



OUTCOMES: Domestic Abuse: Understanding the impact of Outcome 16 on racially minoritised women's participation in Domestic Abuse investigations.

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Background

OUTCOMES: Domestic Abuse: Understanding the impact of Outcome 16 on racially minoritised women's participation in Domestic Abuse investigations.

In cases of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) it is common for survivors to withdraw support for police action- this is recorded as Outcome 16 which is used by the police to describe the finalisation of an investigation where the suspect was identified, but the victim did not support police action.

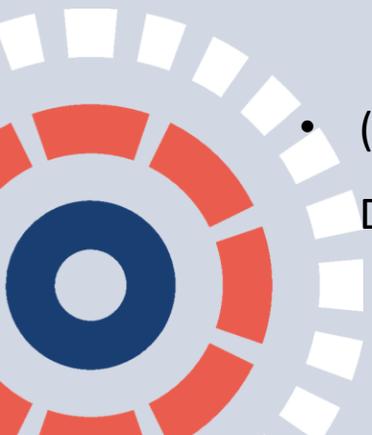
On average 54.8 percent of domestic abuse cases were discontinued in England and Wales from March 2019-2020 - no data on how many are racially minoritised because the domestic abuse act does not mandate data collection on ethnicity.



Aim

OUTCOMES aimed to

- (i) Explore how effectively police respond to and support racially minoritised adult victims-survivors of DVA in relation to reporting crime and how current professional practice influences Outcome 16 cases
- (ii) To understand the individual, organisation, cultural and social factors that influence the survivor's decision to withdraw charges and
- (iii) To identify recommendations that will increase the likelihood of racially minoritised adult DVA survivors supporting criminal investigations.



Methods

Qualitative data was collected via semi-structured focus groups and interviews, with 60 participants in total consisting of:

- 26 Police
- 16 VCSE Professionals
- 18 Survivors. The ethnicity of participants was as follows: 5 Caribbean, 5 British Pakistani, 2 Indian, 2 Ukrainian, 1 Kurdish, 1 Rwandan, 1 Algerian and 1 White British whose husband was racially minoritised.



Procedural Justice Framework

Procedural justice refers to the idea that fairness is determined not just by *outcomes*, but by the **processes** used to make decisions and resolve disputes. In other words, people judge an authority—such as a court, police officer, school, or workplace—not only by *what* it decides, but *how* it treats them along the way.

Procedural justice consists of four main pillars - voice, neutrality, respectful treatment, and trustworthy motives. In relation to policing:

- Voice means that people feel that they have been able to have their say, even if the outcome is not in their favour (Tyler, 2006).
- Neutrality refers to decision-making being transparent and based on consistency and impartiality, with people being more likely to accept outcomes of objective processes (Tyler, 1990).
- Respectful treatment means that people should be treated with respect and dignity and have their rights acknowledged, which can increase trust in institutions (Murphy, 2015).
- Trustworthy motives refer to how professionals should act honestly and sincerely, making decisions in people's best interests

Contextual factors that influenced help-seeking from the police – part 1

Several contextual factors influenced help-seeking/ reporting to the police:

- Non-recognition of (Domestic) Abuse /coercive control
- Internalised shame/ stigma
- Non- awareness of rights in the UK

I didn't understand it. I didn't have the education. So, the barrier for me was education, being educated on what is sexual assault? What is rape? What is consent? What are these things? So, for me, it's the education, because it's such a taboo thing. (Patty, FGD 1)

Contextual factors that influenced help-seeking from the police – part 2



Several contextual factors influenced help-seeking/ reporting to the police:

- Immigration status exploited by perpetrators
- Fear/ stigma of extended family/ community
- Previous experiences/ perceptions of racism

We now know, and we always have known, that within those institutions, racism is rife. So, therefore, the problem in the institution is already there. So, they can't come out and engage with us until they fix the problem internally. They can't expect us to feel comfortable going to them with anything until they fix the problem internally. Until we can see equity happening across the police force, they've got no chance in fixing this. (Aisha, FGD 1)



Voice- part 1

The theme of voice, which reflected the extent to which participants felt (un) heard, or their experiences (in) validated/ (not) recognised, was strongly evidenced in the data:

- Not believed/ silenced/ dismissive responses/ judged
- Non-recording historical/ pattern of abuse
- Perpetrator's account believed

It was like they wanted me to clarify if he (ex-husband) meant it (DA) or not. I go, "I don't know." They're like, "Well, if he said it in anger, sometimes people say things they don't mean." I go, "But I don't know that." Do I just take the risk and just assume he doesn't mean this time? If you're already feeling vulnerable and - Minimising it, yeah (Ruksaar, FGD2)

