



## NSPCC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN BRIEFING 5

### 5. Children experiencing domestic violence in South Asian communities

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The NSPCC is calling on the UK Government and devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland to see domestic violence from a child's point of view.

Every year, an estimated 750,000 children witness domestic violence<sup>1</sup>. Although not every child is affected in the same way, this can cause serious emotional harm in both the short and long term. More worryingly, in families where there is domestic violence, children may also be physically and sexually abused. Researchers estimate that in 30-60% of domestic violence cases, the abusive partner is also abusing children in the family<sup>1</sup>.

Children exposed to violence will react in different ways, and not every child who witnesses abuse will experience long-term difficulties. However **all children have the right to protection from violence and abuse and should have access to support.**

### Summary of recommendations

- There is a need for purpose-built specialist refuges that cater for South Asian women with large numbers of children, alternative accommodation provision and services for older male children who are not allowed into refuge accommodation with their mothers and practical support to smaller specialist refuges. Diversity policies and procedures in specialist and generic refuges must be reviewed, fully implemented and monitored regularly and more Asian interpreters should be available.
- Specialist community-based family support services should be developed to offer culturally appropriate universal services and specialist therapeutic work for South Asian families affected by domestic abuse.
- There should be more culturally specific services for perpetrators from South Asian and BME communities.
- The NSPCC Asian Protection Helpline should be included in any information in any Government and local authority public education materials on domestic abuse.
- Multi-agency responses to domestic abuse, such as multi-agency risk assessment conferences, should be culturally appropriate and sensitive.
- All professionals and practitioners should be trained in how they can help and support South Asian women, children and young people.

## Summary

Domestic violence affects all sections of society. Although there is little evidence of variation in levels of domestic violence by ethnicity, the research that does exist shows that black and ethnic minority women and children experiencing domestic violence face distinct issues arising from culture, language, family structures, racism and in some instances the insecure immigration status of abuse victims.

The NSPCC recently published a report focussing on South Asian communities, ['I can't tell people what is happening at home'. Domestic Abuse within South Asian communities: The specific needs of women, children and young people'](#) that examined needs of children and women in these communities, the barriers that prevent them seeking help and the gaps that exist in provision.

In South Asian communities fear, arising from the notion of shame, honour and racism, and lack of awareness influence how women, children and young people perceive domestic violence. This can prevent them from disclosing such abuse and knowing how to seek help. The NSPCC report highlighted the need for a culturally-appropriate approach including specialist and targeted services, tailored training and appropriate education and awareness resources to be in place to improve their lives.

The NSPCC is calling on the governments in England and Wales to give more focus to women, children and young people from BME communities through further research into understanding their specific needs and ensuring that specialist services, tailored training and appropriate education and awareness resources are in place to improve their lives.

## The needs of children, young people and women in South Asian communities

*'I can't tell people about what is happening at home. I've a large extended family and if anyone finds out they will tell dad. I always feel trapped like there is no way out for me.'*

Young person calling Asian NSPCC Helpline

*'I see dad hitting mum all the time. He blames her for anything, like if he can't find his watch, or if the food is a bit cold. Yesterday he kicked her down the stairs and then made her hide in the bedroom when someone came over. I dread to wake up every morning- I don't know what will happen next.'*

Young person calling Asian NSPCC Helpline

*'He would describe dad making mum sleep on the floor and he drew a picture of dad in the bed and mum sleeping on the floor, as well as dad being physically violent because he ripped mum's ear and there's a picture of him having bitten mum's ear off.'*

Service practitioner

## Adequate support services for children and families affected

Nine out of ten local authorities have no specialised BME service for abused women.<sup>1</sup> Those who do are mainly in England (95 per cent), and almost half are in London. Furthermore, an evaluation of Children's Centres response to domestic violence in England found that, apart from the translation of leaflets into some minority ethnic languages, there were no specific services for BME communities.<sup>2</sup>

- **Specialist refuges** are a vital service for South Asian women and children experiencing abuse, yet Asian refuges are among the most marginalised organisations within the voluntary sector.<sup>3</sup> Out of an estimated 400 refuge support services in England, only 40 are specialist: 28 of these are Asian refuges providing 265 bed spaces.<sup>4</sup> There is a need for purpose-built specialist refuges that cater for South Asian women with large numbers of children, alternative accommodation provision and services for older male children who are not allowed into refuge accommodation with their mothers and practical support to smaller specialist refuges to help them to tender for providing services, as this can be both complex and time-consuming. Diversity policies and procedures in specialist and generic refuges must be reviewed, fully implemented and monitored regularly and more Asian interpreters should be available.
- **Specialist community-based family support services** should be developed to offer culturally appropriate universal services (including mother and toddler group & Asian women's groups) and **specialist therapeutic work** for South Asian families affected by domestic abuse. This includes support in the form of culturally appropriate individual work, group work and work with mothers to establish the parent-child bond that could have been affected by the abuse.
- **No recourse to public funds.** Women with insecure immigration status have no recourse to public funds. The government's forthcoming review of this issue must ensure that the cases of women in this position are handled sensitively, swiftly and fairly.
- There is a lack of **services for perpetrators**, including culturally specific services for South Asian and BME men.<sup>5</sup> Services that provide a coherent and coordinated approach to perpetrators and young men with violent behaviour to enable them to be better fathers should be developed. The NSPCC's Caring Dads, No Xcuses (in Liverpool), the SAFE Domestic Abuse Team (in Barrow) and Changing Places (in Chester) serve as innovative examples of such services.

