



Evidencing Domestic Violence: Men, Legal Aid and family disputes

FINAL REPORT – December 2015

SUMMARY

The survey ran from 14th August to 30th November 2015

A total of **226 individual responses** were received on an anonymous basis through Survey Monkey.

The survey has identified a significant gap in the data collection about men's experience of domestic violence particularly in relation around Private Law family disputes. Rights of Women in partnership with Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid have produced surveys exclusively (and understandably) on the experience of women. These surveys have formed a powerful lobbying and campaigning tool to get the evidence to support changes to the Legal Aid evidence requirements. We hope that this survey may have an equivalent impact in relation to male victims.

In collating evidence for the recently published landmark report 'Is Britain Fairer 2015' the Equalities and Human Rights Commission recognised that there is a gap in the evidence around male victims and their ability to access Legal Aid for family issues on the basis of being victims of domestic violence. This study was inspired by EHRC who raised the issues relating to women in their pre-launch consultation event in Wales.

The conclusions from this study show that men find it significantly more difficult to provide the evidence required to access Legal Aid than women.

KEY FINDINGS

- **70% of men** are unable to provide the necessary evidence to access Legal Aid
- **38% of women** did not have the necessary evidence to access family law Legal Aid based upon the Rights of Women survey from November 2014. <http://rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Evidencing-domestic-violence-IV.pdf>
- **Men are identifying significant difficulties around gender discrimination by services (eg Police, DV support services and Children's Services)** – the hundreds of individual comments by male survivors have a depressingly similar theme - resignation to the discrimination against them by statutory services – Police, Children's Services and Courts, as well as an almost complete distrust in the specialist DV support services which are perceived to be wholly female centred and a plot to catch and undermine men as victims. This view is borne out by personal experience including the process of 'screening' male callers who present as victims yet are treated as perpetrators.

INTRODUCTION

1. WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

We are a shared parenting charity working to support those who are being excluded from the lives of the children they care about. Most of our service users (currently c 75%) are fathers facing contact difficulties. We provide information, support and advice to parents and grandparents with child contact difficulties. We also support all men in their role as a father (or father figure) to make a positive contribution to the upbringing and development of the children they care about. We have been recognised by the Welsh Government as a 'representative body' for men as a group with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

2. THE BACKGROUND

This survey was started as a result of discussions with the Equalities & Human Rights Commission about their report 'Is Britain Fairer 2015?' which identified the lack of evidence about the difficulties faced by male victims of domestic violence with family disputes. It was inspired by the work undertaken by Rights of Women with Women's Aid Federation in England and Welsh Women's Aid who have produced several surveys capturing the picture from the perspective of women.

METHODOLOGY

The research has been undertaken by FNF Both Parents Matter Cymru using an online survey tool – Survey Monkey – commencing on 14th August 2014 and concluding on the 30th November.

The survey has emulated many of the questions included in the Rights of Women surveys to facilitate comparability of results. The primary objective of the survey is to provide a greater understanding of the experience of men who are victims of Domestic Violence (as defined by the UK Government here -<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-to-include-16-and-17-year-olds>) The definition – updated in 2013 states

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

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

'Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

'Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.'" *

3. THE SURVEY

A set of 8 questions have been included in the survey. Most were chosen to provide a direct comparison with the Rights of Women survey dated March 2014 <http://rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Evidencing-DV-a-year-on-2014.pdf> Comparisons with data from Rights of Women is however included in relation to their later survey dated November 2014 <http://rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Evidencing-domestic-violence-IV.pdf>

The questions are:

1. Are you a victim of DV (as defined by the UK Govt.) ?
2. Are you male (or identify as male) ?
3. Tell us about the type of case you needed legal advice and representation for?
4. Which of the following forms of evidence of domestic violence did you have in order to apply for Legal Aid?
5. If you did not have any of the required forms of evidence of Domestic Violence, which of the following did you have instead?
6. If you were unable to obtain Legal Aid for Family Proceedings as a result of you being a victim of 'Domestic Violence' how did you deal with the problem?
7. Where do you currently live? (England & Wales only)
8. Is there anything else you can tell us about your experience of being a male victim of Domestic Violence?

The survey asked individuals to express their views more fully through a comments facility in each section. Reading these comments we appreciated that they were very powerful testimony and provided much greater clarity to underpin the headlines from the statistical data. As a result we have decided to include many of the comments in the body of this report to assist the reader.

THE DATA

A total of 226 responses were received by 30th November 2015.

1. Are you a victim of 'Domestic Violence' as defined by the UK Government guidance https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-to-include-16-and-17-year-olds		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	98.2%	222
No	1.8%	4
<i>answered question</i>		226
<i>skipped question</i>		0

An analysis of the answers given to the rest of the survey by those 4 individuals who answered 'No' to the question would indicate that this response was a mistake on their part.

2. Are you male? (this includes any transsexual people who identify as male)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	98.2%	222
No	1.8%	4
<i>answered question</i>		226

skipped question

0

The remaining answers given by those individuals who responded that they were NOT male indicates that their answer to this question was an error.

3. To help us identify the kind of legal problem(s) you have, please tell us about the type of case you needed legal advice and representation for. Please tick all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Child Arrangements Order	78.9%	172
Other Children Act / Family Law Order eg Prohibited Steps / Non-Molestation etc	50.5%	110
Other Issues relating to children	41.3%	90
Child maintenance / financial support for children	31.2%	68
Divorce	44.5%	97
Financial arrangements after divorce	38.5%	84
Other (please specify)		44
<i>answered question</i>		218
<i>skipped question</i>		8

Multiple answers were permitted for this question as many individuals apply for more than one type of Order when accessing the Family Court. The Child Arrangement Order (which replaced Residence and Contact Orders) is predictably the largest type of application.

