

Praying for Peace: domestic violence  
and faith communities round-table report



November 2006

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## Foreword

I am delighted to publish the Praying for Peace round-table report.

Domestic violence is a major issue affecting Londoners today. Despite chronic under-reporting, it accounts for a quarter of all reported violent crime in the capital, including murders.<sup>1</sup> It is important that we recognise that both survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence are members of our local communities. As such, domestic violence affects us all, as friends, family members, neighbours and employers.

We are fortunate to live in a diverse, multifaith city which contributes to enriching the lives of its citizens.

Many faith groups offer important services to those requiring help, and do much to convey the crucial need to value one another and not to hurt, abuse or control others.

For many survivors of domestic violence, faith plays a key role in supporting and guiding them through their experiences. Perpetrators who use their faith to excuse their abuse must be challenged, as they do great harm to all the world's religions, which neither support, nor condone, domestic violence.

It is essential that we support faith communities in their attempts to help survivors of domestic violence and to challenge abusers. It therefore gives me great pleasure to share the beginnings of what I hope will be an ongoing dialogue with London's faith communities.

We shall also be publishing a practical resource guide for domestic violence agencies and guidance for faith leaders.

By working together we can continue to alleviate the suffering of those affected by domestic violence and take important steps to reduce and prevent domestic violence in our city.

**Anni Marjoram**

Mayor's Policy Advisor on Women's Issues

# 1 Executive summary

Domestic violence affects thousands of Londoners every year - in individual families, in communities, in workplaces, in public services and in faith communities. Faith can play an important role both supporting survivors and challenging social tolerance within our communities.

This report arose from a round-table event for faith leaders held at City Hall in July 2005. Faith leaders from London's main religions were invited to discuss their role in reducing and preventing domestic violence. The event provided the opportunity of beginning a dialogue between the London domestic violence sector and faith communities where expertise could be shared and future possibilities building on existing good practice could be explored.

Faith leaders should be involved in challenging domestic violence because:

- all faith leaders have a responsibility to respond to this issue
- community condemnation of abuse can be very powerful
- they may be more trusted by congregation members than statutory agencies
- they have an opportunity to challenge myths about religions colluding with/being accepting of domestic violence
- domestic violence has no place in a caring and respectful relationship
- it is important for survivors to know that they are accepted and supported by their faith community.

Following discussion, there was acknowledgement that:

- domestic violence occurs in all faith communities
- domestic violence is unacceptable in all faiths
- it is crucial that faith leaders and communities have the courage to face problems honestly when they arise
- in the past both faith communities and the state have tended to see domestic violence as a private matter
- there is a sense of shame and discomfort that domestic violence happens in 'our' faith community, but denial can no longer be an option
- more needs to be done to reduce the stigma of domestic violence
- responding to domestic violence can be overwhelming for faith leaders when they are unaware of available resources.

What faith leaders can do:

- 1 respond effectively to domestic violence victims and perpetrators
- 2 provide leadership for faith communities on this issue
- 3 engage in prevention work by educating children and young people about domestic violence
- 4 develop partnerships between faith communities and the domestic violence sector.

These areas are discussed in more detail in the main body of the report.

What faith leaders want from the domestic violence sector:

- information on local services
- for refuges and other domestic violence services to make provision for the faiths of their clients
- the development of partnership working arrangements with local faith leaders.

## 2 Introduction

Domestic violence affects thousands of Londoners every year - in individual families, in communities, in workplaces, in public services and in faith communities. Faith can play an important role both supporting survivors and challenging social tolerance within our communities.

This report arose from a round-table event for faith leaders held at City Hall in July 2005. Faith leaders from London's main religions were invited to discuss their role in reducing and preventing domestic violence. The event provided the opportunity of beginning a dialogue between the London domestic violence sector and faith communities where expertise could be shared and future possibilities building on existing good practice could be explored.

This report summarises the key themes and recommendations emerging from the event.

We would like to thank all faith leaders and representatives of local domestic violence service providers for attending and sharing their experiences and practice. In particular, we would like to thank Jewish Women's Aid and the Archbishops' Council for their presentations.

