

# MEN AND THEIR EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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# Aims

- To discuss my work with men who have experienced domestic violence – touching on four different studies
  - *Men's experiences and the impact, including the perceptions of male victims*
  - *Post-separation abuse and the experiences of fathers*
  - *Barriers to help-seeking*
  - *Men's experiences of "recovery"*

# Theory and Literature

Cause of IPV is gender; it is a gendered crime - patriarchal values and control

Steinmetz (1978) “The Battered Husband Syndrome”

Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) and gender symmetry in perpetration

“When a woman slaps her husband in the heat of an argument, it is unlikely to be interpreted by him as a serious attempt to do him physical harm. In fact, it is likely to be seen as a quaint form of feminine communication”

# Coercive Control

- Women's use of control
- Tilbook et al. (2010) found high rates of legal and administrative aggression by women who control
- This is often a factor preventing men leaving, because of the fear of losing their children (Hines & Douglas, 2010).
- Hines, Brown and Dunning (2007) 50.3% “manipulating the system”
- Chivalry – condemnation of violence against women, but not violence against men

# Men's experiences (Bates, 2018a)

Verbal and  
Physical  
Aggression

Control

Sexual  
aggression

# Verbal and Physical Aggression

- *“...throwing anything she could get her hands on from tv remotes to ornaments. I used to get punched, slapped and kicked as well”*
- *“In the evening after any argument, always as I was about to fall asleep, she would bring up the whole argument up again. I soon learnt to just apologise for anything and everything because if I didn't I wouldn't be allowed to get any sleep.”*
- *“There will be slapping, scratching, pushing, pulling, blocking exit from a room, spitting, sometimes kicking or throwing things.”*
- *“70% of the time it would be verbal with shouting and threats. 30% would involve violence. Normally when I was unaware. Sleeping or in the shower, bath or toilet.”*
- *“She has woken up in the middle of the night hitting me”*

# Lack of retaliation

- *“I was raised to never ever ever hit a woman, so I never fought back, I just covered my face and backed away from her the best I could”*
- *“I grew up witnessing DV towards my mother and so I would never lay my hands on a woman”*
- *“I was and am too afraid even to defend myself, i know that if i do and any injury occurs, there's no way i could prove self defense.”*
- *“No I didn’t respond, because I was scared”*
- *“I have never attacked her or fought back at all. I have tried to restrain her at times to prevent her from attacking me. The problem with that is that she would then show me bruises a couple of days later and tell me that she could report me to the police for assault and that they would believe her story. Unfortunately that is true. It eventually got to the point where I would just cover my face and not even try to restrain her.”*

# Control - isolated

- *“She controlled my friendships and controlled my contact with my family...This would include logging onto my emails and sending emails to my family pretending to be me”*
- *“Yes, she totally manipulated the relationships I had with my own family trying to avoid contact with them or not seeing them and feeding me negative comments about them all the time...it was gradual you see and like the frog warmed up gently in the pan you do not see the abuse of the relationship creeping up and taking over you.”*
- *“I have no friends now, my wife insisted I stop socialising as I was now with her and if I loved her I would not want to spend time with anyone else.”*
- *“I was afraid to go spend time with friends because I didn't know what kind of minefield I'd be walking into when I got back home.”*
- *“what I have come to realise is that she was deleting a lot of messages from friends that I was getting. Because some of them were saying we have been sending you this message and that message and I never got them. So, she had actually got into my phone and deleted messages from friends and deleted a few friends off my Facebook page as well”*

# Control - threats and manipulation

- *“I mean she developed a thing where she would actually take off her wedding and engagement ring...she would take them off and leave them off for sort of days or weeks...that would always sort of strike fear.”*
- *“if I actually tried to argue with her about anything whereas she would just turn around and say “fine, I am just going to leave and take the kids”, and then she would storm upstairs quite often at 10,11, 12 o'clock at night and pull this poor 3 or 4 year old out of bed, and say “right that's it we are leaving”*
- *“I knew in their face that they already knew what I was telling them, and the only way they could have known was through my ex -wife. So, she used my child abuse constantly, as if... it was controlling”*
- *“I now know you're going into a relationship you don't share fuck all like that...it's dangerous, you're giving somebody too much ammunition. And she used it against me yeah, because that was my greatest fear was my daughter being taken from me and that's what happened”*

# Control around money and children

- *“She had control of my wages and gave me £20 per week from them”*
- *“In the end she had all my online banking passwords and my money always seemed to disappear before id got it.”*
- *“She kept telling me that she would kill out children and me if I ever left her or if I did not comply with whatever it was that she wanted”*
- *“I'd have to bring proof of purchase for milk when she would send me to the shops and ring her when in the shops to prove that I was there and only there, I wasn't allowed to take my daughter to school because of all the single mothers there.”*