4. Which of the following forms of evidence of domestic violence did you have in order to apply for Legal Aid?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
An unspent criminal conviction against my abuser for a domestic violence related criminal offence	1.6%	3
A caution against my abuser for a domestic violence related offence in the past 2 years	5.8%	11
Evidence of ongoing criminal proceedings in relation to my abuser and their violence against me	6.3%	12
A Non-Molestation / occupation / forced marriage / restraining order against my abuser	4.8%	9
A Non-Molestation / occupation / forced marriage / restraining order against my abuser which had expired but was made in the past 2 years	2.6%	5
An undertaking given by my abuser within the past 2 years where I did not give a cross undertaking	4.2%	8
Evidence of my referral to a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment conference) as a high risk victim of domestic violence within the past 2 years AND where there is a plan in place	2.1%	4
A Finding of Fact made in a family proceedings within the past 2 years that my abuser was violent to me	7.4%	14
Evidence from a doctor, nurse or midwife that they examined me within the past 2 years about an injury or condition I had as a result of domestic violence	14.3%	27
Evidence from Social Services that they have assessed me as being at risk of or experiencing domestic violence within the past 2 years.	6.3%	12
Evidence from a refuge that I stayed there for more than 24 hours in the past 2 years	0.5%	1
Evidence of having been assessed by a psychologist as experiencing or being at risk of domestic violence within the past 2 years	10.1%	19
Evidence from a domestic violence support service where	5.3%	10

they have been referred by a health professional.		
Evidence of being unable to access refuge due to insufficient accommodation	2.6%	5
I have none of the above evidence and could not apply for Legal Aid	69.8%	132
Tell us about the difficulties you have in obtaining evidence to qualify for Legal Aid		86
answered question		189
skipped question		37

This question is the most important in the survey. It identifies that men are significantly less able to meet the criteria for evidence than women. The clear view expressed by respondents is that services designed to support victims of DV have a gendered approach that makes them less accessible to male victims.

An interesting point to note is that a higher proportion of men were able to evidence DV from criminal convictions / cautions than might have been anticipated based on the very small numbers of women responding in this way in surveys by Rights of Women.

PLEASE NOTE Respondents were asked which of the criteria of evidence they could meet. Many were able to give multiple forms of evidence eg Referral from a GP AND Evidence of on-going criminal proceedings, for example. This explains why the individual total of responses exceeds 189.

5. If you did not have any of the required forms of evidence of Domestic Violence, which of the following did you have instead?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A letter from a domestic violence support organisation confirming that I am receiving advice and support as a result of domestic violence	10.1%	18
A letter confirming that I have called the National Domestic Violence Helpline / All Wales Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Helpline / Safer Wales 'Dyn' Project Helpline for advice as a result of domestic violence	5.1%	9
Evidence from the police confirming that I have called them as a result of domestic violence	39.9%	71
A letter from friends, family members or neighbours who have witnessed an incident of domestic violence	20.8%	37
A copy of my divorce petition confirming that my marriage broke down as a result of domestic violence	7.3%	13
None of the above	52.8%	94
Other (please specify the form of evidence you have if NOT included above)		40
answered question		178
skipped question		48

Comparison to the Rights of Women surveys is difficult in this area as only 32 responses were made to the equivalent question in their survey. What is noticeable is the disparity between the experience of men and women in respect of DV support services. The Rights of Women survey shows that 34.4% of women had a letter from a DV support organisation in comparison to only 10.1% of men. That disparity continued with 18.8% of women indicating that they had a letter confirming that they had called a DV support helpline while only 5.1% of men had this proposed form of evidence. This disparity of treatment is borne out in the comments made by men about their experience of engaging with DV support services that are designed to support them.

6. If you were unable to obtain Legal Aid for Family Proceedings as a result of you being a victim of 'Domestic Violence' how did you deal with the problem?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I could do nothing	19.5%	38
Paid a solicitor / barrister privately	37.9%	74
Represented myself in Court	42.6%	83
Please use this space to share with us some of the difficulties you have faced as a result of not being able to obtain Legal Aid?		82
<i>answered question</i>		195
<i>skipped question</i>		31

There appears to be a higher level of pro-active measures taken by men as a result of not being able to access Legal Aid. Only 19.5% of men took no action (46.5% of women in RoW March 2014). The rates of those paying for representation were broadly similar (37.9% male / 32.1% female). The disparity in the numbers representing themselves in Court were significant however (42.6% male / 25% female). (comparisons made with Rights of Women survey March 2014)

7. Where do you currently live? (England & Wales only)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
North East	4.4%	10
North West	5.3%	12
Yorkshire & Humberside	5.3%	12
West Midlands	6.2%	14
East Midlands	7.1%	16
Eastern (East Anglia)	8.4%	19
South West	6.6%	15
South East	15.9%	36
London	22.1%	50
Wales	18.6%	42
<i>answered question</i>		226
<i>skipped question</i>		0

The whole of England and Wales was well represented in the responses to the survey – although Wales was over-represented in the responses possibly because the survey was conducted by a Wales based charity.

8. Is there anything else you can tell us about your experience of being a male victim of Domestic Violence? - for example what is your experience of accessing support from a gender neutral DV Helpline / support service etc

Answer Options	Response Count
	173
<i>answered question</i>	173
<i>skipped question</i>	53

The answers given to this question were very illuminating and provided a substantial and unexpected wealth of anecdotal evidence about men's experience of treatment at the hands of both statutory and voluntary services. These have been incorporated into a separate section.

VICTIM'S VOICES - QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF MEN

The evidence that emerged from the comment boxes provided for the survey gave a very clear and disturbing pattern of responses about the experience of men experiencing DV as a result linked to family disputes.

