

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: London Metropolitan University
Unit of Assessment: 22 SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
Title of case study: Violence Against Women: Enhancing responses to victim-survivors
1. Summary of the impact

Since 2000 the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Centre (CWASU) has produced a body of research that has had significant impact for victim-survivors of violence against women (VAW) at policy and practice levels. We have evaluated new and emerging forms of support provision (Sexual Assault Referral Centres), tracked attrition in criminal justice responses to rape in England, Wales and Europe, mapped the 'postcode lottery' of specialist services across Great Britain, and developed minimum standards for specialist services across Europe. Our research highlighted promising practices that led to a national rollout of specific forms of provision and central government funding for specialist services. We were among the first researchers in the UK to draw on human rights principles to illuminate the responsibilities of states to provide services, principles further elaborated in the 2011 Council of Europe Convention. Evidence here demonstrates that responses to victim-survivors across a number of arenas - criminal justice, specialist NGOs, and statutory health agencies – have been enhanced at an unprecedented level because of our work. More widely, our research has rekindled scholarship on sexual violence.

CWASU's role as independent academics... is crucial for both the voluntary and community sector and for statutory bodies like the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime. They understand the issues on the ground from the perspectives of women and girls and... have developed cutting edge research and responses to complex problems to provide a robust evidence base for the sector to use in their advocacy work (Policy and Delivery Officer, Violence against women and gangs, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime).

The ... evaluations of models of service delivery are invaluable in providing us with the information and tools to undertake the work that we do, both nationally and locally. The knowledge that we gain from CWASU informs and shapes our work as we continue to strive for improved responses to violence against women (Manager, Women's Aid, England).

2. Underpinning research

There are four elements to the body of work for which we will provide evidence; these span a number of research awards and publications.

1. Evaluations of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs). The three existing SARCs in England were evaluated as part of the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) Violence Against Women Initiative (2000-2004). This was the first study to systematically document what helped victim-survivors and why; the importance and effectiveness of 'pro-active' contact and practical and emotional support (advocacy) were established. A subsequent study evaluated the first SARC in Scotland.

2. Attrition in reported rape cases, comprising three European studies: 2000-2001, 2001-2003 and 2007-2009 (all funded by the EU Daphne programme) and a study in England and Wales (2000-2004; funded by the Home Office). The first two projects established a methodology for tracking attrition trends over time. The British study sought to unpick this trend through prospectively tracking a large sample (n=1442) of reported rape cases. The final European study built on the previous projects, updating the national time series data alongside research partners in 10 countries retrospectively tracking 100 consecutive cases through the criminal justice process. Together these projects were the first to highlight attrition points in the investigation and prosecution of rape, the role of alcohol and a 'culture of scepticism' within the police and CPS.

3. Mapping Specialised Violence Against Women Services. The two waves of this research (2006/7 and 2008/9) used GIS software to visually map a range of specialised VAW support services across the nations and regions of the UK, and compare levels of provision to regional population data. The results revealed a 'postcode lottery' across nations and regions, and powerfully highlighted areas where no specialist services existed.

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4. Minimum standards for specialised VAW support services. This project, funded by the Council of Europe (2007-2008) linked human rights principles with the availability of services that support victim-survivors. The proposed standards made recommendations for a minimum level of availability and distribution of specialised services (by population/region) alongside overarching policy and practice principles (e.g. confidentiality, empowerment, providing options) and service specific standards for refuges, rape crisis centres, counselling centres and advocacy.

3. References to the research

Research outputs for these projects include reports, journal articles and numerous national and international conference papers. A selection of key publications is listed here:

Lovett, J, Regan L & Kelly, L (2004) *Sexual Assault Referral Centres: Developing Good Practice and Maximising Potentials*. London: Home Office (46 citations)

Kelly, L, Lovett, J & Regan, L (2005) *A Gap or a Chasm? Attrition in Reported Rape Cases*. Home Office Research Study 293 London: Home Office. (211 citations)

Lovett, J & Kelly, L (2009) *Different Systems, Similar Outcomes: Tracking attrition in Reported Rape Cases in 11 European Countries*. London: CWASU. Available at: www.cwasu.org.

Munro, V & Kelly, L (2009) A Vicious Cycle?: Attrition and Conviction Patterns in Contemporary Rape Cases in England and Wales. In Brown, J. and Horvath, M.A.H., (eds) *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking*. Cullompton: Willan.

Coy, M, Kelly, L, & Foord, J (2007/2009) *Map of Gaps (1 and 2): The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women Support Services in Britain*. London: End Violence Against Women Coalition/Equality and Human Rights Commission. Both reports available at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/map-of-gaps/> (30 citations)

Coy, M, Kelly, L, Foord, J & Bowstead, J (2011) Roads to Nowhere? Mapping Specialised Violence Against Women Services. *Violence Against Women*, 17(2) 404-425.