## 3 Definitions

### Domestic violence

The Mayor's London Domestic Violence Strategy<sup>2</sup> has adopted the government's inter-ministerial definition of domestic violence which is as follows:

**'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.'**

This definition includes violence such as female genital mutilation (FGM), so-called 'honour' crimes, forced marriage and acts of gender based violence.

Abuse of children is excluded from this definition of domestic violence. Nonetheless, research has shown that domestic violence and child abuse frequently co-exist, and there is a correlation at least half of the time. Child abuse is dealt with via separate policies and procedures which since January 2004 include **'impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another'**,<sup>3</sup> ie living with domestic violence.

There are particular aspects of abusive men's behaviour that defy categorisation as either child abuse or domestic violence. Part of what needs to be understood is that there can be a double level of intentionality: an act directed towards one individual can, at the same time, be intended to affect another or others involved. Examples would include:

- hitting or threatening a woman in front of her children
- humiliating a woman in front of her children.

Of course, the reverse is also possible, including:

- hitting or threatening a child in front of its mother
- humiliating a child in front of its mother.

Such behaviour is often motivated by a desire to keep and/or increase control over both.<sup>4</sup>

### Victim/survivor

Some people prefer to use the term 'survivor' rather than 'victim' to describe people who have been affected by domestic violence. 'Survivor' emphasises the strength and coping abilities of the person that has lived through the abuse. However, it is also true that many women feel so brutalised by the perpetrator that the word 'victim' can feel like a more accurate description. Some women find they identify more with the term 'victim' because it directs the focus to the

perpetrator as the person responsible for the abuse. This report uses these terms interchangeably.

Throughout this document, victims/survivors of domestic violence are referred to as female and perpetrators as male. This is to reflect the overwhelming majority of domestic violence incidents as well as those who use the existing services. For example, while the commonly-cited figures of domestic violence affecting one in four women and one in six men might suggest a degree of parity in the prevalence and experience of domestic violence between genders, this conceals that 47 per cent of male victims experienced a single incident with a mean average of seven incidents per victim, compared with only 28 per cent of female victims experiencing a single incident, with a mean average of 20 incidents per victim.<sup>5</sup>

### **Refuge**

A refuge is a safe house for women, with or without children. Any woman who is experiencing domestic violence can go to a refuge. Refuges are all different, but women will always have their own room. Some refuges have self-contained flats, but in most, women will probably share a living room, kitchen and bathroom. Refuges have trained staff who are there to provide residents with emotional and practical support.<sup>6</sup>

### **Faith leader**

For the purposes of this report a faith leader includes those with a specific role within a faith, for example a person who performs religious duties and ceremonies. The phrase also includes influential figureheads who help interpret the teachings of the faith.

## 4 Key facts about domestic violence

- Domestic violence is widespread throughout every socio-economic group. Most research suggests that domestic violence occurs in all sections of society irrespective of race, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class or education level.<sup>7</sup>
- British Crime Survey (BCS) figures show that in one year (2003) there were 12.9 million incidents of domestic violence against women and 2.5 million incidents against men.<sup>8</sup>
- The UK police receive a domestic violence call every minute of every day yet only 35% of domestic violence incidents are reported to them.<sup>9</sup>
- In London, the total cost of domestic violence services and of lost economic output is £809.1 million per annum.<sup>10</sup>
- Every week, two women are murdered by their current or former male partner.<sup>11</sup>
- Domestic violence often begins or increases in severity during pregnancy.<sup>12</sup>
- Domestic violence is a feature in the lives of 75 per cent of children on the child protection register.<sup>13</sup>
- Of domestic violence incidents occurring in homes with children, ninety per cent go on while children are in the same or the next room.<sup>14</sup> The effects of domestic violence on children can be both short and long-term.
- Research by teenage magazine Sugar and the NSPCC<sup>15</sup> has shown that one in five teenage girls have been hit by a boyfriend, and 33 per cent experience some form of domestic violence or abuse at home. The survey also found that more than 40 per cent said they would 'consider giving a boy a second chance' if he hit them. More than four in ten (43 per cent) believed it was acceptable for a boyfriend to get aggressive in certain circumstances, for example if a girl cheated on him, flirted with somebody else, screamed at him or 'dressed outrageously'.
- Of respondents to the BBC's 'Hitting Home' public attitude survey, 49 per cent felt that domestic violence is something which takes place behind closed doors and should be for the partners to sort out themselves. Thirty per cent of respondents felt that domestic violence was acceptable if one partner had been unfaithful.<sup>16</sup>