The key themes that emerged from the men's testimony were

- **Concerns around the stigma of being a male victim – predominantly as a result of abuse from female co-parents**
- **Men showed a lack of understanding around the concept of Domestic Violence in terms of its wider definition to include emotional, psychological and financial abuse**
- **A very strong sense that men faced institutionalised sexism as a consequence of their gender when seeking help and support**
- **Responses from the Police and Children's services were heavily skewed against men identifying as victims**
- **The help received from specialist domestic violence support charities was felt to be very poor and often gender biased against men**
- **There was an impression that the Family Justice system – Courts / Cafcass (Cymru) did not treat male victims with the degree of understanding female victims received, and that the experiences of male victims were discounted or treated as an attempt to secure some sort of advantage in Court**
- **The price of justice – both in financial terms and the emotional and psychological costs faced by men were felt to be almost too high given the scepticism and depression they expressed about the service they had received in the Family Court and the outcomes achieved**
- **False allegations and counter claims were felt to be a simple and very effective tactic used by some women when men raised the issue of their victimisation.**

IGNORANCE OR STIGMA

- I didn't know at the time verbal abuse was domestic violence
- It did not even occur to me that I could apply on DV grounds as a man.
- Felt unable to report the DV due to stigma associated
- I told them when she broke my ribs that I had fallen at work . I don't know why . I did not want to cause trouble because I knew that she would get more angry
- i was told it was pointless at the time.
- If you mention this to anyone people will firstly laugh at you and secondly disbelief you and thirdly blame you - you as a man must have done something wrong.
- I was not aware verbal abuse constitutes domestic violence. To make matters worse, the mother presented herself as the victim and obtained a non-mol order and legal aid.
- I did not report to doctor due to embarrassment and also to a degree my ex belittling me and coercing me not to go to doctors with said problems

- As a Male victim of abuse you have no where to turn. Your friends abandon you, there are no resources to help you, and you know that you are truly on your own. I don't think there is any lonelier feeling!!!!
- I never mentioned the years of abuse to anyone.
- I was terrified of reporting it, as I felt I would be portrayed as the abuser, and be force to leave the home, and my kids.
- It's took me so much strength to stand up and admit being abused and yet because I'm a man and want to protect our child, I just have to shut up and take the abuse
- I didn't report any of the initial violence or abuse because of the stigma of being male it was only after the child arrangements proceedings took place that I sort support
- During my marriage I was made to feel like a bully for years. It took months after she left for me to start opening up to friends who encouraged me that I was anything but.
- I had photo evidence of domestic violence but didn't realise I could apply for legal aid in the strength of it.

SEX DISCRIMINATION

- You can drink yourself to death or you can become suicidal or depressed or do drugs or go homeless. No one cares. You are man. Not a human being.
- Being male is a big problem. If I were female, I'm sure my ex partner would have already been charged
- I went to hospital after she ran over my foot. I told the nurse and pointed at the poster. She laughed her head off. It's a shame my child had to witness the whole thing
- I immediately felt like I was being judged as a man and stigma was inherent. No face to face support was offered, merely a telephone call. 99.9% of all abuse shelters in Wales are for women. .1% are for men. That is not equality.
- If you are male you are treated differently by the police, the CPS, the courts and DV help organisations. I absolutely know this as around the same time a female friend experienced similar problems - she was treated completely differently by all of the above. It's like being a black man in the sixties in South Africa, you have no rights, no one listens or cares, as a result many suffer, most of all the children concerned
- There was zero support when I was a victim. It happened whilst I was in the Military and the military laughed at the possibility of DV against the husband.
- There is no support for men. The woman appears to be believed and the male is guilty until proven innocent.
- I wasn't believed or listened to really by any one, even in my statements to court. I made numerous references to DV and not one professional would do anything about it, They were only interested in the lies my ex partner had told them.
- Nobody wants to help a man. No one believes a man.
- Do not report it, the system will allow the perpetrator to make a counter allegation, that what will be believed and you won't see your children, save the money and years in court, realise you as a male victim have no chance, no statutory law to protect your relationship with your children, they will remain with the abuser fully supported and they have no rights to you.
- Didn't seek support - you don't - who's going to believe you anyway.

- Help? What help? No-one believes you and you simply find yourself accused and arrested despite being the victim. Disgusting prejudice.
- There were so so many missed opportunities for the "Authorities" to intervene and provide me with the support that a Female Victim of equal status and risk, quite rightly receives. I have no doubt that I was treated this way because I am a mere Male Victim and all the organisations I came into contact with either did not know or simply would not support me
- Waste of time; there is no protection for men and if you have kids it is the worst of all... If you walk away you lose your kids, your home, your money and you're branded a deadbeat + if you tell the reason there's a stigma and people will not believe you anyway, particularly if you're bigger than your ex
- Solicitor explained that any discussion of her violence would not be taken seriously.
- she stopped me from seeing our children and only now almost 11 months later can i see them unsupervised having had to go to court, see my kids in a contact centre and fend off countless untrue allegations about me, all the while nobody felt it necessary to take action on my ex partner being violent towards me and verbally abusive in front of our two young children on a daily basis, she admitted to doing all of these things and still nobody could care less
- No one believes you because you're a man.
- Was so hard to be recognised as a male victim, despite damning security camera footage.
- My life has been a living hell for 16 months and nobody there to help or Acknowledgement my existence while my female ex-partner pushes and pushes me deeper and deeper into depression. This is not an equal society, so so wrong
- The DV regimes and institutions have been set up to help women, even when they are the perpetrator of brutal violence. What I have suffered and what men like me suffered cannot be undone. We had no recourse to justice. Who can repair and heal that betrayal of trust that we suffered
- There is nothing or support to help men who have been victims of emotional bullies, who exploit the system to hurt and destroy a man.
- Living in wales and being a male victim of DV, who found it so difficult it to disclose, i was extremely hurt and disappointed to see our Government supporting a bill concerning just violence against women when there is growing evidence that males make up a significant proportion of the victims of DV and evident that, like me , so many men find it extremely difficult to report. I am sure that many men feel as discriminated against and as forgotten as I do
- I was told to Deal with it. That I was not a being abused by my partner/ex-partner. Support would be given if I needed to attend A&E as a result of the abuse before anything would be done in this matter.
- as a male single parent, i found that there is no help for single dads. i seen plenty of help for women, but not for men. i believe there is a gynocentric element in society . i always asked my solicitor was the court biased against me for being male, and being on their oath of office, they always replied yes. and you wonder why men are going their own way.
- my experience is that it's so difficult to get help because you're are male so support service feel is ok for man to be DV.