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<sup>1</sup> Coy et al, (2007) *Map of Gaps: The Postcode Lottery of Violence against Women Support Services*. End Violence against women and Equality and Human Rights Commission

<sup>2</sup> Ball M and Nevan L. (2007) *Sure Start Local Programmes and Domestic Abuse. National Evaluation Report*. Research report 025. London DCSF

<sup>3</sup> Thiara R. and Hussain S. (2005) *Supporting People and services for Asian Women and Children affected by domestic violence* London Imkaan.

<sup>4</sup> Thiara R. (2005) *The need for specialist domestic violence services for Asian women and children*. London Imkaan

<sup>5</sup> According to Southall Black Sisters, perpetrator programmes are non-existent for abusers from minority communities. Furthermore, perpetrator programmes do not have the cultural knowledge and expertise to address abuse perpetrated by men from minority communities (Home Affairs Committee, 2006). Regan et al (2007) also noted lack of local perpetrator programme with voluntary entry in Tower Hamlets, and that culturally appropriate programmes would be welcomed.

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- The **NSPCC Asian Protection Helpline** should be included in any information in any Government and local authority public education materials on domestic abuse.
- **Multi-agency responses** to domestic abuse should be culturally appropriate and sensitive. In particular, members of **multi-agency risk assessment conferences** (MARACs) should be aware of the specific issues and needs of South Asian women and their children when putting in place a safety plan. At a strategic level specialist south Asian services should also be involved in the decision making with key local partnerships.
- In addition to **counselling, confidential helplines and peer support**, more support should be available to South Asian young people affected by domestic abuse through **informal spaces such as youth groups**.
- Service providers must actively engage in **consultation** with South Asian children and young people about the barriers that prevent them from seeking help in domestic violence situations and how these can be overcome. They should also participate in decision-making relating to the development and delivery of appropriate support services.

### Training for professionals to identify children living with domestic violence

- **All professionals and practitioners should be trained in how they can help and support South Asian women and children and young people.** In particular, health professionals and staff working in health settings should receive diversity training with a focus on enquiring about domestic violence, and the challenges of discussing the issue in different cultural contexts. Health visitors, GPs and nurses are in a unique position to be able to offer assistance to women and children affected by domestic abuse. Training about routine enquiry should be part of pre-registration curricula and post-registration continuous professional development for all health professionals. Basic awareness training is also important for administrative staff with patient contact, such as general practice and accident and emergency receptionists.

### Role of schools in tackling domestic violence

- Children and young people must have access to a **school counsellor**. Counselling services should be culturally and ethnically responsive and be familiar with issues from the child's cultural background. Counselling services should be independent from schools, thus ensuring that difficulties are dealt with separately from a child's education.
- **Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education.** We welcome the Government's recent announcement to make PSHE a statutory subject in England, which brings it into line with other nations. PSHE is crucial in safeguarding children and it is essential that the framework within which it is taught helps them learn about personal safety and improve their understanding of pro-social and respectful relationships, including parenting and family relationships, as well as abusive behaviours. Teachers must also be properly trained in teaching the subject and know what to do if a child discloses abuse or

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raises concerns about their safety. In relation to domestic violence, PSHE should:

- help children to identify causes of stress and conflict in the home
- set out that domestic abuse can happen in any community
- make children aware that violence and abuse is unacceptable in any relationship
- encourage children to think about possible solutions and coping strategies
- help children to consider who they would turn to for help and support.

### NSPCC PETITION

The NSPCC is calling for the UK Government and devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland to tackle domestic violence from a child's point of view.

We want to see:

- Adequate support services for children and families affected, so that when they are brave enough to speak out, they be safe and supported. (Current government funded provision is not enough)
- Training for professionals to identify children living with domestic violence so that whenever adults are working with domestic violence, they think about the children affected.
- Education about domestic violence in schools and other youth settings so all children learn that the violence is not their fault, and how to stay safe.

To support this campaign, please visit [www.nspcc.org.uk/dvcampaign](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/dvcampaign)

### HELPLINE NUMBERS

**ChildLine:** If you are a child or young person, for confidential advice and support from someone you can trust, call 0800 1111 or go to [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)

**NSPCC helpline:** If you have concerns about the safety of a child please call the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000. It is free, confidential, and our advisors are there to help 24 hours a day.

**National domestic violence helpline:** Domestic violence can happen to anyone. If you or someone you know is affected you can contact: 0808 2000 247 – this is the Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge.

## Contact information

For further information about this campaign please contact :

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