dispute is any quarrel including violence between family or household members. Domestic violence occurs when a person or persons causes, attempts to cause, or threatens physical harm to another family or household member'.
(Force Order: June 23 1987).

The senior officers accept and work with this definition and by acknowledging that it involves all familial contacts, they argue that it includes all boyfriends and girlfriends, even in non-stable relationships at the street level such as jealous boyfriends in pubs. They consider it to be a very wide definition including disputes between friends and acquaintances. One very good reason for allowing the definition to embrace such a multitude of relationships lies in the fact that a high proportion of attacks on women come from ex-boyfriends and ex-husbands.

Police officers are required to offer advice to women, and although they are unable to give names of local solicitors, they recommend the law centres, with whom they claim to have a very good relationship. They also offer information on the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the location of local refuges. They also hold information on at least twenty other voluntary-and statutory organisations, which are used according to circumstances; for instance, various church organisations, marriage guidance and council services are recommended depending on the specific needs and situations of the abused woman. It was felt that it is unnecessary for officers to carry all this information with them, for if required, they can either radio to the control room or make a specific recommendation for a follow up visit to be made the following day, when the necessary information can be provided. This strategy is preferred because, according to the senior officers "people change their minds and require a different approach in the cool light of the day". When asked whether the police officers could have additional particulars on them for women, the senior officers answered that they already have too many cards on them and could not possibly carry any more leaflets.

Follow-ups are not carried out on all cases; each case has to be judged individually, for in many instances the woman refuses to pursue the matter any further. This is a serious matter of contention for the police, who have, on a number of occasions, claimed to have gone to great lengths to offer more advice to the woman. This has even extended to their pretence of being the 'Avon lady' in order to gain access to the woman. They maintain that there are numerous reported occasions of the woman returning to the station on the day following a man's arrest to argue that she has decided not to continue with her case against him after all.
The senior officers claimed that when they consider a matter to be very serious and a matter for the courts, they will ensure that a follow-up call takes place. Statistics are not available, however, for us to ascertain what proportion of cases are dealt with in this way. During a follow up call the woman will be encouraged to take some action against the man, even though it may be very painful for her to do so. But even in such circumstances where the matter has been judged as meriting proceedings being taken against the man and the woman encouraged to do so, it still occurs that the woman chooses not to press charges which leaves the police no alternative but to drop the case, (in spite of the fact that they have the powers to do so under s.80 of The Police and Criminal Evidence Act). According to the senior officers this emphasis on follow-up and the kind of treatment offered to women would not have been possible previously. As mentioned previously, whether or not evidence is sufficient for a court case is a matter for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and not the police, but if no statement is forthcoming from the woman, she cannot be treated as a hostile witness in the courts.

At the end of the day the police are working within the criminal justice system in the context of existing legislation whereby it is impossible to have a class of offence and expect the criminal justice system to accept a lower burden and standard of proof with a hostile witness. One of the senior officers referred to the whole procedure as 'Mediaeval Theatre' and felt that it was little wonder that huge numbers of women did not proceed with their cases when they are subjected to emotional and financial strains during the very long period that the courts take to settle a case. They were very critical of the CPS and suggested that the latter were less willing than the police to recommend criminal prosecution. Although acknowledging that the CPS are constrained by the burden of proof, they are also aware that they are influenced by their own performance indicators of conviction rate.

Injunctions were considered to be quite effective, but only if they had a power of arrest attached to them. If they lack that power "they are not worth the paper they are written on", said the Chief Superintendent. Injunctions with powers of arrest, which can be issued by High, County or Magistrates courts, are filed at police stations. When they arrive at the station they are entered in the warrant register where other criminal warrants are entered which are not crime related (e. g. speeding). In addition, if the man is known to the police a reference will be made on his index card. The address of the victim will be recorded in the street section of the collators index and it will be made clear that there is an injunction to protect her from him. The terms of the injunction will also be recorded.

Police officers do not carry any reference on their person regarding injunctions. In fact, the police are unaware of the majority of injunctions, so if they are called to a property while on patrol they have to rely on the woman to inform them of such details. They then have to radio the station for confirmation and only when they have this information can they act in accordance with the attached powers. If the terms of the injunction are what they refer to as "woolly", they may not act against the man and will advise the woman to return to her solicitor for legal advice. This sometimes causes conflict if the woman is under a misapprehension that
she is 'fully protected' by her injunction and it then transpires that she is not. For if the man has not done anything specific to her the police are unable to take any action against him unless the injunction contains powers of arrest.

In discussing whether police responses have been a deterrent to violent men, the senior officers considered that this was a question which could not be considered in isolation from wider societal issues. "When a man has had a skinsful and he is put in clink for the night it is no deterrent to him. Some men see it as an escape from the family." It is important to bear in mind, according to the police, that a substantial proportion of people who get involved in domestic violence are people who already have violent backgrounds. Many have criminal records for other criminal activities which have never prevented them from continuing their violent behaviour. They had grave doubts that individual deterrence had anything to do with what went on in the criminal justice system. "It's all about protecting people for a given period of time - six hours, six months - it won't improve behaviour. It has no effect whatsoever, especially since so many cases are drink related". Indeed, the police claim that many cases of domestic violence do not go through the police - .this is confirmed by our findings in Section One - and that those which are processed through police channels involve people who cannot afford anything else or who have few social networks, those involved with drink or those already having criminal records.

We also asked whether women were informed by the police when men were released from prison or from bail. Regarding the former, no information is given to the woman but it is the police's duty to inform the woman when the man has been released from the station.

When a woman eventually leaves home, she is often confronted by the additional problem of the man who has been violent to her attempting to find out where she is living or staying. If he reports her as missing from the home and requests the police to find her address, it is their responsibility to satisfy themselves only that she is alive and to inform the man as such. The policy requires them to inform the man that she is alive and wants no further contact with him; they should not under any circumstance convey her address to him. Nor in the case of demanding solicitors letters, should they offer this information.

The senior officers refused to complete the training questionnaire which the research team had devised but gave a brief resume of the kinds of training which their police officers follow. The generic training for the Metropolitan Police is conducted at Hendon but, although it covers the new force order policy, the course does not contain a module on domestic violence. Officers are made aware of options within the policy and in addition will have had practical experience of dealing with simulated domestic violence incidents which are videoed and played back. Although every class is made aware of both policy and practice in the course of their training, not all of them will be examined on the issue, for there are no compulsory questions on this subject. Officers cannot, of course, be expected to be experts in domestic violence since they have so many other things to do. In fact, the vast majority of domestic violence work is carried out by semi-trained officers who have completed this training.
but who are on probation for two years. It is generally considered by the senior officers that this represents nothing less than a culture shock for many of them.

A certain amount of in-service training is conducted in response to changes in policy but most training is what one would call 'on the job training'. Eleven per cent of police officers are said to be involved in formal training at anyone time.

In discussing how individual police officers deal with cases, the senior officers felt that generally they coped with the situations well. Some were very sensitive to the issue and experienced tremendous frustration at being unable to provide an immediate solution for the women they dealt with. There were others who were insensitive to the issue but it was felt that they would react and operate in this way in all criminal incidences with which they were dealing.