- I do not know of a single gender neutral DV helpline, do they even exist? the media is full of experts/journalists/women rights groups who regularly diminish DV against men in favour of women victims only. there is simply not enough or any awareness for men as to what they need in order to pursue legal action for DV. we are expected to provide everything without any support, whereas women victims get funded support groups to assist them.
- The system is a joke. It's designed for women and only works for women. When my ex made false claims of harassment to the police I was cautioned and interviewed by two women officers who looked at me like I was guilty from the outset. A female would never be interrogated by two male officers like this.
- There is no support for men, plenty for women though.
- As a man, we are more vulnerable to constant abuse by the mothers of our children and almost no authority will do anything about it. We are clearly in a very weak position.
- Police, housing, government organisations and social services did not and do not care.
- Pg 16 of the DART Domestic Violence Course Notes states: "If a woman claims she has been the victim of domestic violence or abuse, she should be believed without question and without the need to provide evidence or proof". This is a course that many Social Workers are familiar with and whilst this one sided bias continues, many men will unnecessarily continue to be victims.
- Seems that DV doesn't get recognised against a male. I was a victim and now barely see my child, have lost my house and everything. If I was the one that was DV I would have been nailed to a cross
- I was threatened and assaulted by my wife, who due to her having an affair I was leaving .police were not really interested .if I had assaulted her I would have been charged .ie gender bias
- Over a period of nine years I was beaten up by my wife, and then beaten up by the system which listened to her lies, and assumed I was guilty
- Being a male victim of Domestic violence was not something anyone ever believes you actually happened.
- No one care for men and their problems. Legal aid for men is far from reality.
- noone believed me and i was falsely accused of being the abuser. social services refused to believe a man could be a victim and portrayed me as the abuser in court with no evidence at all. it was disgusting sexist nonsense.
- Very aware of the direct discrimination experienced and unfair manner in being treated.
- After an 18-month county court battle ending October 2002 and being asked to be assessed by a forensic psychiatrist because I was "seen as gay" (I am not), CAF/CASS decided I should not have direct access to my four children because my ex-wife would become very angry in front of the children and that would not be in the best interest of the children. I was seen as the abuser (ex-wife's account) and all my accounts of physical, emotional and sexual abuse were ignored. I have still not seen my children since April 2001. I have worked in health and social care (mainly mental health) since 1996 and have always had an immaculate DBS record. I ended up with mental health issues and frightening dreams since 2001. I still work in health and social care. I was diagnosed with Asperger's only in 2009 when I was age 53. I was

abused in both my marriage (above) and in a subsequent relationship ending 2007 when I required treatment in A&E from serious physical abuse. All relations have been heterosexual

- I was a house husband and denied access to local services because of my gender in Brent which facilitated and promoted false allegations against me as evidenced by 2 Ombudsman Investigations.
- The groups which are around for so called abused woman give them so much support that the men dont stand a chance unless they can pay a good solicitor a lot of money. Legal aid just keeps the woman able to harass you, and keep coming back for more of anything they can
- No one would accept that I was a victim of abuse. At best I would be ridiculed.more likely, I would be taken to jail when my ex would claim self defense.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSES

- Local Authority Children's Services Officers perjured themselves in Family Court under oath and attempted to pervert the course of justice.
- Social Services write reports based on the lies of your ex that prevent you from seeing your child, and Schools prevent you from having access to your child, or even copies of school reports, based on the "advice" of Social Services. In my experience, Social Services are a disgrace and, without exception, should be forbidden from working with children or in family law cases.
- Legal action against social services for discrimination, failure to investigate fully, breaching my human rights, failure to adhere to court orders and mal-administration
- I spoke with social services, who responded to me as if I was lying about the abuse my children and I suffered. They did not take any notes, appeared suspicious about my intentions and were intent on questioning the children away from me. I did not allow them to do that, at which point the meeting was concluded
- Social services recorded that "there was violence in the relationship" and would not state that I was the victim even though my ex told them and her doctor that she was hitting me and she went on to say that I never retaliated either verbally or physically.
- My former partner was helped by Children's Services in matters of access when she was deemed unfit to look after our son. This was despite them repeatedly telling me they could not get involved. She openly admits to fabricating incidents of domestic abuse now that she is well. Children's Services were fully aware of the situation but acted out of impunity when I made a formal complaint against them. After the complaint I started noting fabricated statements and events in my reports.
- Social Services have assisted my abuser in keeping my children from me because my abuser has lied to them and the police.
- Social services even lied on a section seven report and subsequent complaint enquiry to paint me as the evil party. It's criminal. They just don't care
- Was told to report the psychological abuse (domestic violence) to local authority. They ignored my evidence (supported by my son and other family members) and openly colluded with the abuser without any evidence, only vagaries and conjecture
- At the start of proceedings I was the primary carer living in a house i had completely paid for. I have now almost nothing and my children are clearly suffering. Yes the psychologist also detailed that the children "felt a low level of support by

professionals". They are now scared to speak to anybody about their wishes and how they are being treated as in their own words "every time we do we have to spend more time with mum". Social services and their mother are twisting this to say they are 'happy' without asking the children themselves or looking into why they are self-harming. Needless to say I am well and truly suffering with stress and finding it incredibly difficult to hide this from my children or the sickeningly biased and utterly dishonest social worker.

- Social Services took the side of the mother, she claimed I hit her! my child was removed for 6 weeks without me being able to contact him and being thrown into the back of the police van handcuffed and disbelieved. It was declared NFA but it is still referred to constantly
- Both social services and the police ignore it, on top of this a Brighton social services manager admitted during a complaint that she "felt hostile towards me"
- I did not report the matter until the abuse became too much to endure and social services refused to intervene in matters of child access. They fully assisted my former partner.
- The continuous interference of Social Services which supported the female involved. She claimed violence and was believed. It was declared NFA without going to court.