# Gaslighting

- *“Yes I was constantly told I had remembered everything wrong and that I was mentally unwell for thinking these bad thoughts and that she only loved me.”*
- *“This was part of the control. When you only hear one voice it dominates”*
- *“Yes, I didn't know that was a real thing, and didn't know it was called gas lighting, but it describes exactly what she did - that's the nail on the head there.”*
- *“It absolutely occurred. I would put something somewhere and she was the only person who could have moved it or would have because the kids would have never touched it. when I couldn't find it, she would find it somewhere that wasn't even close to where I was sure I left it. She would tell me I was the crazy one”*
- *“ I would begin to doubt my own sanity and perception of reality.”*

# Sexual Aggression

- *“Sex used as a form of abuse and control”*
- *“...waking up to find myself handcuffed to the metal bedframe. She proceeded to torture me (insertion of vibrators into my anus, lots of small cuts with a craft knife, squeezing and hitting testicles) and then got infuriated because I was not getting an erection (obviously too terrified and in too much pain) and gave me a good punching and left me there.”*
- *“I opened my diary and she had placed a letter in it stating that she was pregnant and had come off the pill deliberately...I felt totally violated”*
- *“She stopped taking her pill and attempted to get pregnant against my wishes”*
- *“She also was in complete control of our sex life - she decided if, when, and how we had sex... She also controlled when/if I was allowed to orgasm, and would be violent if I didn't comply.”*

# Impact of IPV

- The men in this study reported lasting impact of their experiences
- Many believe this only affects women
- But there is evidence that it is the same for men
  - *E.g. Hines & Douglas (2011) mental health; Hines (2007) PTSD*
- Tendency for focusing on internalising symptoms (women do this twice as much). Men tend to externalise (Afifi et al., 2008)

# Impact of their experiences (Bates, 2018b)

- *“I tried to kill myself...I ate all the sleeping pills I could find, drank a bit, and was happy that it was over. I woke up next to her, It was the worst moment in my life, I was still in hell”*
- *“I am still afraid of her”*
- *“The relationship is over for two years now and I still don't feel like I could trust another person to form a new relationship. I'm also heartbroken knowing there is nothing I can do to help my son, I'm still in court fighting”*

# Post-separation

- Escalation of abuse (e.g., Jaffe et al., 2003)
- Stalking (e.g., Douglas & Dutton, 2001)
- Custody dispute and divorce
- Parental Alienation (syndrome)
- Impact on children (e.g., Callaghan et al., 2015) and children's voice
- We know little about post-separation abuse for men and fathers
  - *Follow up study – N = 13 interviews*

# Post-separation: Harassment Bates (2018c)

- *“Erm, last year we was on holiday and it was Father’s Day. I’d already been told that I wouldn’t see the kids on Father’s day so we decided to go away for the weekend, and that was really as a result of I didn’t really want to be at home when it was Father’s Day knowing I couldn’t see the children, so I thought I’d take myself away from the situation. So my partner and I went away and on Father’s Day itself I got a text message through with a picture: Happy Father’s Day, you f-ing sperm donor!” (P12)*
- *“I actually ended it, which made her very unhappy. She harassed me for a little over two years, sending me emails. Even once I was in a relationship with somebody else...she took every opportunity to tear me down” (P6)*

# False allegations

- *“no it was a different one... erm, every sort of two or three weeks with increasing severity. She obviously she starts off saying “oh no he used to beat me up” and then it got onto I had sexually abused my older kids, so they had to go through a child protection investigation. Erm... then she said I was having a relationship with an unspecified child at the school”, I was working at, so I got suspended for three months and a whole big position of trust enquiry” (P3)*
- *“And ultimately in 2015, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2015 my then wife took the decision to raise a false and malicious allegation against me formally. She had run one informally in March of that year but formally involving the police which led to my arrest and erm, then, er, I was in custody overnight, released on police bail for 12 weeks.” (P13)*

# Escalation and Continuation

- *“...shortly after that we actually separated then things changed really dramatically and if they had been bad over the last few months then it became horrible really...” (P10)*
- *“oh yeah, absolutely it continues to this day. There is like a vengeful vendetta of erm...that how dare I have the audacity to leave...basically anything to try and damage” (P8)*
- *“Obviously since my departure, she has had no control on my day to day existence other than, on access to the children. She would be as difficult as possible and not be there or be somewhere else” (P8)*