The researchers discussed the different ways in which each station dealt with domestic violence. One of the senior officers suggested that the issue of domestic violence was marginalised by having a specific unit to deal with it. He was not convinced that the creation of such a unit would make any appreciable difference to service delivery; rather it was an issue which should be handled by all officers in order to educate them to the problems of dealing with such situations.

In conclusion, the senior police officers were generally satisfied with the internal implementation of the new force order. Some people, they felt, had unrealistic expectations of the outcome of its introduction since domestic violence is a complex problem which cannot be overcome by the police service alone. They considered that the major changes which had taken place eighteen months ago had produced good results. It is far too early to consider making any changes yet, the impact of the new force order is yet to be assessed. They do expect some constitutional issues to emerge as time goes by which will need to be considered before any further changes take place. Overall, they considered the policy and actions to be correct. Now it is necessary to look beyond these changes to the broader issues raised by the actions of the courts, in such important areas as whether a lesser level of proof is acceptable in cases of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Whilst the changes in policy and recent initiatives are to be welcomed, we have been unable to assess them in practice. We suspect that the faith of the senior officers we talked to in the implementation of the force order is unlikely to be consistently reflected in practice throughout the borough. The evidence from the refuge groups of recent contacts with the police (some details of which follow) suggest that 'old attitudes die hard'.

Indeed there was some evidence of this in the responses of the senior officers themselves. One senior officer, for instance, stressed that domestic violence was not an issue for women only but that it was experienced by a number of men. The statistic he quoted was high but is
not borne out by the study carried out by Sue Edwards - An evaluation of the force order on domestic disputes and violence, 1988 - where 98% of domestic violence incidents were perpetrated by men and in the remaining 2% where women were the principal suspects these cases involved reciprocal or counter allegations. This is a problem we also confronted when trying to gain access to GP surgeries for the screening. We were discouraged by one or two male GPs from using their venue because they considered domestic violence was also experienced by a number of men.

A further comment made by both senior officers concerned the notion that 'women tend to move from one violent relationship to another'. This idea was also expressed by social workers (as reported in Section Two of the report). Section five will discuss the negative impact such ideas can have upon women when they turn to help seeking agencies in their attempts to stop their partners violence.

The senior officers also stressed that most domestic violence cases they dealt with concerned perpetrators with criminal records. Since they are not making their statistics available to the public in a meaningful form, it is impossible to confirm or disconfirm these impressions. Whilst acknowledging that a high proportion of police time is spent in dealing with domestic violence cases where the assailant already has a criminal record, the evidence in Section one would suggest that this is certainly not reflected in the majority of cases in our sample - and by extrapolation, for the rest of the population.

These three ideas, expressed in the short space of one interview, and held by reasonably sensitive senior officers who have been working around the issue of domestic violence for some years suggest that we cannot guarantee what other ideas, some of which can be most vehement, are influencing the work of police officers who deal with women on a daily basis. But they clearly have a great influence on the confidence of women who would resort to many other protective strategies before they sought help from the police.

During the interview the senior officers attempted to justify their previous inaction prior to the new force order in terms of 'lack of powers'. This, however, as never been the fundamental issue. For the point that is at issue here is the attitudes of the police to domestic violence. This was demonstrated by a pilot project in Berkshire in 1976 following the Select Committee Report 'Violence in Marriage'. This project instigated an active response to domestic violence which included an arrest policy and the police taking charges against the man rather than the woman doing so. The results demonstrated that it was possible for the police to do all of these things within existing legislation.

There were other examples during the period of 1976-1986 of chief inspectors stressing that domestic violence is an assault and thereby encouraging their officers to use existing legislation.

Indeed, the police have always had a discretionary duty to arrest where there is reasonable suspicion that a crime has taken place. If there is evidence that a crime has been committed it is the duty of the police to investigate and where appropriate arrest the suspect / perpetrator. Whether
or not the case is eventually prosecuted is not the issue. The importance and success of the new force order should not be seen in relation to whether women appear in court as witnesses (indeed, if CPS decide not to prosecute, women willing to give evidence will not be called). Rather, the police should see themselves as engaging in law enforcement and prevention of further crime. Moreover, by removing violent men from the household they are taking the actions many women in the borough argued for in the screening. What is needed is greater understanding of the issues and processes for women experiencing domestic violence. Very few women leave after a single assault, what they are asking for when they call the police is for the violence to stop at that particular instance. They may then decide to reconcile with the man and believe the man's promises that he will change in the hope that they can save the relationship.

By maintaining the new policy, and publicising the extent to which it now occurs, the police may find that the negative image of the police that was evident amongst many women in the borough begins to shift.

A Council initiated working group on 'domestic violence and policing', in consultation with relevant agencies in the borough, is in the process of examining responses to local police initiatives following police requests for 'feedback' and it is hoped that such collaboration will also contribute towards this shift.
It is perhaps unfortunate that we were not able to interview police officers at the three stations who deal with domestic violence as part of their daily routine. This would have enabled us to ascertain how they felt about the changed responses expected of the police since the introduction of the new force order. In the absence of further data from the police, therefore, we have interviewed women in the refuges and taken details from the screening interview to gain their perceptions of police responses.

The evidence suggests that the confidence expressed by the senior officers that things have improved since the introduction of the new force order does not correspond to the experiences of women in our sample. For instance, thirty eight percent of women in the screening questionnaire claimed that the agency they would never contact during a situation of domestic violence were the police and examples of some of their quotations from our questionnaire follow:

"The police do not try to help protect victims, they try to make their jobs easier by dismissing violence as domestic affairs."

"I have no faith in the police, I wouldn't expect much constructive help from them". "Shepherds Bush station makes you feel it was the victim who was to blame". "I wouldn't contact the police because they wouldn't help me when my ex raped me and beat me up".

There were, in fact, only two women in the sample of almost three hundred women where the police had actually taken action, one of whom was happy with the response, whilst the second felt that the intervention had been heavy handed.

Refuge workers also referred to problems they had experienced with the police which created the impression that "the Hammersmith police just don't seem to like women".

"We had a woman come in about two months ago one Sunday afternoon, her friend brought her round. She'd run out leaving her children behind. I said the only thing we could do was call the police and get them to go with us to get her things. The policeman who came more or less persuaded her to go home and sort it out with her husband. I had to leave the room because of some of the things he was saying to her. He had dealt with violent situations in her home before but he was more or less putting the blame on her, saying she should stay at home, be a good little wife. If he came home drunk then to humour him. I was disgusted. She went back with the policeman".

Two other examples of incidents in a refuge occurred when residents noticed a man at the side of the house and called the police. It took twenty minutes for the police to respond and the officer's verbal response was "If you don't feel safe here then would better find somewhere else to go". The second occasion occurred when the refuge called the police during the weekend when someone was trying to get in the front door.
"It took them fifteen minutes to get here. When they arrived they were quite good but if it had been someone's husband who was determined to get in, he'd have been in, taken his wife and gone during that period of time. You don't expect them to take fifteen minutes when they are just round the corner," said the refuge worker.