CAFCASS / CAFCASS CYMRU RESPONSE

- Was just ridiculed by Cafcass whose response was 'but you're a man'.
- Despite [MOTHER] being found guilty of causing harm to the children the CAFCASS officer recommended that I did not re-become main carer as I was before split and only see them a few times a week. I feel let down by all the local authorities as I had to fit long and hard to be in my children's life and both they and myself are victims in this situation.
- It was the attitude of Cafcass officers that particularly made me angry; it is obviously a female run organisation just for the benefit of women. There is no way I would ever make a complaint of DV again. There is no support unless you are female or gay.
- I informed CAFCASS that I had been threatened with a firearm by my "inlaws" if I returned (to see my sons) in the rural part of the US that my children were being taken to. CAFCASS did not put any of this before the judge. The CAFCASS officer said in court that she "Discounted all of my comments" (!!!) .
- In children's proceedings CAFCASS initially gave my ex wife CREDIT for being arrested, ie they had sympathy for her arrest after molesting my face.
- CAFCASS ignores complaints about DV from fathers!

DV SUPPORT SERVICES

- The whole system is designed to support women only. I am suffering everyday and my whole life is ruined because I asked for help. I'm so upset and suicidal my life is a mess I miss my son I've lost everything I hate myself
- No support available. Told by Women's Aid that I 'must have deserved it'
- national DV helpline advertised everywhere is only for female victims - they do not tell you this until the end...

- Basically, you're stuffed. Nothing you can do and your ex holds all the cards. Nil contact with kids thanks to lying Social Workers and Womens Aid workers.
- I contacted men's help line when I was at risk of domestic violence, but all they do is to give basic advice and ask to get in touch with solicitors.
- [DV SUPPORT SERVICE – NAME REMOVED] Project was a disgrace. Anti-male, run by radical feminists in [NAME OF ORGANISATION REMOVED] who screen men, but not women.
- No domestic abuse charity in Cardiff offers non judgemental support to men. I once visited [NAME OF ORGANISATION REMOVED] and they did not keep my details confidential. I only had a children's services report which mentioned in passing mother assaulting me.
- There are no gender neutral DV helplines or services. All claim to be, to abide by certain legislature, but are not in practice. All public, NGO and private services in the UK are feminist and rarely help men.
- When I first engaged with the DV helpline (the one based near Waterloo and funded by Lambeth) they rejected my claim to be abused and classified me as an abuser and threw me out.
- I have talked to a couple of helplines as more of a "counselling support" and this has helped a bit, but due to lack of funds, etc no one has been able to help to represent me with legal matters
- Support was very very poor. Ultimately all relevant helplines were advising to contact a solicitor because most of the abuse was not physical.
- Took half a day to speak to a male dv helpline got through to female one immediately who sign posted me back to male one.
- Very little support available. Nobody believes my story. False allegations are accepted. Duluth Model applied from the start
- The experience of being accused when I was asking for help was horrific. It's very difficult for men to self identify as abuse victims and being met with disbelief and accusation is horrible. They would never do this to a woman victim. This isolated me from seeking help for many years until after my relationship had already broken down. Approaching services more recently I found that the male services were shutting down. All groups with male services were for male abuser only. I would call up and say I was male and they would put me through to the abuser program. It was like they could not conceive of a male as victim.
- Hostility from Domestic Violence helpline. Police witnessed me being assaulted but arrested me. General refusal to address issue - female on male domestic violence 'does not exist because men are stronger than women' is the prevailing view.
- [DV SUPPORT SERVICE NAME REMOVED] stopped working with me because my abuser went to them while they were assisting me. They said it was a conflict and assisted her instead of me
- I was going to get in contact with Greenwich Domestic Violence helpline, although decided against after sensing their website was much more geared towards women victims.
- At the time I did not self-identify as a victim of domestic abuse. None of the statutory and professionals involved in my case correctly identified my children and I as victims, instead focusing on my ex's allegations which labelled me as the dangerous aggressor.

- The government helpline setup for male victims was useless as they offered no assistance whatsoever
- Local domestic abuse service in West Sussex refused to support me as they were already supporting my ex-wife who lied to get an ex-parte NMO
- They said that they were unable to accommodate me since Domestic Violence aid was provided only to women and children
- When I first approached helplines the bias against male victims was blatant and many were simply women only. Even the male victims helpline was unhelpful. Later I obtained excellent counselling through a Surrey DV service where I had initially met indifference. Even then, not all staff were unbiased.
- DV helplines don't give letter or references to record your calls very unfair. I had diary evidence as well as police statements and proof I went to seek help from a councillor but the judge didn't want to take me seriously
- Male victims not taken seriously. [NAME REMOVED] project is anti-heterosexual male

FALSE ALLEGATIONS

- I needed legal support to counter false allegations made about me. Fortunately, but not before I spent my life savings my ex partner submitted a formal retraction statement to police days before the court hearing because she knew I had 32 witnesses to demonstrate it was in fact her who was violent. Today she applies DV to my children and has had my son wrongly arrested but again she backed down. Alcohol plays a major role.
- Faced discrimination from police, social services and Cafcas. All the agencies made things worse. All ignored my overwhelming evidence in favour of my son's mother. I was even arrested with false allegations stalked and threatened with violence
- No one listens because she made the accusation first. They don't believe you in court. Especially if she works for impact.
- No one believes you. My ex claimed that I was the one who abused her and despite me offering the police and social services the chance, neither would collect evidence - it clearly wasn't a priority for them, but they loved the idea of a woman being abused because it fitted in with what their priorities were.
- My ex in laws physically abuse me and to save my marriage I withdrew the complaint but Social Services and Cafcas and court didn't acknowledge that and accused me of being abuser to my ex wife.
- Found it incredibly difficult to represent myself against all the lies the other party told. She failed to supply documents subject to a court order because they showed the real extent of the abuse.
- My ex-wife made numerous malicious complaints that were readily believed despite there being no evidence. Suffolk police have since had to pay me compensation for their sexist actions
- The female abusers use the restraint of physically stronger males as a weapon and tool, knowing they can manipulate them whether the male victim defends himself or not
- My ex attacked me and I taped it in spurts. I was going to call the police but held off as I didn't want to have her arrested. She then called the police and had me arrested.

