

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON
Unit of Assessment: LAW
<p>Title of case study:</p> <p>The Plight of Women Rough Sleepers and other Victims of Domestic Violence – Alerting and Informing EU and domestic policy makers</p> <p>Short summary of the case study (Maximum 150 words)</p> <p>The case study emerged from research conducted by the Central Institute for the Study of Public Protection and its predecessors (Policy Research Institute and Regional Research Institute). It informed the development of specialist domestic violence courts in the UK and brought to the attention of European and domestic policy-makers the plight of victims of domestic violence many of whom find themselves compelled to sleep rough, but do so in ways that result in them remaining invisible to the authorities.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impact of the research has been firstly, in informing the creation of a new kind of domestic violence court and secondly, in alerting domestic and European policy-makers to the problem of women rough sleepers which was previously effectively “invisible.”</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>There has been extensive research in criminology on domestic violence at the University of Wolverhampton for many years. The founder of CISPP, Professor Dee Cook, made significant contributions to informing government policy. Specifically, Professor Cook carried out research funded by the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Crown Prosecution Service on the formation and operation of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, in which special provision was made for women and children. A great deal of this work focused on the Black Country region of the West Midlands and was specifically directed towards policy formulation and implementation. Professor Cook wrote a total of eleven reports on domestic violence from 2000. After trials that Professor Cook and others evaluated, Specialist Domestic Violence Courts were rolled out nationally. The number of these courts has continued to be increased during the census period and so the research continues to have impact.</p> <p>Professor Cook retired in 2006, but projects she initiated continued. One specific issue identified during the course of conducting research emerged in a study of homeless women in Shrewsbury, many of whom, it was discovered, were victims of domestic violence from which they had fled. This led, in 2010, to an award under the EU Daphne III Funding Programme to look into the problem of women rough sleepers. The research was presented to the EU Commission in 2012 - “Women Rough Sleepers Who Had Suffered Domestic Violence” in Britain, Hungary, Sweden and Spain (Moss & Singh 2012). The plight of Women Rough Sleepers across Europe is now firmly on the EU agenda. Proof that the research was both of a high quality and influential can be inferred from the award to CISPP of two further awards in cognate areas (amounting to €3m) under the Daphne programme following the submission of the 2012 report. These further awards lead naturally on from the 2012 report and are financing research examining the problems, respectively, of:</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

- a) Children Rough Sleepers who are runaways and homeless, and victims of sexual exploitation/abuse and other violence on the streets and the development of knowledge transfer activities that improve services and policies to support and protect these vulnerable children; and
- b) How to empower Women Rough Sleepers to protect themselves from violence living on the streets (for example; rape, sexual abuse/exploitation) and create an innovative supportive protective environment that meets the needs of Women Rough Sleepers and support them back into mainstream society and away from violence.

These latter two research projects are on-going, but demonstrate that concern has been aroused in the policy-making circles of the European Union. The 2012 report succeeded in making visible and highlighting a problem amongst a particularly “hard-to-reach” section of the population. It contributes to increasing awareness of the existence and consequences of domestic violence throughout Europe.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Key publications (peer reviewed journals at 2* and above, and books)

Cook, D., Burton M., Robinson A. and Vallely C. (2004) Evaluation of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts/Fast Track Systems <http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/specialistdvcourts.pdf>

Robinson, A. & Cook, D. (2006) ‘Understanding Victim Retraction in Cases of Domestic Violence: Specialist Courts, Government Policy, and Victim-Centred Justice.’ In *Criminal Justice Review* (Taylor Francis, New York).

Moss, K & Singh, P (2012) EU DAPHNE III: Women Rough Sleepers & Domestic Abuse, European Union DAPHNE Programme
(<http://www.womenroughsleepers.eu/sites/default/files/WRS%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The contribution, impact or benefit

Research conducted by CISPP (and its predecessors) both alone and in collaboration with others contributed directly to policy-making at local and national levels. A programme to roll-out Specialist Domestic Violence Courts into the architecture of the court system through the Department of Constitutional Affairs commenced in 2005 and has continued subsequently into the census period. By 2010, according to the current Crown Prosecution Service website “there are now 127 courts, across the country. This is just one short of the Government target of 128, by 2011” <http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/equality/vaw/sdvc.html>. Locally, these reports helped to empower voluntary organisations with whom CISPP works actively, to guide and support domestic violence victims to influence successfully the relevant authorities to make suitable provision.