Apart from dealing with individual cases inappropriately, several workers felt that the police had a misunderstanding of what refuges are and were consequently making inappropriate referrals. They felt that some officers take advantage of the refuge, particularly over the weekends, by depositing women there who have no alternative source of shelter. For instance, they dumped a drunk woman on the doorstep with the address of the refuge given to her on a piece of paper. Another serious matter concerns the occasions when the telephone number of the refuge has been given to the families of residents who have been reported as missing. As indicated above, the police have a duty to respect that the missing person requests her whereabouts to be kept secret from other members of her family when she wishes.

CONCLUSION

All of these incidents suggest that even though the police are attempting to make changes in their practices, past practice continues to inform local opinion of police response.

There does not seem to be a consistent liaison between the police and the refuges. As far as the refuges are concerned, when problems arise there is contact and discussion about changes in policy but little evidence of those changes actually taking place in practice. There appears to be no established code of practice between the police and refuges, since it is inappropriate for women to be given the telephone number and address of local refuges. It would, therefore, be advisable for more liaison to take place between the two in order to iron out the misunderstandings which seem to be present.
The Courts

Letters were sent to West London Magistrates Courts and the County Court requesting details of applications made for injunctions, the number of orders made, the number of undertakings issued and details of the number of breaches reported to the courts. A letter was also sent to the Crown Prosecution Service requesting details of the number of cases of domestic assault referred through by the police, what percentage are charges preferred by the police/victim, how many are put forward for prosecution, the number of prosecutions for domestic assault and the outcome of cases.

The Crown Prosecution Services who were unable to provide any statistics replied to our request as below:

"Unfortunately we maintain no statistics of the number of cases dealt with which could be described as 'domestic violence'. It is, therefore, not possible to give any details of the number of cases referred to the CPS by police and the success or otherwise of them. The reason why no statistics are kept is that 'domestic violence' is regarded by the CPS as no different to any other category of offence and in considering the case submitted by the police, Crown Prosecutors apply the policy of the published 'Code for Crown Prosecutors' in the same way that they apply that code to all other offences, You are no doubt aware that that Code requires two criteria to be satisfied. Firstly a Crown Prosecutor has to be satisfied that there is available, admissible sufficient evidence to justify a realistic prospect of conviction. An indication of the sort of matters to be taken into account in assessing the public interest criteria is more fully set out in the published Code, a copy of which I enclose.

I note in your letter that you suggest that the CPS is 'providing legal assistance and remedies to women experiencing domestic violence', The CPS role is of course to prosecute criminal cases commenced by the police and strictly could not be described as providing the legal assistance and remedies to which you refer.

There is nothing more which I could add about CPS policy or practice were I to meet with the researchers. My experience is that Crown Prosecutors regard domestic violence cases as serious cases requiring at least as much attention as any case in the office. The matter which concerns Crown Prosecutors most about such cases is how frequently the victim spouse expresses a wish to withdraw the allegation previously made. We have no statistics to substantiate this view but it is the frequently disturbing but common experience of all Crown Prosecutors."

It is not only disappointing to find that no statistics are provided by the CPS but it is also disquieting to find that the category of 'domestic violence' is not in use by them. Clearly the initiatives within the new force order which specifically requests the police to keep statistics on domestic violence has not been fed through to the court system. It would be more helpful if there could be some co-ordination over this issue in order to actually make more use of those statistics provided by the police. For instance, the central assumption held by the CPS that by and large
women withdraw from presenting at court is also held by the police. But without up to date statistical data there is no way of substantiating this claim. This assumption affects the work of a wide variety of other agencies, particularly the police, and hinders the work of others who are attempting to promote change. In the same way there is no way of measuring the police's perceptions that the CPS were less ready than they were previously to prosecute in cases of domestic violence.

The following somewhat limited statistics have been provided to date by the Magistrates' Courts.

West London Magistrates' Court made one Personal protection order in 1987 (only one application was made); and three orders in 1988 (one application was refused.) Six Family Protection Orders were made (including Exclusion Orders) in 1986, one in 1987 and five in 1988.

West London County Court deals with between seven and sixteen domestic violence applications per month.

CONCLUSION

Although we have only been able to conduct a few interviews with officers within the courts, these figures suggest that the legal remedies available to women under the Domestic Violence Act 1976 and the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Court Act, 1978 are not being pursued vigorously in the borough, or even in West London as a whole. In fact, statistics provided by the Norwich County Court only, for the year 1986, reveal that there were 163 applications for injunctions in an area with a much smaller population.

Clearly it is a daunting experience for any woman to appear in court, but the circumstances for a woman who has suffered the humiliation of assault from a partner is made doubly traumatic when she has to bring a case against him in a court of law. A new initiative in South West Yorks attempts to contribute towards supporting women in such situations by employing a woman crown court liaison officer whose main purpose is to liaise with and support female and child witnesses at court. A person employed by the CPS would naturally have much a more formal position within the structure of the courts and could possibly stand by a witness in the box.

The Home Office is also concerned to respond to the needs of witnesses and have published a circular asking court officers to review practices and procedures in order to take account of witnesses' needs and to make every effort to provide somewhere for nervous or distressed witnesses to sit away from the general public. It is hoped that the needs of witnesses will be treated as a high priority by our local courts so that they are offered appropriate support.
SOLICITORS' PROVISION FOR WOMEN

During interviews with women who had experienced domestic violence, it was revealed that many of them had found it difficult to acquire a sympathetic solicitor in the borough who could act on their behalf. For this reason, we decided to design a questionnaire for solicitors to ascertain how many of them undertake legal aid work and provide advice on domestic violence cases. The survey also probed for details of their practices in this context.

Hammersmith & Fulham Information Centre provided the researchers with addresses of thirty-nine solicitors in the borough, all of whom were sent copies of our questionnaire. Unfortunately the response rate was extremely low and only eight questionnaires were returned, three of which were not completed because their organisations did not carry out matrimonial work. Two letters were also received informing us to this effect. The remaining solicitors were reminded by telephone about our survey but in the main we were unable to get past the switchboard or secretaries who promised to remind the solicitors concerned. Eleven of these practices also stated that they did not carry out matrimonial work and would not, therefore, be able to complete their copy.

The information fact sheet provided by the Information Centre included details of how many of the thirty-nine practices carried out legal aid work and how many of them had members of staff who spoke different languages. According to the sheet, thirty-one of the firms provided legal aid facilities, which appears to be quite a high figure, and twelve of the organisations indicated they spoke other languages. It was, however, disappointing to find that these languages referred in the main to French and German, with Italian, Maltese, Hebrew, Welsh and Spanish being spoken in one firm respectively. Only one solicitor's practice included Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi speakers but on investigation we found that this practice had moved away from the borough. Clearly, since the population make-up of the borough includes a number of different ethnic groups, there appears to be a need for solicitors to have a more varied linguistic base, or at least staff who can interpret.

