

South Wiltshire Domestic Violence Forum

Overview:

Domestic Violence - 1 in 4 women experience it at some time in their lives, yet many choose to take no action. Those that do have suffered, on average, 35 incidents before reporting it!

Some facts and figures: Domestic Violence is far more prevalent than many people realise. - 5990 cases were reported in Wiltshire and Swindon in 2004/5 and nationally, police receive a call for help every minute – this despite some estimates that only 20% of incidents are reported at all. Women are usually the victims, but men can suffer violence at the hands of women or in gay relationships. Over 25% of all assaults recorded by the police are for domestic violence and nationally over two women are murdered in an average week.

It has devastating effects not just on immediate victims, but also on families and especially children. 60% of Domestic Violence incidents take place in direct view of a child. In 65% of cases the perpetrator will also directly abuse at least one of the children of the household.

Children in such an environment often show disturbed and anti-social behaviour patterns as well as poor academic performance. There is evidence to suggest that a disproportionately high level of juvenile offenders, including those in custodial facilities, have a background featuring domestic violence. Evidence also suggests that children subjected to these experiences are more likely to engage in domestic violence themselves in later life.

Recent research by the NSPCC detailed in SUGAR magazine for teenage girls revealed that of those surveyed 33% experienced violence at home, 16% had been hit by a boyfriend, 6% had been forced to have sex, and 31% felt that cheating on a boy gave him the right to get aggressive. Shocking statistics - The need to stop the cycle could not be clearer!

What help is available? Domestic violence is not necessarily easy to detect. Friends or neighbours may suspect it, but often misguidedly regard domestic violence as a private matter in which they should not interfere. There are many agencies that exist to help both victims and survivors of domestic violence, many of who are members of the South Wiltshire Domestic Violence Forum. The Forum produces a leaflet outlining these services and providing useful telephone contact numbers – copies are available from 01722 434308.

***Definition:** Domestic Violence is not defined in law but is where a person is being physically or sexually assaulted by someone they live or have lived with, or is being threatened or intimidated by them. It is controlling behaviour and includes all kinds of physical, sexual and emotional abuse within all kinds of intimate relationships. It occurs right across society and does not recognise income levels or other economic dividers or follow social, geographical or racial boundaries.*