



Faculty of Public Health

of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

UK Faculty of Public Health (FPH) response to Taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence against Women and Girls

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The UK Faculty of Public Health (FPH) is the leading professional body for public health specialists in the UK. It aims to advance the health of the population through three key areas of work: health promotion, health protection and healthcare improvement. In addition to maintaining professional and educational standards for specialists in public health, FPH advocates on key public health issues and provides practical information and guidance for public health professionals.

FPH welcomes the invitation to comment on this important taskforce, and asks for reassurance that there has been sufficient involvement of public health colleagues working in related fields (mental health settings, Public Mental health roles, sexual health and alcohol/substance misuse prevention fields) in the original Home Office-led cross-Government consultation *Together we can end violence against women and girls*.

FPH has the following topline comments on the taskforce:

- It has been recognised for some years (since the SNAP report on Domestic Violence, published in 1997) that 'domestic abuse' (broadly defined, and including all of the above four categories) is a serious NHS issue;
- A major problem in obscuring the extent of the issue is the lack of reliable data recorded by practitioners who come into contact with victims of violence in various NHS settings (typically primary care, A&E, antenatal services, Family Planning clinics, mental health services). Prevalence and incidence figures, and trends, are thus difficult to establish accurately;
- Alcohol is a significant co-factor and as data collection for alcohol-related injuries and incidents improves in the NHS it is important that data on violence is also collected;
- Where evidence demonstrates that violence against women and girls is a significant issue, all staff should receive training on recognition, sensitivity and referral processes (including links with the voluntary sector). This should be mandatory in such settings;
- Referral links with voluntary sector organisations and services should be developed and strengthened;
- The NHS is itself a major employer, particularly of women. It should be used as an exemplar and develop excellent services for recognition, referral and management for its own staff. Excellent progress was made within the NHS in Scotland some years ago.

Examples of best practice

The WORTH Project is a multi-agency funded pilot project at Worthing and Southlands hospitals in West Sussex, that trains all relevant staff in the A&E and Maternity Departments to undertake screening for domestic violence, with on-site advocacy support. It has recently been expanded to a 24-hour service used by all hospitals in West Sussex.

<http://www.healthcareinnovationexpo.com/sha-nhs-theworthprojectworthin.asp>

A very powerful short drama piece, called *W@m*, which was shown in a number of NHS and local authority settings across West Sussex, and did a huge amount to raise awareness of the domestic violence issue.

<http://www.helennelder.com/warn/>