Each of the five firms returning questionnaires undertook legal aid work with as many as twenty legal aid solicitors between them. Nine of these solicitors specialised in matrimonial cases. One firm had dealt with as many as eighteen cases of domestic violence in a three month period, another with twelve cases, the third with ten cases, the fourth had eight cases and the fifth had six. Each of these firms claimed that they always discussed injunction, non-molestation and ouster undertakings, divorce and separation, whilst only one of them also included interim custody, property settlement and protection of property with abused women.

Each of the respondents tended to use the County courts for injunctions. This confirms the perceptions held by the police that solicitors prefer to operate through this channel. When asked in what circumstances they would apply for ex-parte non-molestation injunctions, three respondents said 'in extreme cases of recent violence', another said "in all situations unless client absolutely sure respondent cannot contact her", and the fifth said

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they would apply in order to protect a woman whilst she was waiting for a full hearing date and 'when the client was very recently battered or threatened. Or if she has nowhere else to live except with respondent'.

Each of the solicitors claimed they could acquire an injunction within a period of one day, although one said it could sometimes take up to ten days. Two of them had applied for eight ex-parte non-molestation injunctions during the past three months, one had applied for nine, and a fourth had applied for thirteen, each of which were successful, whilst the fifth respondent had not applied for any. In total thirty eight ex-parte non-molestation injunctions had been applied for in a period of three months.

Regarding the circumstances in which exclusion orders are applied for, two solicitors said that it was only in "extreme cases of continuing violence" that they were recommended, especially if there was no security of tenure — no applications had been made by one of these respondents (the same firm as above who had not applied for ex-parte injunctions), whilst the other had applied for six, (most of which were successful). Another solicitor had applied for sixteen exclusion orders (ten of which had been successful) and did so 'in the majority of cases where the respondent knows the client's address'. Each of the other two respondents had applied for two (both of which were successful) and nine (eight of which were successful) exclusion orders and replied that they did so 'when the client wants the respondent out and wants to remain in the property'.

Most respondents stated that they would apply for powers of arrest wherever actual bodily harm or extreme violence had occurred, one said they would always apply in these circumstances and another said they would even if it was doubtful, although they could only apply if the man and woman were living together as man and wife. What is interesting regarding the response for this question is the fact that the respondent who had not applied for either of the above injunctions had also not applied for powers of arrest, even though they had dealt with six cases of domestic violence in the past three months. Of the other four respondents, the one organisation who had dealt with eighteen cases had applied for powers of arrest on thirteen of them and been successful in ten applications. Two organisations who had dealt with ten and twelve cases respectively had also applied for powers of arrest on each of these cases, most of which had been successful. The fifth respondent who had dealt with eight cases had applied for powers of arrest on six of them, four of which had been successful. The time limits for these injunctions are often for three months. It seems to be rare for women to have their terms of injunction changed once they have been issued and only nine breaches of injunctions had been handled in the past three months between the practices. Five of these were handled by the court giving a warning, whilst four were given suspended committals.

The legal practice who had not applied for any of the above injunctions said that they would advise women to apply for an undertaking in all cases, and that in fifty per cent of cases this would be the outcome; two other practices stressed they would never advise this, except in cases where they thought that the likelihood of acquiring a power of arrest was unlikely another said that the courts in the area were very keen to accept
undertakings and it was pointless not to accept them; and the fifth said they would recommend them when an injunction was likely to be defended.

An interim custody was applied for by each respondent in all cases where children were involved or the parties were married. This occurred in 95% of all cases for one firm, 75% for another, 50% for another, 20% for another and 10% for the fifth.

In each case the solicitors take precautions to keep the woman's whereabouts secret by not revealing her address on legal documents and by asking the court not to state her address.

Only one of the legal practices offered advice on criminal injuries compensation, although in the main most other issues were covered by them. Four of the respondents had been asked for a letter to support a woman's housing application, although this does not seem to have occurred very often, except for one solicitor who said that it happened on 'too many numerous occasions to give an accurate reply.' Neither of the organisations offer any particular advice to women migrants.

Generally it was thought that the available legal remedies were effective for women who had experienced domestic violence, especially since injunctions (non-molestation) are quick and easily obtainable; although one of the main problems was caused by the difficulty of obtaining legal aid when the violence was not considered of a serious nature.

Protection with an ouster is much more difficult to obtain than a non-molestation injunction; although in many cases women often do not want to remain in the household because of bad memories and risk of further violence. In one solicitor's opinion tests for powers of arrest are too stringent. An additional problem is caused by the fact that a woman cannot often be given a power of arrest when living in a refuge on the basis that she is safe there. This, however, restricts her freedom of movement and freedom of association with her family whose addresses are often known to respondents.

Power of arrests seem important but due to the legal aid policy of refusing legal aid to respondents in non-molestation only applications, the woman is often forced into a position of agreeing to accept undertakings rather than face an adjournment and going through the evidence - when she still might not get a power of arrest. Although committal proceedings in non power of arrest cases. are available, the remedy is not quick and committal rare, nor does it give the woman immediate protection if the injunction is breached (often at weekends when solicitors are unavailable). It also requires solicitors to act very quickly because applications cannot be issued in many courts without a sworn affidavit.

In their opinion more adequate housing remedies are a high priority in joint tenancy situations for women who don't want to return. And a major problem concerns the lack of support available to women once injunctions have been obtained. A criticism of the police was also forthcoming in that solicitors considered it to be a problem that the police did not want to become involved with domestic violence cases until injunctions and powers of arrest had been obtained, two respondents made it clear that they had
completely inadequate support from the police. According to one respondent, they felt it was a waste of public money when the police could arrest in any case where violence occurs.

**Conclusion**

Although the response rate to the questionnaire was extremely disappointing we are grateful for the comments offered to us on those which have been completed. Clearly four of these legal practices have very sensitive approaches to the problems experienced by abused women but we are concerned at the lack of appropriate legal services for women in the borough and the lack of access for women whose first language is not English. We now have information on twenty one of the thirty nine solicitors listed on the information sheet, and it is disturbing to find that only five of them deal with matrimonial cases. It is, therefore, little wonder that women experience great difficulties in finding a solicitor to act on their behalf.

It is clear that active and sensitive solicitors can use the law in women's interests, indeed two of the respondents were successful in most applications and granted powers of arrest in a higher proportion than nationally but the questionnaire results reveals that there is variability in the advice and practice offered to women regarding domestic violence.

It would, however, be very interesting for an organisation to follow up our investigations on the remaining eighteen solicitors, perhaps with brief interviews, since solicitors might prefer to find the time for a short discussion with a researcher than to complete what they might consider to be a laborious questionnaire. Given more time, we would have followed up in this way. Once information was gained on all practices it would be useful to convey it in a fact pact for use by advice agencies, refuges and women themselves.
The Law Centre

Due to the fact that the Law Centre was used as a referral contact by so many other agencies, we considered that it would be useful to carry out interviews with members of their staff to gain full details of their services and perceptions of particular problems which are confronted by women experiencing domestic violence.

Women's Advice Sessions

Because domestic violence involves many different areas of the law, the Law Centre felt it needed to provide a service where women could find out about all legal remedies available to them. This service was established to help women cut down on the number of visits they made to different agencies before they gained the relevant information to meet their needs.