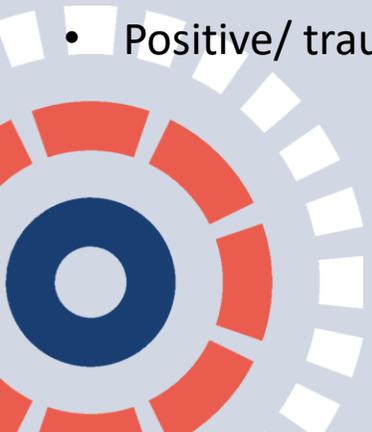


Voice - part 2

The theme of voice, which reflected the extent to which participants felt (un)heard, or their experiences (in) validated/ (not) recognised, was strongly evidenced in the data:

- Language barriers/no interpreters provided
- Re-traumatisation – having to repeat their narratives to multiple individuals/ multiple times
- Voice/ Vulnerabilities of children not recognised
- Positive/ trauma informed responses also reported

The first barrier is language. Because now I speak a little bit better English, but at that time, even the police in their reports said that I spoke poor language. I wasn't able to express myself, I wasn't able to explain properly what was happening, because my vocabulary simply wasn't good enough. They didn't provide an interpreter. They saw me speaking like this, they never provided an interpreter. (Olivia, 1-1 interview)



Neutrality, Respect and Dignity-part 1



The values of fairness and impartiality, along with the associated values of respect and dignity, were evidenced in the data albeit primarily in ways that contradicted these principles:

- DA attributed to culture/ religion
- Non-linking DA with intersectional issues such as alcohol/ substance abuse
- Not understanding the vulnerability that comes with temporary/dependent visas

The police had come to me and basically said because there was controlling behaviour, was it because he was Muslim, was it because of his culture or was it because he was just that type of man? How you answer that question, as a victim, I really don't know because it's quite difficult when you're telling them the scenario (Rachel, FGD 2)



Neutrality, Respect and Dignity – part 2



The values of fairness and impartiality, along with the associated values of respect and dignity, were evidenced in the data albeit primarily in ways that contradicted these principles:

- Experiences of bullying/ racism
- Positive experiences also evident

The male officer was nicer... Once that one male officer knew I was distressed, he knew he had to get me out of the street. And he said, "Are you happy to come to the station to give your evidence, your first initial evidence?" He was good because he judged the situation, as soon as he knew, cameras off, straight away he was on the ball. And he was male. (Patty, FGD 1).



Trustworthy motives – part 1

Several participants also shared a lack of trust they felt towards the police, which specifically stemmed from factors such as:

- Inadequate assessment of non-physical abuse and its impact
- No explanation of the distinction between civil and criminal justice pathways

*The police asked me if I want to arrest him and charge him, and I said no, because I was so fearful of what would happen...What he would do, if I kind of agreed to that. He would kill me... If they clearly saw somebody's harmful behaviour towards a child and their mother, why would they even ask me about that? Clearly, I was scared of him, they clearly saw that...Because, coercive control is a criminal offence, yes. And why are police not trained in coercive control?
(Olivia, 1-1 interview)*



Trustworthy motives – part 2

Several participants also shared a lack of trust they felt towards the police, which specifically stemmed from factors such as:

- No follow ups/ updates
- Delays in risk-assessment or in the collection of evidence or implementing safeguarding measures

They're (the police) not speaking to them on a level. They're not telling them what we're going to do. How you're going to do it. What's going to happen. What the process is or what your safety is, or anything. (Fatima, FGD 2).



Recommendations – part 1

- **Consider victim-survivors' immediate safety**
 - i. The provision of safehouses or safe spaces for confidential and safe reporting.
 - ii. Swift implementation of legal safety measures, such as non-molestation orders.
- **Consistent, ongoing support**
 - i. Assignment of a designated police officer for their case to reduce re-traumatization
 - ii. Long term IDVA/ ISVA support before, before, during and after legal proceedings
- **Culturally-sensitive responses**
 - i. Availability of information in multiple languages
 - ii. Training for police officers on the cultural contexts of domestic abuse.



Recommendations – part 2

- **Empathy and trauma-informed support**
 - i. Police should believe victim-survivors' accounts from the first interaction, rather a neutral or procedural stance
 - ii. Active listening, emotional validation, and reassurance to be practiced throughout

- **Legal and Specialist Support**
 - i. Police should provide information about the support ISVAs can provide, legal options and support organisations
 - ii. Partnerships between police and specialist domestic abuse services should be strengthened





Any Questions?

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