In continuing the theme of domestic violence, the aim of the more recent and current research conducted by CISPP has been to highlight and draw to the attention of policy-makers the issue of homeless women, who are “invisible” to the agencies that normally deal with homeless people, because they do not appear “on the streets”. These women quickly discover that sleeping rough is dangerous: it exposes them to all the risks that accompany sleeping rough (such as violence), but also exposes them to predatory sexual crimes. In response they pursue alternatives which carry their own risks, such as “sofa surfing” and forming inappropriate sexual relationships. The publication of the report occasioned considerable interest in the European Parliament and the

research team made a series of presentations to MEPs on 29th November 2012, including a video recorded interview that was posted on the EU website (see: <http://www.europeandyou.com/news/1223/8/>)

During the course of this research, it was revealed that the dangers were not limited to women, but also afflicted children who had run away from domestic violence and abuse. Current research is exploring the nature and scope of this problem in thirteen European countries. Research has been commissioned to study this issue in greater depth, but is currently in progress and it is too early to assess its actual or likely impact. Indicative of the impact and worth of the project completed in 2012, is the fact that European Union policy-makers saw fit to support this further research with significant funding.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Specialist Domestic Violence Courts review 2007/08 (Background) http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/equality/sdvc_review.html#a01
2. The research team held a public seminar at the European Parliament in Brussels on 29 November 2012, hosted by the Hungarian MEP Ms Kinga G6ncz and Mr Michael Cashman, MEP. Mr Cashman has kindly provided an email supporting the impact of the research in the following terms:

“Re: Testimonial for Women Rough Sleepers Project

We organised in November 2012 the First European Parliament Public Seminar on the gender dimension of homelessness and the links with domestic violence. The European Parliament has made a significant contribution to raising the issue of homelessness on a European level and this event served to further the existing good work and enhance the knowledge transfer around the impact on women specifically.

The presentation of the result of the project by the University of Wolverhampton regarding Women Rough Sleepers opened the eyes to many European decision-makers as to the reality of homeless women. It raised awareness about the fact that few Local Authorities in the UK and the rest of the EU have strategies, policies or services in place to support and meet the needs of women who require them. Government initiatives and services currently lack impact, are variable in quality, and many are poor. It is our responsibility in the EU to make sure that we learn from best practices in order to implement similar measures at local level. This needs to be monitored by projects such as this one in order to keep us accountable.

Michael Cashman CBE
 Labour MEP for the West Midlands”

3. Findings were presented to the Commission, and radio and TV interviews were undertaken for Europe and You TV see <http://www.europeandyou.com/news/1220/8/>
4. A number of MEPs and EU Networks attended including EURODIACONIA and FEANTSA. The feedback received was extremely positive. Assurances were given that the work this project delivered has filled a gap in knowledge and that it will feed into the development of future European policy and strategy on rough sleeping and gender / domestic violence. Moss was encouraged to continue her work in this field and assist Europe in raising the profile of two important topics which lack public profile and are absent in social discourses - namely violence against women and women’s homelessness. Tangible outcomes have yet to emerge, but this does demonstrate the success in raising awareness.

The following individuals have agreed to be approached to provide corroboration of the impact of the 2012 Women Rough Sleepers research:

Mr Freek Sinnewijn, Director, Feantsa

The European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless.
194, Chaussee de Louvain
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 538 66 69

freek.spinnewijn@feantsa.org

Ms Heather Roy, Secretary General, Eurodiaconia

Rue Joseph II 166
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 234 38 60

Heather.roy@eurodiaconia.org

Ms Esther Sample, Strategy Coordinator, St Mungo's Homeless Charity

St Mungo's is one of Britain's largest charities supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. They provide supportive housing for 1,900 people and manage more than 200 housing, health and work projects across London and the South.

St Mungo's Griffin House,
161 Hammersmith Road,
London W6 8BS

Esther.Sample@Mungos.org

5. Professor Moss was interviewed about the findings on Radio Four's Women's Hour on 23 November 2012 see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01nxzcd>. According to the BBC this is one of the top three programmes on Radio 4 in audience size, it is also targeted at precisely the section of the population most at risk of domestic violence, namely women.