Sessions are held once a week and attendance varies from two or three women to six or seven women per session. One worker is available per session and women are told that they can have as much time as they need. This sometimes causes problems in the cramped premises when others are waiting their turn. The centre clearly needs better facilities and a creche since it is a drop-in. The workers see a desperate need to make the service accessible to people with disabilities and although they have repeatedly requested council funding, this has not been forthcoming.

Women are referred to the Law Centre by Social Services, CAB, Shepherds Bush Advice Centre, Housing, Fulham Legal Advice Centre and, occasionally, from the Police. This is, indeed, borne out by the results of our research. The Law Centre serves all areas of the borough with many women coming from Shepherds Bush and White City. There are fewer women from the Southern end of the borough, particularly Sands End.

A range of advice is discussed in the session, covering the options that may be available to a woman. A lot of women just need to talk and find out what these are. The session worker may, on occasions, talk for an hour with a woman, only twenty minutes of which may be spent discussing legal advice. The rest of the time is spent just talking about her situation. The Law Centre service is very concerned to relate to the reality of the situation; so that if they are talking about injunctions, for instance, they question what might happen if the man returns and the woman does not have a phone. At the same time information on other issues such as housing or immigration will often be taken up when relevant, and details of available support from voluntary groups will be given. The Law Centre said that up-to-date information of groups and resources in the borough would be very helpful.

They also refer women to appropriate resources outside of the borough. For example a single woman who does not qualify for re-housing may be put in touch with Housing Action for Women (Featherstone Street). A woman with mental health problems may be referred to the Women's Section of Mind.

Occasionally, the Law Centre will take up cases offering more involvement (mainly those which solicitors won't be involved with). This is
particularly true for non-married women. Women whose cases also have a Housing, Social Services or Immigration element may be treated in the same way.

Statistics:

The Law Centre figures for Jan - Dec. 1988 have been supplied.

856 women contacted the centre.

254 women had a housing problem of which;
42 were about homelessness

155 women contacted about a family problem.
39 about domestic violence.
53 about children.
52 about divorce.

These figures should be treated with caution, for the staff felt that the figures for domestic violence were unrepresentative of the real contact they had with women experiencing violence. Many women ring or drop into the office, and they are listened to, given advice and referred on without their enquiry being recorded. Women experiencing violence may also be recorded under the "legal services category" when they attend the centre because of dissatisfaction with a solicitor.

Solicitor's legal remedies

If this is the route women want to pursue, the Law Centre refers them to a solicitor. Unfortunately women do not always find their case being treated with the same sympathetic approach as themselves. Instead of being given time to express their anxieties and fears, women are often efficiently swept out of interviews in record time. Domestic violence is a particularly traumatic issue to take through the legal system and women need to be given time and a sympathetic approach.

"A lot of solicitors have stopped doing Legal Aid over the last year, therefore it can be quite problematic in referring women for injunctions etc".

The Law Centre conducted their own survey of solicitors and domestic violence three years ago but they still find it difficult to keep track of practices.

"Most of the good solicitors for matrimonial work are out of the borough. We mainly send women to ...... in Acton. This is not totally convenient but it is not too far".

It is difficult to assess the service that women receive from solicitors. But when women are referred they are told by the Law Centre that if there are any problems with the solicitor or if the solicitor has not explained something clearly, then she should come back to the Law Centre. But there is a sense that solicitors are not totally satisfactory in dealing with
cases of domestic violence since women often return to the Centre with complaints.

"Without women even realising it, solicitors have been negligent. A recent case illustrates this. The case was of violence and relationship breakdown and the solicitor had not applied for transfer of the tenancy in the divorce petition. This is just the pits. This obviously does not occur in the majority of cases but it does happen. In a divorce petition it is necessary to apply for everything. It is not necessary to proceed with it but if the client has not applied and left it for a few years, this creates tremendous problems. This is particularly true for council tenancies. The 1980 Housing Act has made this issue more complicated".

**Housing**

The Law Centre, often becomes involved in challenging council decisions in connection with domestic violence cases. This particularly relates to the issue of Homelessness. The Law Centre identified the situation of women who have come from other parts of the country, particularly Ireland, as a significant problem in the borough.

They consider that the current tightening up of council policy is presenting problems and that they might have recourse to using the recent judgement made against Kensington and Chelsea in relation to possible decisions they make in Hammersmith and Fulham. Problems they deal with include women who are not being given a re-housing duty and the speed at which decisions are reached. Such situations arise from women having no local connection or being found intentionally homeless.

The Law Centre comes across complicated sets of circumstances.

"... man ousted and moved into other accommodation and the woman is rehoused in her own area, the problems still go on. She may have been through all those hoops. And the only way to get out of it is to just completely uproot. You are them faced with a huge investigation and maybe at the end of it - nothing"

In their opinion the housing department have been making many more investigations during the last year so that medical information and solicitors injunctions are needed to prove that women are serious.

As well as problems concerning homeless women, the Law Centre has noticed considerable difficulties experienced by council tenants and the use of the Greenwich v McCrady ruling. The council's new caution is reflected in a number of articles in the Law Journals which draws attention to the implications of this judgement.

"Because the joint tenancy creates a trust situation, the woman giving notice to quit ultimately could be breaching trust for which the man could then sue her".

The Centre cited a recent case in Wandsworth where the male tenant contested a case on these grounds. They feel that the Law Centre may have to become involved in such cases in the future.
An agreement was reached in a recent case where the Housing Department attempted to write to the other tenant to try and track him down to tell him of the tenancy issue. They agreed to wait so many months and then they eventually said they would accept her notice to quit and granted her the sole tenancy. However, this is a long, somewhat problematic procedure.

The Law Centre often advises women with a sole tenancy to retain this when considering extending it to a joint tenancy. They point out the potential future complications of joint tenancies and think that Housing Officers should also give better advice.

Communication with the Housing Department is fairly good and many referrals are made to the Law Centre by them. Despite some time delays the Law Centre is up to date with policies and is sent copies of all council minutes.

**Immigration**

The issue of immigration may also be dealt with by the Law Centre during the women's sessions. The Law Centre has identified this as a big issue. Other than the Commission for Racial Equality they are the only service in the borough specifically addressing these difficulties.

Women are in a very difficult situation if they are experiencing violence in their first year of marriage after they arrive in Britain. They have no access to Legal Aid and often have additional problems of housing, finance and pressure to go back. It is difficult to advise women in these situations. They are advised that to leave the home may bring their immigration status into question. The male partners sometimes write or threaten to write to the Home Office. The Law Centre, therefore, encourages women to make closer links in this country, so that if they leave the home they may be able to argue for compassionate grounds to help them if the Home Office becomes involved. This is a very dangerous position for these women.

**Social Services re. Child Abuse**

Involvement with Social Services is usually about children. And although domestic violence or may not be the issue, staff have pointed out that they are aware that women are not always receiving the service that they should. Women have come to them for support and for assistance in reverting or changing Social Services decisions or practice.