The case was dropped. But she bought it up in family courts and they ruled in her favour despite the tape recordings, which they said i controlled as they stop start. One sided arse protection racket that the family court is.

- No one listens. I'm not treated the same as my ex wife who falsely claimed to be the victim of domestic violence. She was treated completely different to me. She was treated as a victim and I was the perpetrator who had to prove himself innocent.
- after leaving the violent relationship my ex went to court and told them i was the violent one. i did not see my child for over 18 years. my ex was undergoing anger management with her gp. and relate made her promise not to use violence during the sessions. neither could help with legal address.
- My ex who got legal aid obtained non molestation order against me though I am the one suffering. As I can't fight back I am becoming more under pressure to all the false accusations and further..
- wife lied to police, and various DV charities that I had abused her - the opposite was true ... As I'm a man they assume that she's telling the truth; in reality she is the abuser ... She got a non-mol against me based on more lies
- Ex has made false claims of harassment, cps are charging me.
- If I didn't have proof in the form of video and audio recordings of my ex committing acts of domestic violence, I would definitely have been convicted on my ex's false allegations just on her word and absolutely no proof whatsoever. The Gender Bias in this area of law is shocking, corrupt and disgusting.
- My wife who had been violent towards me had me removed from the home by police when she made a false allegation of assault against me. I was then barred from my home and my children while she gained access to legal aid as a result of her allegation. Three months later I was cleared. She retained her legal aid status.
- DV was ignored by all relevant authorities also because my ex wife made false allegations of DV against me. All authorities initially believed her and to cover up for their mistakes ignored my complaints against her, although there were plenty of evidence. She got to the point of bringing our 1y old daughter to doctors twice (that I am aware of) insinuating that I sexually abused her. Fortunately, the doctors clearly dismissed the concerns
- I was forced out of the former marital home after false allegations made to the police over the phone. Although I was primary carer of our child after he was 9 months old until our separation when he was 3.5 years old, the false allegations seem to have persuaded the judge to allow our son's mother to keep our son for most of the time. Our son is upset about this and says that it is not fair. I have to go back to court to obtain a fairer Child Arrangement Order.
- As the victim of a false accusation as a tactic, much "evidence" was aimed at myself
- I was taken to Court for on a non molestation injunction. All evidence was fraudulent and there were no facts to be found. The applicant maliciously made false allegations to the police in regards to allegations of sexual abuse which were dismissed by the Police. The applicant committed a criminal offence; am advised to take this further as her allegations were compounded three months later on similar allegations which were given to support a continuation of the non molestation injunction
- i have been arrested as a result of false accusations
- have photos of where my ex wrote on the living room wall in marker when I didn't do as I was told. I left when she threw knives at me in front of my 1 year old son at the

time. Since the split I have had a number of false allegations made against me, her father has been threatening and went to hit me and mine and my new wife's cars have been keyed on multiple occasions, she has lied to the courts, been malicious and found our address we suspect through the police computers as she works for the force. We have been stalked on social media and my wife undertook a Sarah law check as my ex said she would not make my son available if she did not.

- They made false allegations against me regarding domestic violence
- My ex lied through her teeth and despite being given the opportunity to get evidence, police and so on services weren't interested, believed her and branded me a 'perpetrator of domestic violence'.

FEAR OF REPRISALS

- I have never raised my ex's domestic violence in the court case due to fear of repercussions (she threatened to destroy me), for the sake of my son and because I don't want to relive it. My focus was solely on seeing my son.
- My abuser had pretended to be a victim and always threatened me of more troubles if I try to approach anyone

COURT PROCESSES & LEGAL RESPONSES

- Court hearing listings/timescales & a District Judge allowing a Mother to be granted an adjournment for 3 months to process and obtain legal aid but would not allow Father an adjournment so he could be informed of his legal aid application and receive legal representation. These decisions from a District Judge resulted in the District Judge being biased in favour of a Mother, making biased orders as per Mother's wish, allowing a Mother to have legal representation & Father being stopped from being treated in a likewise manner; and failing to ensure a right to a fair hearing occurred and the welfare of children were paramount that causes ongoing harm!!!
- It was all a minefield with a total lack of clear signposting to relevant and much needed support
- My reports of domestic violence were simply ignored by the Family Court. They are much more willing to believe a woman is a victim of domestic violence.
- I had suffered serious DV, both physical and emotional, from my wife for many years, but when she applied for divorce, it somehow became a non-issue. The cruel irony was that she applied for, an ousting order to get me out of the matrimonial home saying that she felt threatened. My barrister, (of 5 minutes), advised me that, "You'll be leaving eventually anyway, so agree to go now." I was effectively ousted on Father's Day on two weeks notice. It was the worst legal advice I ever received.
- My ex partner falsely claimed legal aid based on allegations of DV. When these allegations were unfounded in the finding of fact her legal aid should have been stopped. It wasn't which meant that I had to carry on as an litigant in person [LITIGANT IN PERSON]
- The problems in obtaining support pale into insignificance though compared to the difficulties caused to a highly vulnerable victim by the culture prevalent among many in the judicial system, of combativeness and bias which greatly exacerbated the psychological damage initially caused by DV.