# Children as a weapon: withholding or manipulating the relationship

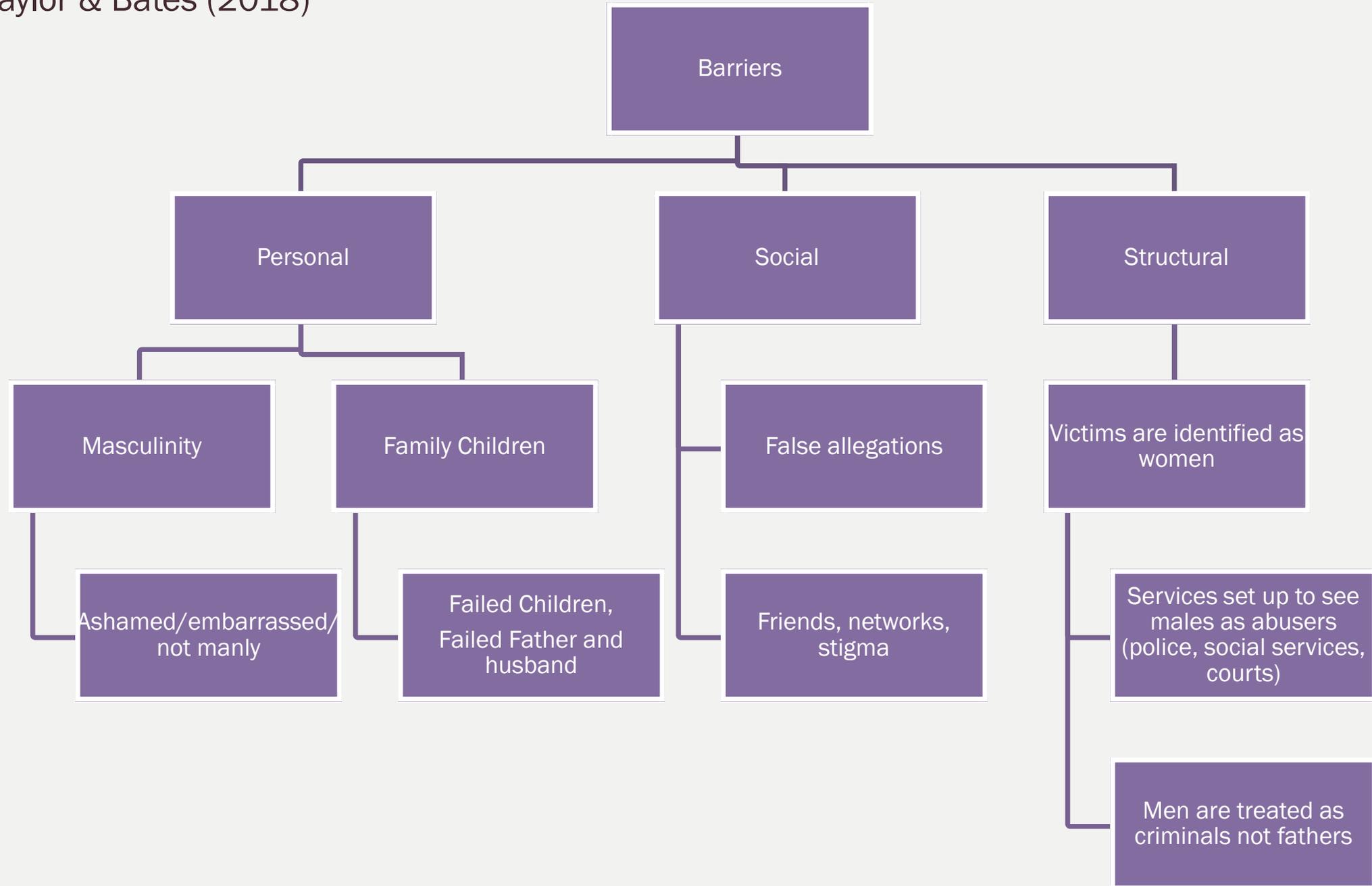
- *“I don’t see my eldest child, even though there are court orders saying that I should. I’ve not seen her since October 2015, and there is a system there that doesn’t give two hoots whether I see her” (P2)*
- *“I haven’t seen her for three years, this long I haven’t seen her...yes she was very much aware of it” (P9)*
- *“...they have sort of said...she has cut you off from the kids, your ten month old daughter when she was taken doesn’t know who you are anymore and the older child has been turned against you...she is scared of me because she thinks that I have murdered her pet cat, which is not true...that I am going to kill her, her sister and her mother, and bury them in the backyard. That’s what this 6 almost 7 year old has been told, and she believes it” (P7)*

