

Domestic abuse – everybody's business

**Polly Neate, Chief Executive
Women's Aid**



women's aid
until women & children are safe

Coercive control: cultural context

Drake – Hotline Bling

You don't need no one else
You don't need nobody else, no

Why you never alone

Why you always touching road

Used to always stay at home, be a good girl

You was in a zone, yeah

You should just be yourself

Right now, you're someone else

Nick Jonas – Jealous

You can call me obsessed
It's not your fault that they hover
I mean no disrespect

It's my right to be hellish

I still get jealous

Eminem – Love the Way You Lie

"Wait! Where you going?"

"I'm leaving you!"

"No you ain't. Come back."

We're running right back.

Here we go again

It's so insane cause when it's going good, it's going great

I'm Superman with the wind at his back, she's Lois Lane

But when it's bad it's awful, I feel so ashamed I snapped

Who's that dude?

"I don't even know his name."

I laid hands on her, I'll never stoop so low again

I guess I don't know my own strength

Play N Skillz – Literally I Can't

You got a big ol' butt

I can tell by the way you're walkin

But you annoying me...cause you're talkin.(STFU!)

...

Shhh, don't talk about it, Be about it

...

I'm tryna see what you got

Not tryna hear what you think

It's not just young people either...

Roxy Music

I didn't mean to hurt you
I'm sorry that I made you cry
I didn't want to hurt you
I'm just a jealous guy

The Police

Oh can't you see
You belong to me
And my poor heart aches
With every breath you take

Carmen, Tosca, Madame Butterfly, Nancy... I could go on...

It's early days, but we are seeing a shift in some areas from...

- Disclosure feels (and is) unsafe
- Judgemental response
- Focus on risk: what we measure and what we fund
- “Job done” delusion
- Domestic abuse seen as single violent incidents
- Ignoring children living with domestic abuse

But we are still stuck with...

- Lack of appreciation of victims' needs and assets
- Focus on short-term goals not long-term recovery
- Lack of preventive effort
- Punishing victims for impact of abuse on children
- Focus on criminal justice system: tunnel vision

As the police response improves, what else is out there?

Coercive control: not just a matter for the police

“Finding the Costs of Freedom”, London Metropolitan University/ Solace Women’s Aid, 100 women and their children tracked over 3 years:

“Across all agencies domestic violence was still being reduced to incidents of physical assault, which led not only to an exclusion of some women from services and support when their abuse was more characterised by coercive control, but also a minimising of post-separation abuse. This misunderstanding also meant that many professionals underestimated the toll living with abuse had on women and children, expecting that separation, in and of itself, would not just create safety but also lift all the other burdens. Women may have moved on but the shadow of domestic violence had not been rubbed out. **The current policy focus on short term risk reduction contributed to this misunderstanding, and failure to recognise women’s current and persisting support needs.**”

What women experience

- “Why doesn’t she just leave?” – professionals, family, friends
- “If you don’t protect your children, they will have to be taken into care” – social workers
- “This woman was literally shaking in front of me, she couldn’t articulate anything, she was completely unable to express herself” – Family Court judge
- “She said she wants them to stay together and we must respect that” – relationship counsellor
- “I asked if she would like to see me without her husband, but she said no and seemed certain about it” – health visitor
- “The violence ended several months ago and I see no reason why you should not do all you can to help your children see their father” – Judge

Jess' story: 2008 - 2013

Between June 2008 and March 2013 this included:

- 20 police call outs
- 16 MARACs
- 12 child protection meetings
- 4 housing applications, resulting in rehousing 3 times
- 9 court hearings
- 3 applications for non-molestation orders
- 8 breaches of non-molestation orders
- 1 visit to A&E and several GP visits

- There were many more DV incidents, not all reported, as Jess lost faith in services to protect her
- Jess had depression and other health issues and the well-being and education of her children were negatively affected
- In April 2013, Jess weighed less than 7 stone and was struggling to function

Addressing 3 things she needed right away

“I need the police to stop raiding my house looking for him in the middle of the night. He’s not here and they keep breaking the door down”

Local needs-led service took this to the police and it stopped

“I need somewhere to live that has no connection to Rick and all this mess”

Local needs-led service advocated on her behalf with the Housing Association and secured a more suitable tenancy with security

“I need some help for the children, we’re all in bits”

Local needs-led service enabled the children and Jess into Counselling

Went with her to all appointments for 3 months as she was not well and needed help to break down barriers that had built up between her and the services

How is Jess now?

The service recently contacted Jess again to check how things are going:

- She was in good spirits and pleased to hear from them but feels that she doesn't need their support any longer
- There are no agencies involved and she has had **no problems** for **20 months**

What has changed?