- I felt I couldn't use this [THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A VICTIM OF DV] in court because the court might have felt that I was doing so to 'knock mother'. DV and significant emotional distress has continued to impact our child in terms of child manipulation and myself in terms of actual and threatened breaches of court order (with holding son) and undermining me as a father at the school and with other parents..
- All proceedings were delayed, I have to prove my innocence and fight for my daughter in court
- I am still going through the court system. I have to do research myself on what my rights are and apply to courts for each stage. I have no legal experience and every legal advise I seek (even) from non profit or charities, this is very limited. I have a complicated case and I am drowned in the amount of hurdles I have to jump just to be taken seriously or be believed. I am a LIP and have no legal support at all. I live in London and am unemployed. The court hearings take place in Truro which is very expensive to travel to never mind the time it takes to get there and back Originally I paid for a solicitor and barrister, but the money ran out after seven months. Three years now and no end in sight. I did not apply for legal aid as my salary was too great at the time.
- Expensive, solicitors would only create more work for themselves now legal aid is no longer available and often would exploit men. One barrister i went to visit and told my story too told me i had no chance and played me as a pig, i could tell she was feminist. Fully enough in our first hearing my ex wife was being represented by the same barrister. i had it adjourned due to conflict of interest
- I found it incredibly stressful and time consuming to try to learn about how the court system works so that I was able to represent myself in court, all the while dealing with abusive texts and letters being sent by my ex
- the legal system simply does not put the need of the child to have a father, it is always biased toward the mother no matter what. in Australia, I understand the starting point in law is that contact etc is 50/50 until either party can prove cause for this to differ. Here the starting point is always that the child 'belongs' solely to the mother and the father starts off with an uphill battle. Also, the mothers can make whatever allegations they want, including false and damaging allegations to ostracise the father in his child's eyes, when the mother knows there will be no consequences for her lies.
- Courts and judges didn't believe me Even with clear evidence and breaking down in court
- I could not afford legal representation throughout the whole course of the legal process, and part way through the process I had to give up legal representation and from then on acted as a litigant-in-person. This was very challenging as I did not fully understand the process and how to employ the different laws that could protect my children and I. The abuser had full legal aid throughout the whole process. I made too many errors in presenting my case to the court, and the abuser's legal team could easily and frequently did point out the mistakes in my legal approach. The judge was sympathetic to begin with, but soon lost patience with my legal ineptitude. I had recourse to no resources or tools to assist me during this very difficult experience.

- It was more a case of solicitors being unwilling to take on a case where the male is the victim. They all said I would lose so they couldn't take the case. Instead I had to represent myself and I won.
- I paid for a solicitor until my money ran out then became a LIP. My ex claimed non specified domestic violence with the help of DART and received legal aid. Because money was no object, she used her solicitor to constantly bully me and delay and frustrate the process of me seeing my son. In the end he was completely alienated from me and I didn't see him for over a year. I was able to start rebuilding a relationship with him only once her legal aid stopped and when people stopped believing her lies about me.
- A broken nose and a confession under caution by my daughter's mother that her hand "accidentally" came into contact with my nose. Endless broken court orders - it's a farce.
- If they don't grant my appeal for Legal Aid I will be forced to represent myself and the stress could cause me to have another bleed to my brain, which has been diagnosed. The court knows this is an issue and could not care less and refused to adjourn
- children services and her solicitor broke family law protocol, I had started divorce due to DV, they started another saying the same and binned mine. I was then divorced for the very reasons I left home to escape. A nonsense

THE PRICE OF JUSTICE

- I have so far spent £40 k on courts, solicitors and barristers
- Cost me £30000 to them defend myself against false allegations made against me after my ex had been charged with DV
- I entered "the system" which led to many years of courts battle to see my child. This meant spending time in a contact centre for just under a year, paying 250 pounds per week to see my own son until the final hearing at a family court. I was bankrupt at the end but money well spent to see my child. However it could have been simpler and the money could have been used for my child's future and give me a place to live.
- Paid private for solicitors and barristers over a 6 year period and at a cost of nearly £30 000 debt
- The total cost to my son's inheritance had been about £70,000 and has left me in severe financial difficulties – at least I'm seeing my son now and we're beginning to undo some of the damage done by his mother and those criminals at social services. One day, I truly believe a British Prime Minister will apologise for the current system and the harm it does to children and victims.
- I want to share my story, it is truly shocking, particularly how the system failed to support me but instead supported my ex who later submitted a formal police retraction statement, but by then I'd lost my life savings my home my business and my daughter and son
- I am £27000.00 in debt but I have my son twice a week, she has him 5 days a week and has just started trying to cut down my time again using legal aid and more untruths. I would pay it again for my son as we are fantastic friends and she hates it, surely she should be happy for him.
- I had to take a loan, because I finished with all my savings and I lost my job.

- It cost everything I had in time and money and now I am burdened by debt

ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

- Currently going through the courts for an enforcement order as mother has been obstructing contact and not meeting final court order to the point I have not had contact with my son since Feb
- My ex partner continues with her behaviour, she breaks court orders frequently and has the order amended seemingly at will to suit her needs.
- Our son's mother would remove our son from me under duress despite a court order being in place putting him with me.

CHILD ABUSE

- Trying to protect my children, who now live with the abuser from ongoing incidents of violence from their mother. She hits them, name calls, discusses her sex life with the older daughter (age 13), excessively withholds money/computer time and is emotionally ambivalent. I have tried involving social services, which said the case was not serious enough to involve them and I should work it out with mother directly. Mother is the same person who assaulted, abused and humiliated me for over thirteen years. When I asked the social services, how I might go about working things out with mother, or what resources/tools they could available to me, they said they could not provide me with anything.
- Cafcass officer also told your children have fear that they lost their dad and if they tell the truth and did not listen to their mum they may lose mum as well. I think family justice system need immediate overhauling because current system is not useful for children;s welfare

PARENTAL ALIENATION

- I have recently had a PR order made in respect of my 2 children, both male, aged 15 and 13, a child arrangements order was made in respect of my youngest but the judge found it pointless to make an order for my oldest son because of his age, regardless of the fact that PAS is well recognised in this case, I have had no contact with my eldest for over 12 months but, I have sporadic contact with my youngest, the child arrangements order has made no difference.

