

CPD Conference Scotland: Workshop

Domestic abuse and career guidance practice

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Workshop Overview

- Background and importance of this work
- Overview of domestic abuse literature and legislation
- Background to the work in Scotland: Building Equality
- Practical findings of research to date with focus groups
- Professional dialogue discussion
- Sources of information and support

Background

With 1-in-4 experiencing domestic abuse in their lifetime, the probability that a career development professional will encounter domestic abuse within their client group is highly likely

- The impact of domestic abuse on career decision-making is profound
- It should be incorporated in our understanding of career over a lifetime
- Dearth of literature on the practical experiences of survivors of domestic abuse in relation to career guidance interventions
- Importance of practical training and much needed academic research

What my work on this issue concerns:

- understanding how domestic abuse affects career decision making
- how career development professionals can support individuals who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse

Literature and Legislation

Building Equality

- I was invited to sit on the advisers panel for Building Equality, a project run by Scottish Women's Aid, Close the Gap and Engender, to challenge economic discrimination and develop effective models to improve and protect the economic independence of women experiencing domestic abuse
- Building Equality was a project to challenge economic discrimination and develop effective models to improve and protect the economic independence of women experiencing domestic abuse
- Enabling competence of career professionals to understand how domestic abuse affects an individual's career will build on the learning from this project

Building Equality Video

In a video produced for students on the UWS MSc programme, I am joined by Zoe Hopkins, Building Equality Coordinator, to discuss some of the learning from this project and how we can apply it to the training of practitioners and career research



Building Equality: **economic abuse: career-related implications**

Tactics of economic abuse, used by perpetrators include:

Controlling access to money: changing PIN numbers or cancelling debit cards, salary paid into perpetrator's account

Preventing or restricting education: refusing to let partner learn English or pursue career studies, discouraging promotion

Preventing or disrupting employment: abusive emails and or behaviour at work place, locking women in the house, destroying their work clothes, disrupting sleep

Slide Credit: Scottish Women's Aid

Building Equality: barriers noted by women experiencing DA

Barriers for women having experienced DA progressing through the Employability Pipeline include, but are not limited to:

- Losing access to their qualifications, work clothes or equipment for their business, due to relocating for their own safety
- Accessing references, if changed name, difficult to chase, or often abroad for BME women
- Disruptive status of housing situation affecting ability to set goals and look for study and work options in one location
- Continuing abuse (or fear of it continuing) from their partner or ex-partner, including at their place of work or study
- Costly and lengthy civil law cases, contesting the perpetrators pursuit of unrestricted child contact, extremely disruptive for work or study
- Social isolation if support network been damaged by the abuse, including a distant relocation, limited childcare options

Work underway

- Build on and apply the learning from the Building Equality project
- Develop understanding of how domestic abuse can affect career decision-making
- Raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on career decision-making
- Develop career development professionals' practical knowledge of best practice in referral processes
- Develop practical guidance on how career professionals working with clients experiencing domestic abuse can manage vicarious trauma
- Promote the career guidance and development sector as support network for domestic abuse victims and survivors
- To offer an intersectional and inclusive approach, cognisant of the impact of abuse on women, men, children, non-binary and trans individuals from all backgrounds

Focus group findings

The collated comments that follow are drawn from:

- practitioners' real-world experience of supporting clients who have experienced domestic abuse
- the concerns of practitioners who have not knowingly encountered it in their practice

Focus group findings:

General employability and career planning

- There are barriers created by CV gaps
- Sense of stigma if upfront about gaps being the result of domestic abuse
- Personal referees may be difficult if the individual has moved away from previous social circle / work referees may be difficult if abuser was a work colleague
- BME individuals and qualification transfer: non-UK may have no evidenced experience to draw on so how to evidence skills transfer?
- If creating a “fresh start” you may start again with a blank CV
- Unwillingness to use previous qualifications due to their associations
- Extent to which future planning may be affected for example an unwillingness to work in a public facing environment or to have any public element to the work (i.e. can include staff profiles on websites)

Focus group findings: Out of work and in work challenges

Out of Work

- Is accessing work “possible”
- Work readiness (emotional and practical)
- Resources required if not work ready
- Need for application/interview skills
- Purchase of interview clothing
- Childcare support for interviews and employment
- Benefits advice

In work

- All of the out of work challenges can apply to those looking to change employment
- Abuser may be in the current workplace
- Different dynamics if disclosing to a new or existing employer

Focus group findings:

Practitioner Impact

- Disclosure may be unexpected
- Personal responses and vicarious trauma
 - Is adequate supervision offered for professionals working with victims?
- Fear of vicarious trauma may mean practitioners may not want to engage with it or raise it
- Support for practitioners (best practice routes, organisations to contact, understanding boundaries, resources to give)
- Potential for a practitioner to realise they are themselves a victim of domestic abuse
- Gender of supervisor/manager may have an impact (may wait for a female senior member of staff)

Focus group findings:

Ethical / professional practice / training

- Confidentiality
- The contracting process in itself could be a barrier
- Safeguarding legislation if young people involved
- May not feel suitably qualified to intervene
- Need for practitioners to understand what domestic abuse is (expert input, legislation)
- How to raise and talk about domestic abuse
- Teaching on gender and work is embedded in CGD postgraduate teaching, however the importance of challenging the choices that reinforce occupational segregation can be reinforced through this work
- Case studies on this topic will bring the issues to life

Your input

How should we approach domestic abuse as a career guidance and development issue?

In small groups consider the following points

- Is it about “asking the right question”
- What if your client does not accept they are experiencing domestic abuse?
- What if your client does not wish to do anything about domestic abuse?
- A client may wish to access support, so do you know the following:
 - What support is available?
 - When is signposting appropriate?
- Might the gender of practitioner affect willingness to disclose? How can you reduce the possibility of this?

Information and support services

Scottish Women's Aid: <https://womensaid.scot/> 0800 027 1234

Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline: www.sdafmh.org.uk

Broken Rainbow www.brokenrainbow.org.uk 0845 260 4460

LGBT Scotland Domestic Abuse: www.lgbtdomesticabuse.org.uk

Men's Advice Line: www.mensadviceline.org.uk 0808 801 0327

Abused Men In Scotland: www.abusedmeninscotland.org 0808 800 0024

Citizens' Advice: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/law-and-courts/gender-violence-1/help-for-domestic-abuse-s/