With issues surrounding child abuse women are also identified as 'victims' of that abuse by staff at the centre. This is not in the physical sense but by the subsequent handling of the case by Social Services. Women often feel that they are being punished for a crime they did not commit. The Law Centre is dealing with cases where women are not getting satisfactory access to their children. This is not necessarily in terms of not being able to see the child but maybe by not seeing them alone, or being given adequate support in getting to see them. Children are often placed away from the borough and difficulties can then arise for the women.
From their experience of such circumstances the child is the client and the needs of the mother are not considered. Their situations are viewed quite separately.

"... they don't even view the mother and daughter as a unit. Their initial concerns must be with the child quite correctly but they should see the unit - what are we doing about the mother? - nothing absolutely nothing. They should be looking at building bridges."

Black women have been identified as receiving a poor and often judgemental service from social workers. There have been complaints made on behalf of women by the Law Centre but particular social workers have not been removed from the case as the child and not the woman is the client.

Although Social Services has made a commitment to placing Black children in Black families the support that children receive is not always seen as appropriate and is questioned by staff on behalf of clients.

**CONCLUSION**

Clearly the Law Centre has insight into a number of issues encountered by women experiencing domestic violence as well as contacts with a number of other agencies dealing with these problems. Their knowledge and experience is valuable and respected highly in the borough. It is, therefore, suggested that a tightening up of their statistics is carried out so that figures for domestic violence cases are monitored and available for interested agencies in the borough.
SECTION FIVE

DRAWING OUT THE INTERCONNECTIONS

"I eventually finished with my partner as I was losing all confidence in myself. I am much happier now."

"At first I thought people just wouldn't believe me, then they said it was my fault, I could leave him at any time. But unless one is in that situation oneself, that shouldn't be judged."

In the previous chapters we have reported on the findings of our research in the borough. In this final chapter we will draw out some of the links between policy and practice in the statutory and voluntary sectors and the experiences and needs of women. The chapter is divided into sections: understanding of domestic violence; help seeking and referral networks; liaison and co-operation; and an action plan.

Understanding domestic violence

What emerged from all areas of the research was the continuing popularity of 'common sense' ideas about who experiences and commits domestic violence and why it happens. These simplistic explanations and stereotypes ranged from the stress placed by the police on the role of alcohol in precipitating assaults, to suggestions (in the screening questionnaire) by women who had not been abused that women who are abused have 'inferiority complexes'. In our interviews with housing workers and social workers we encountered racist attitudes which suggested that violence was 'acceptable' within some cultures and ageist responses which implied that if women had tolerated abuse for long periods of time this meant that they accepted it.

In the accounts from women who had experienced violence, and in the practice of sensitive workers, there was a much more complex understanding and analysis. Here the complexities of women's experience emerged, and an awareness that domestic violence is the result of women's position in society' (quoted from the fifth aim of the Women's Aid Federation, England).

It is our view that theory and understanding directly inform practice. Where explanations of social phenomena are simplistic and individualistic, then practice will inevitably result in a focus on the failures of individuals. When an individual's experience is placed in a social context, practice can reflect a deeper, and, therefore, more effective perspective. We laid out the social context in which domestic violence should be placed in the Preface, and any changes in policy and practice along with any training initiatives must take discussion of theory and explanation as their starting point.

Without this base, service providers will not understand the ambivalence many women experience when beginning to seek help about violence, nor the processes that have led to their making contact (see conclusion of Section...
One). This results in workers having unrealistic expectations of women, and presumptions about what they should do if they really wanted to end violence. For example, that women who call the police should follow this through with prosecution or that women contacting social workers/advice workers should be given the option to leave.

Many women pick up on these expectations, and may feel their actions/choices will be interpreted as I failure', as illustrated by the second quote at the beginning of this section. Not wanting to be viewed/responded to in this way can cut women off from potential sources of support and reinforce their isolation and low self-image. Workers need to be able to make distinctions between continuing to support a woman because her situation necessitates support, and not necessarily agreeing with her decisions/choices. Some social workers appeared to be able to make these distinctions in their work.

Help seeking and referral networks

Contrary to received wisdom, our questionnaire revealed that a substantial number of women do tell someone quite soon after violence begins in a relationship. Some of these initial contacts were supportive, but many were not. There was also a substantial number of women who had, at the point they completed the questionnaire, never spoken to anyone about the abuse they were experiencing/had experienced. This suggests that there are two levels of need - an increase in publicity and information about domestic violence which will enable women to tell someone and a commitment to encouraging responses in informal networks, the voluntary and statutory sectors, which do not deny women's experience, minimise it, blame women or place unrealistic expectations on them.

The research also revealed that despite their misgivings and distrust many women do make contact with police and social services. The resort to these two agencies, and the police in particular, emerges out of crisis situations - what women are seeking is some form of effective intervention which provides temporary or permanent respite from violence. Responses to women in these situations must include a variable combination of sanctioning the violent man, providing refuge for the woman and her children and detailed information and advice on a range of options. Whether women press charges, use the information immediately or leave permanently are not the primary issues in intervention, rather the purpose should be to make clear to the man that his behaviour is unacceptable, and to the woman that she need not tolerate it.

There was considerable evidence from the screening that women experiencing domestic violence prefer to speak about it to other women. Clearly this is not always possible, but all agencies and groups should bear this in mind when developing services on domestic violence.

Throughout our research we were committed to exploring whether the needs of all women were being understood and met in the borough. The data we have presented in the report points to many ways in which factors such as race, language, age, disability and sexuality affect women's access to information, and therefore, resources and possibilities. Moreover, the lack of awareness evident amongst many workers in the borough about the ways in
which additional forms of oppression affect women's experiences and needs concerned us. Many of our recommendations address the changes that need to take place in policy and practice to ensure that women living in the borough have the possibilities of ending violence in their lives.

However, it is not only differences between groups of women that affect access to support and information, but also women's individual circumstances and preferences. For example, whilst the support of informal networks were crucially important for many women, a sizeable proportion would never approach close relatives and friends. Beyond the decision to make the violence public. Some women reach the decision to leave/exclude the violent man relatively easily and simply need the information and services that will enable them to achieve this. Other women are not so clear about what they want to do, and need the space to talk about their situation and discuss options. A further, and we would argue smaller group, find themselves trapped in situations they feel unable to change – either because of their own uncertainty or the persistence and terrorism of the man. They may need more long term support. This points to the need for a range of possibilities being available to women and for all agencies and groups in the borough to recognise the range of responses that might be required to support women.

Our work within council departments and the surveys of other agencies in the borough revealed that whilst there was some awareness of local resources, the referral networks used by agencies and groups were limited, and often not reflective of the actual support on offer and range of possibilities in the borough. For example, many voluntary groups refer Women's Aid or social services. There seemed to be little awareness that currently very few women will be able to find a place in a London refuge or that social workers are currently finding it impossible to deal effectively with their statutory case loads, let alone referrals which do not fall within this category. Equally, social workers and housing officers frequently refer women on to solicitors, yet our evidence suggests that local legal practice in relation to domestic violence leaves something to be desired. Initial referral to the law centre's weekly women's legal advice session might be more useful and appropriate. We would seek to encourage the making of a range of options available to women, which in turn requires increased awareness and use of other resources in the borough.