Kelly, L & Dubois, L (2008) *Combating Violence Against Women: Minimum Standards for Support Service*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF\(2007\)Study%20rev.en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF(2007)Study%20rev.en.pdf)

4. Details of the impact

Our innovative methodologies and carefully crafted recommendations that are rooted in rigorous evaluation and research have led to transformative changes in three interlinked areas: integration of practices that victim-survivors identify as most valuable into support services; more equitable distribution of specialist support services in the statutory and NGO sectors; enhanced criminal justice responses to victim-survivors of rape. The evaluations of SARCs prompted the largest expansion of statutory services for victim-survivors of rape in contemporary history, with the SARC model being rolled out nationally: from the three when we began the evaluations to 33 in November 2012. This represents an investment by central government of more than £10 million. Recommendations that we made with respect to key elements of a SARC were integrated into national standards issued by the Department of Health in 2005 and 2009 e.g. preferences among female and male victim-survivors for female forensic examiners, a model of practice which begins from a 'culture of belief' and respect, and pro-active advocacy. Thus the core findings from the initial evaluation continue to inform how responses to victim-survivors of rape are delivered. Pro-active advocacy in particular has developed considerably. The Home Office and Ministry of Justice currently fund 60 Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) at £1.72m in every year up to 2015. The model has also been adopted with respect to domestic violence, with 1400 Independent Domestic Violence Advisors trained in England and Wales. Successive government VAW action plans have continued to highlight pro-active advocacy as a key plank of support provision. An unprecedented level of funding - £3.3m in every year up to 2015 – accompanies this. New policy

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agendas are also recognising the importance of pro-active advocacy e.g. work on gangs and child sexual exploitation.

As a direct outcome of our studies on attrition the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) now track the progress of rape cases through their own data systems. The evident failings of criminal justice agencies led to a raft of policy measures including training, guidance for prosecutors begun in 2007, and enhanced monitoring of rape cases. One explanation for so many cases failing to reach prosecution was what we termed a 'culture of scepticism' in the criminal justice system. Recently several senior police officers have explicitly used the concept and in 2012, in the wake of the Jimmy Savile enquiries, the Keir Starmer, Director of Public Prosecutions, pledged to move the CPS away from this approach to complainants:

Professor Liz Kelly and CWASU have worked closely with the Crown Prosecution Service since 2003... We have found them the most influential research team on VAWG across government (Violence Against Women Strategy Manager, Crown Prosecution Service).

The Map of Gaps research generated considerable media coverage and debate. When the second report was published, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) used the findings as an 'acid test' of how local authorities were meeting obligations under the then Gender Equality Duty. Each local authority identified as having no specialised VAW services (n=93) was asked to provide details of any existing or planned provision. Those who were assessed as non-compliant with legal obligations were asked to explain why. The Rape Crisis Network England and Wales used the reports in their influencing work, and as a result the current government has invested £11million to secure existing centres and open 18 new ones in the life time of the parliament:

This document enabled us to lobby and produce policy documents around the lack of provision nationally, but particularly highlighting the East Region [as least resourced]. As a result, the East Region now has a Rape Crisis Centre in every county. This means we have been able to address and reduce the post code lottery for women's access to specialist support. I would say this has been one of the most significant impacts, in terms of service provision and policy, because it was directly used to inform and increase service provision (Chair of Rape Crisis Network England and Wales).

The minimum standards for specialist VAW services have been incorporated into the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, which now has 26 signatories, including the UK. This places requirements on member states to provide resources for victim-survivors in line with our recommended standards e.g. shelter places, free national helplines. The document has also been used by a number of European networks (for example, the European Women's Lobby, Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), European Institute of Gender Equality) and national NGOs to inform the development of strategies and action plans. UN Women are currently using the recommendations to underpin a regional advocacy strategy on VAW support services across South Eastern Europe. The national strategy on gender-based violence in the Republic of Ireland (COSC, 2010) uses the study as a starting point for assessing the levels of support provision needed.

The influence of our research has been to define promising practices which meet the needs of victim-survivors and embed these into a number of policy frameworks and action plans. In recognition of our expertise, Liz Kelly was invited to be an expert member of the following policymaking forums:

- An inter-governmental group who used our methodology to track attrition and develop policies to reverse the trend (2005-8), reconstituted in 2012 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.
- A group convened to develop guidance for judges which informed judicial rulings in rape cases that went to appeal court (2008).
- The Inter-Ministerial group overseeing delivery of the violence against women action plan (current).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Rape attrition studies

- Stern, V. (2010) *The Stern Review: an independent review into how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales* London: The Stationery Office

SARC evaluations

- Department of Health (2009) *Revised National Service Guide: a Resource for Developing Sexual Assault Referral Centre*. London: DoH.

Map of Gaps

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission website details how the research was used to assess obligations under the Gender Equality Duty. See <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/map-of-gaps/> and the reports appear under 'key commission reports' <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/key-commission-reports/>

Minimum standards study

- Council of Europe (2011) *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence CETS No.: 210*. Available at <http://www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?CL=ENG&NT=210>

Individuals

- **Professor**, Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa (**Rape Attrition studies**)
- Project Advisor, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe (**Minimum Standards study**).
- Home Office senior civil servant (**Rape Attrition and SARC studies**)
- Independent researcher, Serbia (**Map of Gaps and Council of Europe study**)
- Chair of the Rape Crisis Network England and Wales (**Map of Gaps and body of work on Sexual Violence**)
- Police and Crime Commissioner Northumbria - former Solicitor General (**body of work on Sexual Violence**).