# Children as a weapon: using the child

- *“... she was basically saying ‘oh mummy has been going round...just in tears saying oh I don’t know how I am going to cope without you here’” (P6)*
- *“Quite often my daughters, both of them were telling me that mum tells lies, which is quite hard to explain to children without being abusive yourself but you know, ‘well mum sees things slightly different to what we do and you must remember that what you’re seeing is your truth and you must, you know, stay true to that, and if you know that your truth the way you saw it is true then you must remember that always’,” (P11)*
- *“...you know I don’t know what she’s trying to get out of it at the end of the day if social services were that worried they’d take her off me and put her in to care which is no good for her or anybody else so...but again it’s like I say there’s something there’s something still there that she’s trying to, you know she’s trying to have an effect over me still definitely but” (P13)*

# Barriers to leaving/help-seeking

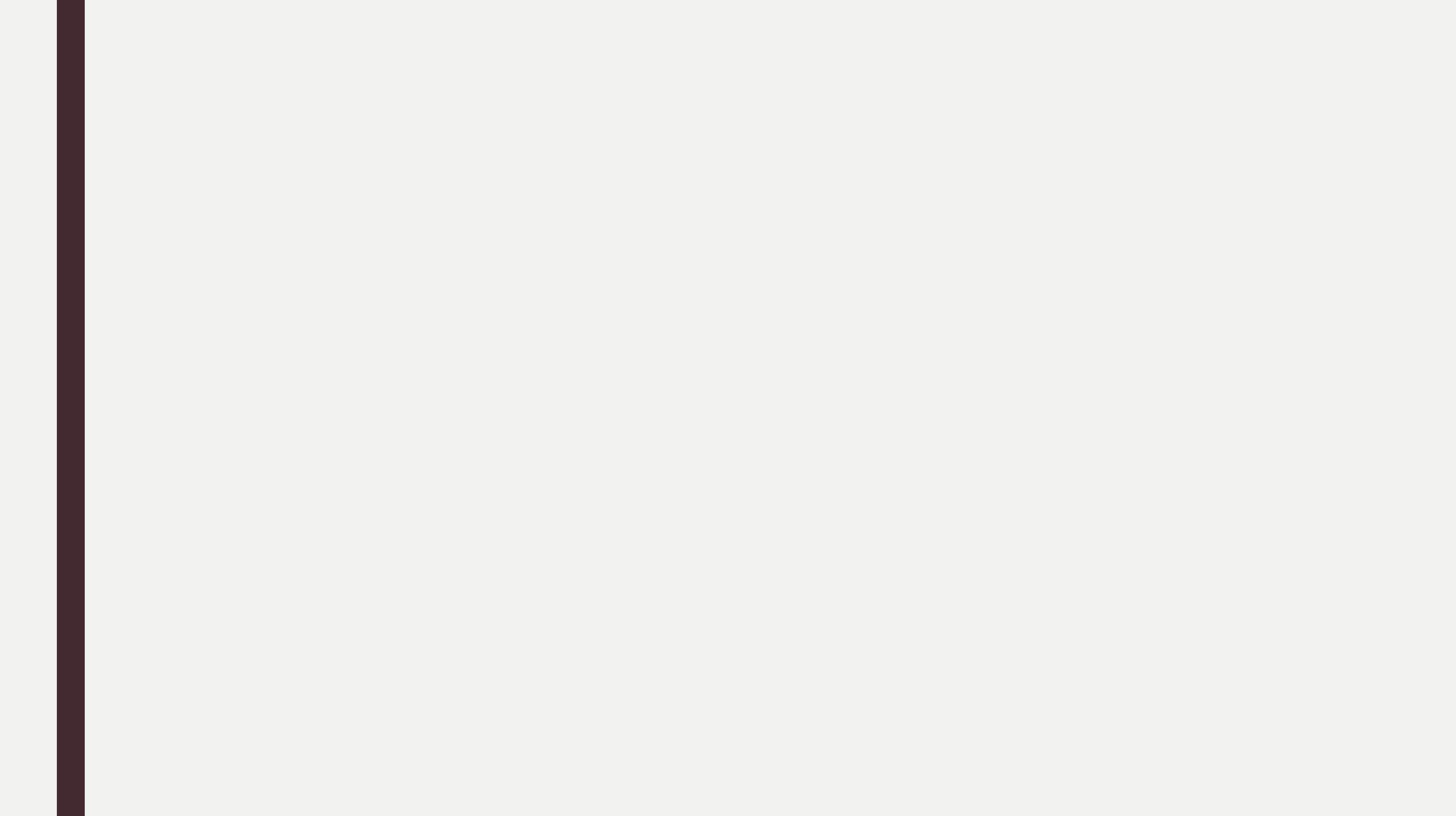
- *“I was ashamed I thought they would all think that I am a monster. I... she used to tell me that the only reason she used to hit me, was because I was scaring her. Cos I would be big and I would be opposing and I would be standing in her way... and so I thought I was the bad guy. I never once thought that I was the victim,” (P6)*
- Significant barriers to help-seeking and reporting – both pre- and post-separation
- Led to the development of another study to explore these barriers in more details, specifically to understand the complexity