Mainly Jess' belief in her own ability

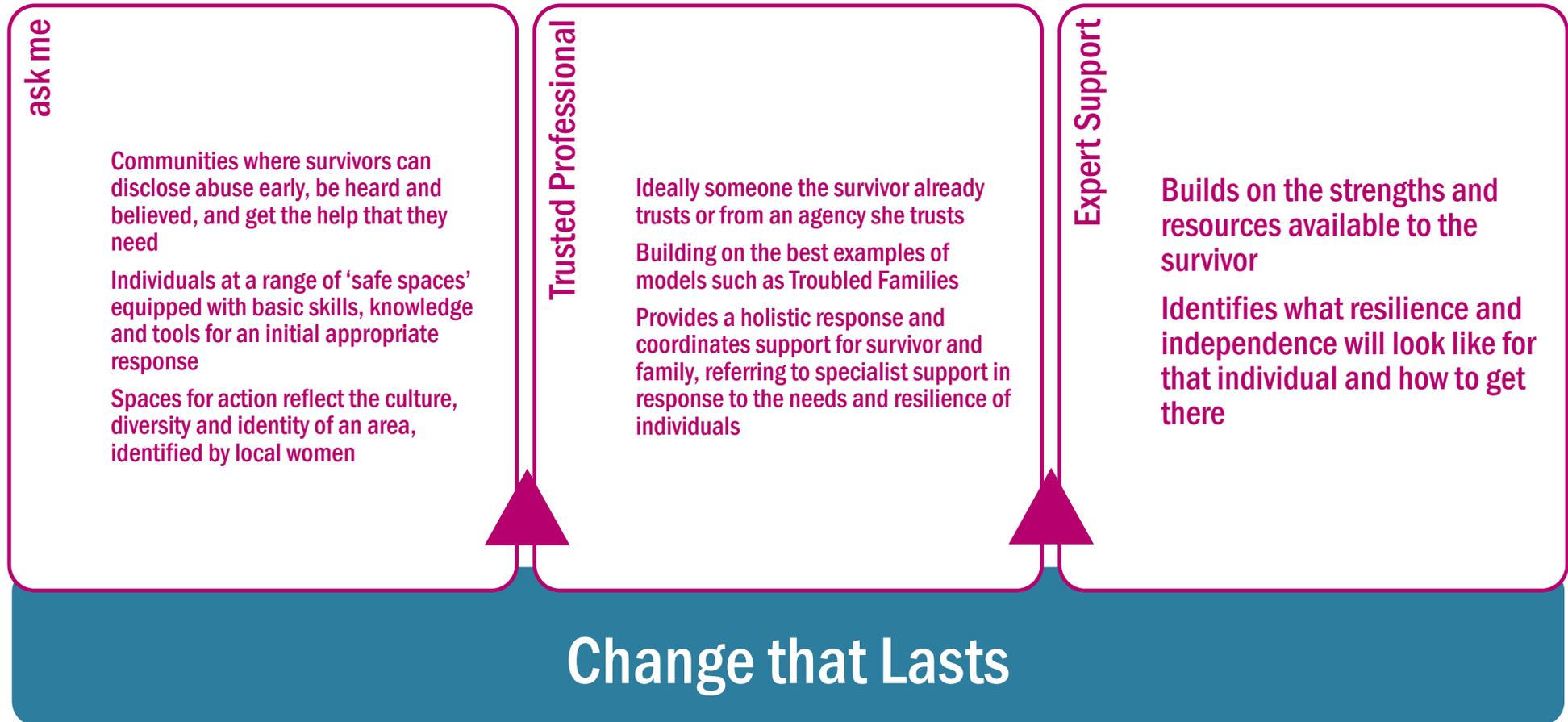
In Jess' case, the risk-based response failed either to keep her safe or to meet her needs

The needs-based response provided by the service addressed both

Expert support is not a luxury

- For the cost of one MARAC, the service that worked with Jess could support five women for a year
- Half of women in refuge and two thirds of women using community-based specialist services have not (yet) reported to the police (Women's Aid Annual Survey 2016)
- Only about one in six women using community-based support and one in five in refuge had seen any criminal action against the perpetrator
- In 2016 the number of women turned away from refuge overtook the number accepted – while three quarters of women in refuge are from outside that local authority area
- A third of specialist organisations are running at least one service with no dedicated funding
- The complexity of needs of women supported by specialist services is increasing all the time: mental and physical ill-health, drug and alcohol misuse, issues with children and parenting, housing problems, severe financial problems

What “everybody’s business” should look like



Further information

 @womensaid

 @pollyn1

<http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/polly-neate/>

Further information available at
www.womensaid.org.uk

Email info@womensaid.org.uk for:

- Change that Lasts summary
- Infographics
- Theory of Change document

women's aid
until women & children are safe