

An exchange between Vera Baird QC and J4MB on the topic of domestic abuse – 10 January 2014

Ms Baird's original response in black text.

J4MB comments and questions in red font.

No matter who the perpetrator or the victim is, domestic violence is a crime.

I'd like to assure you that any report of domestic violence, from a male or female, is taken seriously and people will be given support from the police and other agencies.

Figures available do show that the number of female victims of domestic violence is hugely higher – They certainly do NOT show that nationally (ONS), so which 'figures available' are you citing? ONS figures show that 40% of victims of DA nationally are men, let me know if you want me to point you to '21 key facts' about DA, all backed up with ONS statistics – but that does not have any impact on the service received by anyone affected by this crime. Are you aware that the majority of perpetrators of uni-directional DV (where the victim 'takes it' or exits the situation) are women, and that only 4% of female perpetrators of DV report self-defence as a motivation? If you're not, I'll be happy to direct you to the source of that information, produced by Dr Nicola Graham-Kevan of the University of Central Lancashire.

In 2012/13 the total number of incidents where the victim was female stood at 22,247 with 83% relating to partners or ex-partners. The total number of male victims was 3,474 with 69% relating to partners or ex-partners. In Northumbria? Do you *really* believe that the proportion of DV victims who are male is SO dramatically lower in Northumbria than in the rest of the UK, and if so, what do you believe might explain that?

As a matter of interest the overwhelming majority of domestic violence complaints from men are about violence by other men, brothers, fathers and gay partners, though there are certainly complaints about such violence by women.

I made the point that no matter who the perpetrator or the victim is, domestic violence is a crime at the recent launch of the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy at the Beacon Centre in Newcastle and in every speech I have made about domestic violence. Why, then, call it a 'Violence Against Women and Girls' strategy, and why – in your public statements that have come to my attention, anyway – do you NEVER refer to male victims and/or female perpetrators? Do you not think this sends a clear message to abused men and boys, 'We don't care about you'? To our minds, it surely does. Do you agree with our view that the wilful neglect of male victims of DV must be a contributor to the male suicide rate in the UK being three times higher than the female suicide rate?

We encourage all victims of domestic violence to report incidents to us, although we are aware that men in same sex relationships will sometimes not report an incident as their friends and relatives are unaware of their sexuality. I guess the same point may be made about women. Are you aware that the group with the most DV is lesbians? How might you account for that startling fact?

All Northumbria Police officers follow the force definition of domestic violence which is: "Any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 16 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or are family members, regardless of gender and sexuality."

We do have more girls and women who are willing to contact police and ask for help – male under-reporting is well-understood, and is known to be FAR higher than female under-reporting (ONS). So what programmes are you running to encourage men to report being victims of DV, and how much will be spent on them in the current financial year? – but there are organisations available to help victims who are boys or men. Compared with the vast number of organisations available to help victims who are girls or women, there are very few such organisations even at the national level, and they receive little or no state funding. Could you please give me details of Northumbria-based organisations which specifically support boys and/or men, and tell me what state support they receive?

Northumbria Police is made up of six area commands and each works with agencies in their area to help male victims of this crime.

As well as our external campaign 'Are you always walking on eggshells?' which I know you will be familiar with – no, I'm not, is this a local campaign? I live in Bath – we have been running an internal domestic violence campaign within Northumbria Police which has two strands, each with a poster which separately targets men and women. Could these posted designs please be emailed to me, ideally as PDFs? And what number of each of them have been posted publicly since you became PPC?

This is part of a wider workplace policy I introduced in this region for organisations to help any member of their workforce who is a victim of domestic violence.

I care about anyone who is a victim of domestic violence.

There is no place for it in any community and Northumbria Police and its partners will continue to provide support and advice to anyone affected by this crime.

Could you please inform me of the number of beds available in Northumbria exclusively for female victims of DV, and the number available exclusively for male victims?

I appreciate you taking the trouble to respond, and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Best wishes.