POLICE RESPONSES

- DV never reported. Only a madman would risk his life reporting DV to the police.
- Absolutely appalling especially from the Police and Social Services. I have been informed by a serving officer that guidance from senior level is to protect and prioritise women against dv.
- Police don't take me seriously even when I have given them video evidence.
- In my case I feel I have been fobbed off by the police, I have shown them proof and evidence to support my complaints but they simply give me excuses as to why they will not investigate them

- I have recorded voice and text messages from my sons mother and her various partners. One of her partners being a Sergeant in Gwent police. I have a recording on my phone of him threatening to "smash me off the road", this was at a time when he and a friend of his were following me
- When I reported that my ex-wife had assaulted me to a police officer he just laughed at me and said "We wouldn't take that seriously". He was totally on my ex's side and even called me a criminal as she had reported that I made death threats over the phone
- Police don't treat it as dv if the perpetrator is female. They gave her a severe telling off but they perhaps should have done more.
- The police were very blasé about the attacks on me by my (female) partner, suggesting that I 'hit her back - in self defence'
- It is just not taken seriously. My ex attacked me and yet alleged that I had attacked her. I was arrested and custody sergeant said "I've seen your wife and she wouldn't hurt a fly." All concerns expressed about risk Mother's behaviour posed to children totally ignored.
- Yes I was arrested as she claimed self defence. During my time in custody the police officers laughed at me saying. "Wow, she done a good job on you" (she broke my nose) and made me feel bad about myself. They dismissed my case against her and NFA me as they had no evidence I assaulted her. I then countered the claim and they said it done. No further action will be carried out regarding this incident.
- Police and national helpline were unhelpful / useless
- Surprisingly the police managed to convince me not to press charges as our child was in the house too and said that the child needs the mother. They ended up asking me to leave the house for the night only to come back tomorrow and see the mother of my child and child had disappeared with all their belongings as well as some house furniture.
- as a Male victim I have been re-victimised by local authorities and police services everytime I approached them about an incident of domestic violence. I have been perpetually blamed for what my abuser has done to me as I was told regularly that her actions were my responsibility.
- When my partner was being violent I called the police to assist and when they turned up the initially thought they were there to arrest me.
- I found the CPS's unwillingness to prosecute my ex due to a lack of evidence of DV frustrating. That said, the police themselves were excellent.
- Very very difficult to get the police to believe it occurred. Total ignorance of the facts and evidence. Struggling to get any help at all.
- People don't believe you. When your ex counter claims to say it was you who attacked her with the carving knife, the Police refuse to gather evidence and arrest you
- I didn't know we're to turn at the time, I had a police force refuse to listen to me. I tried to kill myself because I couldn't take it any more, knowing that not only that fact I lived through abuse but my (then) four year old daughter was and still is living with a vilest woman
- The police were absolutely disgustingly non supporting. I was made to feel like I was wasting their time as I didn't report it when it happened.
- The police were not interested in my wife's DV against me and my 2 daughters.

- he police treated it like a joke, no one believed me and my ex partner claimed that I had been "psychologically abusive" towards her and was granted legal aid. My ex partner threw a bottle at my head, hit me, spat in my face, threw things at me, stole things from my house, contacted friends of mine and my family's and told lies about me, even found out the password to my email account and was monitoring my emails.
- Police just do not believe men who have a "gentle personality" can be abused in any form by a woman. Men are stereotyped as having to be macho.
- The abuse I have suffered is not physical but using children, financial, Isolation from support, psychological. I have complained to the police but they have not acted upon any of my complaints
- The police treated me apphalingly, they told me not to cry over spilled milk because of the abuse.
- i had no idea as a man who to turn to regarding this, went to the police and they said it was a civil matter and the horror stories i have read where men have reported woman being violent have often come out and still manage to get men arrested as they are seen as the perpetrators.
- Sussex police gave the perpetrator domestic violence leaflets after I made a 999 call which they took 1.5hrs to respond to, on complaint about this the officers where send back to give me the same information
- Police was pre judging. . . even when I reported of the threat. I was asked to leave the house as a general preference that kids not separated from mother. thus throwing me out
- When I have reported to Police, I have not been believed.
- still the police said just separate and I leave children with mother who just came that day after few days visit alone with her friends and I caring for the children

LEGAL AID & THE COST OF COURT PROCEEDINGS

- I had no idea I could apply
- I have had to borrow money to be able to keep contact with my child legal aid was refused
- I needed a non-molestation order after my ex raged at me again at handover and caused me another bleed to the brain. Even though I had the medical evidence I could not get Legal Aid because my income was over by about £80 in the last 3 months. When my income made me eligible a month later it was too late for me to apply for a non molestation order. I was granted emergency Legal Aid as I am unable to represent myself due to bleed to brain for a Child Arrangements Order. The Legal Aid Board rejected my application and gave no real reason and I've had to appeal. I am too ill to work due to the DV and abuse
- I was refused legal aid because my name waS on the mortgage, but I was refused those funds as my abuser refused to sell my house as her name was on the same document
- I didn't know in the beginning that legal aid was still available so in the beginning I was representing myself against my ex-wife's barrister. When I was helped and found out about legal aid it took 12 weeks to get it.

MULTIPLE PROBLEMS

- had photographic and other documented evidence. Legal aid was more interested in how much money, valuables I had rather than merits of case. my DV was conducted over 4 countries including UK. Had no confidence in seeking help from police because of fear or removal from my disabled child(I'm disabled as well)
- the sort of domestic abuse I have suffered has been completely dismissed by most, including police, charities and social services
- The violence was ongoing for 5 years, I was harmed on two occasions. I removed myself from the situation when possible. Ultimately my partner assaulted me whilst cradling our 4 month old son in an effort to provoke a reaction as it transpired that she planned to take away both of our children and remove me from their lives
- I can do nothing. learnt a rough lesson. system is so gender biased, response from children's services. brief experience in court. What I now know is, If I want to see my son.. I have to bow down and lick her (wife) boots.
- Lied to by social services. Lied about by social services. Wife went to DV services as a female abuser looking for help was told they could only help her as a victim. The entire system gives the impression that men are abusers and women are victims. It couldn't be more wrong. I stood to lose EVERYTHING - children, home, job everything and all with the full support of social services who lied in court.
- I have been trying to obtain legal aid, but could not as all the solicitors I meet keep telling me that I do not qualify. I called the domestic abuse line and I was sent a letter to take to my gp who then prepared a letter that I reported a domestic violence incident to her, but I did not report it on the day the incident happened which is like 7 months old and such she could not confirm exactly the nature of my injuries. I called the police to the incident but no action was taken against my wife. She has left the marriage with our daughter since 11 months ago and I have not seen my daughter and I have self represented myself in court asking for child arrangement order.

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