Personal	Social	Structural
<p><i>Felt like my <b>manlihood</b> would be questioned</i></p>	<p><i>I'm a 6 foot 2 ex squaddie with a professional technology job and lots of accomplishments. Moaning about my wife beating me up could turn a friend who admired me into someone who either <b>viewed me as a failure or suspicious</b> that I was really to blame within minutes.</i></p>	<p><i>I was hospitalised on two occasions from physical attack and on one occasion I sat in the triage room and their were <b>four posters about DV and all were from the female perspective</b>, not one dealt with the male being the receiver.</i></p>
<p><i>a man is looked upon as being the <b>protector</b> not the victim</i></p>	<p><i>I was very worried about the sexual <b>allegations</b> and other assault allegations made against as people may believe there is no smoke without fire and for a period of time became withdrawn from family and friends and depressed</i></p>	<p><i>I was justifiably worried that if i spoke about it i would lose the kids this is exactly what happened <b>she used the failures of police and social services</b> to her advantage in family court,</i></p>
<p><i><b>Shame</b> was a big factor. I felt unable to discuss my <b>humiliation</b> with friends and family. I felt quite alone.</i></p>	<p><i>It was really the threat of <b>reputation destruction</b> that worried me most, that and the ensuring storm that would arise if she accused me of 'beating her' after she harmed herself.</i></p>	<p><i>It's is not just men that are reluctant to be seen as 'victims' but this reluctance seems to permeate life, <b>no one wants to hear about male victims</b> as this runs contrary to stereotypes</i></p>
<p><i>Feeling shamed and insignificant</i></p>	<p><i>I am 6 feet tall with a black belt in karate, my ex wife is 4 feet and 11 inches tall. I was <b>too embarrassed</b> to talk about what I was going through.</i></p>	<p><i>The stigma of having so little time with my son and having to see him in <b>contact centre</b> for such a long time is heart breaking. It feels like I am <b>prisoner meeting</b> my child but what crime have a i committed.</i></p>

# Victims of Control

- Barriers to help-seeking and reporting:
  - *Personal*
  - *Social*
  - *Structural*
- Fear – of reprisal, of being arrested, or being falsely accused
- Being isolated, losing touch with friends and family
- Children
  
- Moving on? Recovery?



The importance of asking the question...

*“He took me up the corridor and round the corner and just looked at me and said...look do you need help...?”*

*(Bates & Taylor, 2018)*

# Respect Model

- Screening/assessment process
- Wrong for several reasons...
  - *Assumption men are perpetrators in disguise*
  - *Adds an additional layer of victimisation to an already vulnerable group*
  - *Will affect men's decision to come forward, could affect mental health symptoms*
  - *Same procedure not in place for women – with nature of bidirectional abuse*

# Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men

- “ ...in addition, male victims have unique experiences in that their female abusers are able to use a system that is designed to aide female victims of domestic violence. Thus, some female perpetrators of IPV manipulate their husbands because they know that the system is designed without the abused male’s experiences in mind, and that more often than not people will not believe or take seriously these men’s victimisation.” Hines et al., (2007)

# Final thoughts: Home Affairs Select Committee

- Recommendations:

- *Stalking register*
- *Provision around refuge space*
- *Universal credit will disadvantage*
- *Bill – VAWG and Domestic Abuse Bill*
- *“Gendered crime”*
  - “gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately”

# Thank you for listening!



- [Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk)
- Twitter: @DrLizBates
- Bates, E. A. (2018a). “Walking on egg shells”: A qualitative examination of men’s experiences of intimate partner violence. *Manuscript under review in Psychology of Men and Masculinity*
- Bates, E. A. (2018b). “No one would ever believe me”: An exploration of the impact of intimate partner violence victimization on men. *Manuscript under review in Psychology of Men and Masculinity*
- Bates, E. A. (2018c) “I am still afraid of her”: Men’s experiences of post-separation abuse. *Manuscript under review in Partner Abuse.*