**Liaison and co-operation**

There were some necessary fruitful links within the borough, but on the whole we found a lack of awareness about the work ongoing and what other agencies and groups could and could not offer. This can result in inappropriate referrals or a failure to suggest options that women might find helpful.

Whilst we recognise that there are practical and political reasons which prevent full co-operation between parts of the statutory and voluntary sectors, there is still room for improvement. Moreover, increased understanding of local agency policy and practice can increase the ability of individuals to respond sensitively and effectively to women seeking
help. It can also result in the development of new initiatives and innovative practice.

We see the fact pack, the proposed forum and the proposed multi-disciplinary training as fruitful ways in which liaison and co-operation can be developed and maintained. A major factor influencing whether this will be effective is the willingness of members of different groups to recognise their different roles, to engage in open debate about basic issues and to recognise that everyone can improve their practice through reflection, discussion and self-criticism.

**Action Plan**

- Increasing awareness

Hammersmith and Fulham Council, by commissioning this research and other initiatives, have demonstrated a political commitment to addressing the issue of male violence. This commitment should be reflected in the public statements made by the council, in published materials and in resource decision making. Whilst the fact pack which has been commissioned will make information more accessible to workers and women in the borough this should be seen as part of an information drive, in light of willingness to display more. Other basic information, such as posters which make explicit the councils commitment to challenging domestic violence, that women should not have to tolerate violence in their homes, and which offer several initial referral points, are also needed if the initiatives suggested in this report are to have an impact throughout the borough.

- Increasing knowledge and good practice

Clearly the recommendations that accompany this report, and the fact pack which will be produced on the basis of our findings, are designed to increase information and encourage good practice. These have to be backed up with a commitment to monitoring implementation and to encouraging wide ranging discussions within and across groups in the borough. We see the proposed working group and open forums as essential components in taking the work of the research project forward.

Training is also a priority. We suggest that a combination of internal and inter-disciplinary training will produce the best results. The latter is important because it will give access to training to small voluntary groups and in and of itself encourages dialogue and exchange across work boundaries.

All training should include an initial focus on the reality of domestic violence - the forms it takes and how women respond to it initially and over time. Leaving violent men must be understood as a process within which factors such as wanting to save the relationship but end the violence; worries about depriving children of their father, home and community; concerns about surviving as a one parent family must be discussed. Womens ability to leave must also be contextualised within an awareness that this society eulogises the heterosexual nuclear family and places great stress on children's need and right to two parents. Furthermore, women's socialisation places great store on finding and
keeping a man, and it is still the case that women do not have access to
paid work and income on the same terms as men. This context provides a
basis for understanding why many women feel guilty, ambivalent and insecure
about leaving violent men. Within this basic framework differences between
women, and how these might affect both their experience of domestic
violence, and their needs as a consequence of it, must be consistently
addressed.

It is also important for training to include recognition of the fact that
whilst law enforcement remains ineffective and there are few legal and/or
social consequences for violent men, some women may feel safer' living
with the man. This is not an acceptance of violence, but a resignation to
the fact that they have been unable to escape/find safety. For example,
many refuges have to enable women to move hundreds of miles away, change
their names and cut off from everything about their past as this is the
only way some women can escape a violent man. Where women do not have this
possibility, and their partner has demonstrated his determination to find
her, she may decide that living and coping with violence is preferable to
living in fear every minute of every day wondering if this is the day she
is going to be found.
APPENDIX ONE

CURRENT GOOD PRACTICE

In 1986 the Women’s Aid movement produced its own guidelines on best practice for local authorities. "The Answer is Maybe - and That’s Final." All these recommendations are already current practice in LE Ealing.

1. All existing practices in breach of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 (now Part III of the Housing Act 1985) should be remedied immediately. In particular:

   (i) all women must be advised of their rights under the Act and temporary accommodation offered to them (preferably to include a Women’s Aid Refuge).

   (ii) temporary accommodation must be offered to women who choose to seek Court protection pending the order being made.

   (iii) no evidence of abuse or fear of abuse other than a simple statement may be required at the initial enquiry stage.

   (iv) all women living in refuges must be recognised as being homeless.

   (v) all women who leave home because of abuse must be accepted as being unintentionally homeless.

   (vi) responsibility must be accepted for housing women who would be at risk of abuse if they were sent back to another local authority area.

   (vii) S. 64 notices, which state whether or not, with reasons, an applicant is entitled to permanent accommodation under the Act, must be made available to every applicant.

   (viii) custody orders (or their equivalent) must not be required as a precondition of permanent housing.

2. No evidence of physical or mental abuse, or the fear of such abuse should be required beyond a simple statement from the woman concerned.

3. No enquiries should be made of any person(s), agency or organization without the knowledge and express permission of the woman applicant. Under no circumstances should enquiries be made of the spouse/cohabitee or neighbours of the woman applicant.

4. No evidence that there is a risk of abuse if a woman returns to another local authority area should be required. A woman's statement that she fears abuse and does not wish to return should be sufficient. Any enquiries should be made with the woman's knowledge and express permission.
5. A higher standard of proof of homelessness etc., should never be required from a woman who does not have local connection with the authority. Likewise, additional legal requirements should not be made.

6. A woman with no children who has been abused should be accepted as 'vulnerable' and in priority need of accommodation under the Act.

7. A S.64 notice should be sent out to every applicant.

8. A woman in a refuge should be rehoused within 10 weeks of the date of her application under the Act unless she chooses to remain for a longer period.

   (Domestic Violence Working Party comment: The aim of refuges is to provide emergency accommodation and in order to enable new cases to come in, speedy move-on accommodation is required. It is recognised that in the current climate the only type of accommodation that would be available "within 10 weeks of the date of application" would be alternative temporary accommodation (possibly women only hotels),]

9. A woman's legal responsibility for rent arrears should be waived where it is clear that she lived under threat of abuse and thus cannot reasonably be expected to have had any control over the family income.

10. Distance from a former spouse/cohabitee and a woman applicant's wishes to be near family and/or friends must be taken into account when making an offer of permanent accommodation.

   The Women's Aid document further recommended that local authorities should ensure:

11. that Housing Department staff are thoroughly trained so that abused women can be advised of their range of options and staff can then support their choice with appropriate action. Women’s Aid as the relevant agency should be involved in training.

12. that all abused women are told about Women's aid. Women's Aid publicity should be displayed in all Housing Department offices.

13. that women in refuges are not discriminated against by waiting longer in temporary refuge accommodation than other homeless applicants in comparable accommodation.

14. that the rules and procedures for allocating permanent accommodation to homeless people are fair and objective and that clear, intelligible information about these rules and procedures is made available to all homeless applicants and their advisors.

15. That there is a formal right of appeal against a 5.64 decision and against an offer of unsuitable accommodation. All applicants should be informed of appeal procedures and how to use the..
English Women's Aid further recommend:

1. No pressure to be put on women to take out an injunction as a means of solving their homelessness problem.

2. The local authority should not demand that women accept the first offer made if the woman considers it unacceptable either due to the physical condition or location, e.g. near to relatives unlikely to be sympathetic or a long way from relatives whose support is needed. Particular consideration should be given to black and ethnic minority women who could be vulnerable to racial harassment.

3. Housing Departments should adopt a positive approach to people experiencing domestic violence. The attitude should be that everyone has the right to live "free from violence. The clients should be taken seriously, priority should be given to ensuring their immediate physical safety and they should be facilitated in the emergency contacts they need to make, e.g. for assistance from other Council departments, contacting relatives etc.

4. Unless the permission of the person experiencing domestic violence has been sought, no Council department should agree to a request from a perpetrator to be put in contact with a person experiencing domestic violence. Nor should any officer agree to pass on any messages.
EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE HOMELESSNESS LEGISLATION AND POLICY IN RELATION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

ALBERT
(Tracey's Father)

KEVIN
(Tracey's boyfriend) (Aged to begin)

CHARLENE
(Kein + Tracey's daughter)

JOAN
(Wendy's mother)

ANDREW
(Wendy's husband)

WENDY

1) Actual violence from Albert to Tracey:
   Homelessness + Priority need (although it was not from within a relationship, Charlene is a dependent child)

2) Threatened violence from Albert to Tracey:
   Homelessness + Priority need (although it was neither actual violence nor within a relationship, Charlene is a dependent child)

3) Actual Violence from Andrew to Wendy:
   Homelessness + Priority need (because it is actual violence and within a relationship if both necessary criteria are met)

4) Actual violence from Joan to Wendy:
   Homelessness but No priority need (although it was actual violence it was not from within a relationship and there is no independent priority need)

For threatened violence, read threatened violence when threats are likely to be carried out
5) Threatened Violence from Kevin to Tracey:
   Homelessness +
   Priority need (although the violence was not actual Charlene, as a dependent child constitute a priority need)

6) Threatened violence from Andrew to Wendy:
   Homelessness but
   No priority need (the violence was not actual and there is no independent priority need).

7) Actual violence from Kevin to Andrew
   Not homeless (unless the violence is such that it renders Andrew's accommodation unreasonable for him to continue to occupy)

   + No priority need
The Metropolitan Police Working Party on Domestic Violence identified an urgent need to enhance the police response to victims of such violence, as stated in the Force Goal. Recommendations included improved reporting procedures, the clarification of Force Policy, and the improvements of training and support victims.

In future the following principles should be borne in mind when dealing with such incidents.

DEFINITIONS

DOMESTIC DISPUTE - is any quarrel between family or household members

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - occurs when a person or persons causes, attempts to cause, or threatens to cause physical harm to another family or household member

REPORTS

In relation to domestic incidents the following reports are completed: -

- Incident Report Book
- Form 78 (If children are in the household)
- Crime Book (If an allegation of crime reported)

One or more of the above will be completed in EVERY CASE when an officer is called to a DOMESTIC DISPUTE.

If the dispute has NO ELEMENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE the facts WILL be reported and the IRB endorsed “No domestic violence involved”.

It is essential that officers are aware of their initial action required at the scene of a domestic dispute and also aware of the organizations which may be able to assist in supporting the victims of domestic violence.

The following has been compiled to assist you in this respect.

UNIFORMED OFFICER’S INITIAL ACTION AT THE SCENE

1. Prevent a breach of the peace and try to calm the parties down

2. Consider medical aid for the victim. If it is urgent call an ambulance. If it is not urgent and the victim refuses and ambulance, advise that the family doctor should be seen.

3. Be fair and firm with the parties involved. Avoid the temptation of assuming what happened prior to your arrival. Presumptions and assumptions will cloud your judgement and may prejudice your investigation.

4. If there are visible injuries or injuries which cannot be seen but are complained of, it is a matter for you to investigate as to their cause. Remember some injuries may be covered by clothing. A person who is reduced to a state of hysteria or suffering from shock has injuries which can be regarded as actual bodily harm.

5. Be mindful of your own safety. One of the parties, especially the aggressor may resent your presence.
6. Choose the area where you intend conducting your investigation carefully. The kitchen is not a good place to investigate a domestic incident as there are too many available items and implements which could cause you injury, or in fact could cause the victim further injury.

7. Try to avoid using the parties' bedroom as an interview area. This room is the most private room in the house and resentment or embarrassment may be shown by either or both parties.

8. If there are children present when you arrive, it is important to observe them and to communicate with them. The observation of the children will give you information as to whether they may also be victims, and it may be important in the future to have a note of their general condition. The importance of communicating with them is that it may break down some barriers later in dealing with the parents of the children.

9. If the parties agree it may be better not to have the children present during your investigation, as the proceedings may intimidate or frighten them.

10. If there are children in the home but they are out of your sight in another room be mindful of their presence. Attempt to get the parties to introduce you to them. This will give you a chance to observe them as mentioned before.

A point to note here is that if there are children in the home who are out or your sight and you have grounds to suspect that they may be in danger, and the parties strongly refuse to allow you to see the children, you have power under Section 17 Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984 to enter that room with reasonable force if necessary to save life or limb.

THIS POWER SHOULD ONLY BE USED IN EXTREME CASES, AND WHERE YOUR GROUNDS FOR SUCH A BELIEF ARE STRONG. IN ANY EVENT BEFORE USING SUCH POWER GET THE ASSISTANCE OF YOUR DUTY OFFICER OR SUPERVISING SERGEANT.

11. If an order from a Magistrates Court or an injunction from a County Court is in existence, and does not have a power of arrest attached it will not be filed at your station. Question the victim as to the existence of either and if there is one, ask to see a copy. This will make you aware of the conditions and may help you to decide on a course of action, if any of the conditions have been breached.

12. In any dispute, it is established Force practice for an allegation to be reported in the presence and hearing of the person against whom it is made. However, Domestic Violence is a peculiar situation in which the victim probably resides with the assailant, and fear of retribution is more likely to prevent openness than in other circumstances. That being so, commonsense and reason dictate that to obtain the best evidence the parties should wherever possible be spoken to separately.

13. When investigating an assault in a domestic situation, you will have to assess the degree of the injury that can be seen by you or is complained of by the victim. Sections 24 and 25 Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984 are the relevant powers of arrest, if appropriate.
It can well happen that even without the victims agreeing to prosecute, you may well have sufficient evidence to establish a prima facie case against the aggressor and prefer a charge, the Crown Prosecution Service will decide whether to carry on with the prosecution, and are willing to pursue in these matters prior to charge.

14. Therefore at the scene of a domestic incident, your course of action may result in:–

   a) Arresting the aggressor  
   b) Removing the victim to safety or to relatives  
   c) Removing the children to a place of safety

In any event do not forget your Duty Officer or supervising Sergeant is to be consulted.

15. At the scene be mindful of other offences such as Criminal Damage and Theft which may also have been committed. If these offences appear to have been committed they will need investigating.

A police officer should be able to demonstrate his/her awareness of the considerable amount of conflict which is generated within such a dispute.

Reports encompass the views of many women’s organizations which did, however, highlight the "bad practice" within the police in response to husband and wife disputes

Basically police can react in different ways when called to investigate a domestic incident.
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