## 5 Why should faith leaders be involved in challenging domestic violence?

Faith leaders or staff members of a faith community are in a good position to provide an informed and supportive environment for victims, survivors, and perpetrators of domestic violence. Safety should be the priority for victims, survivors and children.

Religious teachings can be misinterpreted, taken out of context or used as a tool by some perpetrators to further their control.

Victims may struggle to understand the abuse in light of their religious beliefs. Staff or leaders of faith communities can help victims recognise and acknowledge the challenge of their inner conflict, and be clear that the responsibility for the abuse lies with the abuser.

Some principal reasons why faith leaders should be involved in challenging domestic violence include, but are not limited to, those set out below.

- 1 All faith leaders have a responsibility to respond to this issue. Domestic violence is everybody's business and it is the responsibility of the state and communities to end domestic violence. Freedom from violence and abuse is a basic human right which requires the commitment of everyone to uphold. Victims should not be held responsible for the abuse or have to try and stop it occurring on their own.
- 2 Community condemnation of abuse can be very powerful. There is evidence to suggest that community condemnation can be more powerful than interventions by state institutions. Disapproval from friends, neighbours and the wider community can act as a disinhibitor or motivator to change abusive behaviour.
- 3 Faiths are being used by abusers to justify their behaviour and to disempower the victim/survivor. Faith leaders need to challenge this behaviour from abusers and to re-frame the myths they are using. This means utilising those parts of the religion that stress peace and harmony; that stress positive and healthy relationships; and to promote these as your faith's stance on domestic violence so as to ensure that abusers cannot misinterpret what your faith says on this issue.
- 4 Faith leaders may be more trusted by congregation members than statutory agencies as not having an 'agenda'.
- 5 Faith leaders have an opportunity to challenge myths about religions colluding with or being accepting of domestic violence.
- 6 Domestic violence has no place in a caring and respectful relationship.

- 7 It is important for survivors to know that they are accepted, and supported by their faith community. It can give strength and comfort. It is vital for them to feel accepted and believed and not outcast because of the abuse.
- 8 It is important that faith leaders explore the meanings of terms like atonement, repentance and forgiveness. Research shows that about half of abusers apologise but go on to perpetrate further abuse, so faith leaders need to be cautious about believing abusers based on their words alone and/or in encouraging victims to accept apologies.
- 9 It is important that faith leaders explore the idea of suffering and karma in relation to domestic violence. Faith leaders could, for example, explore whether there is a view within the community that you deserve to be hit because of what you did in a past life or whether an individual's suffering should be offered up to God as penitence for past sins.
- 10 Often leaders are happy to pray for an individual and deal with their spiritual situation, but they may not fully understand any practical barriers that could prevent the victim leaving an abusive relationship. Victims usually face a complex mix of emotional and practical issues, affecting their decisions about how to respond to their abuse.
- 11 Faith leaders are ideally placed to facilitate the development of preventative measures (for example, education and pre-marital advice programmes), which are important in reducing and preventing domestic violence.
- 12 Liaison between faith leaders and the appropriate agencies must be effective, with referrals being made where appropriate. Safe practice must be encouraged by ensuring that faith leaders work with specialist domestic violence agencies. The fact that a violent relationship can harm both adult victims and their children must always be remembered.
- 13 Faith leaders can encourage the reporting of domestic violence to the appropriate public authorities. They should make contact with their local Community Safety Unit, which is the specialist Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) team dealing with domestic violence and other hate crimes, as well as specialist domestic violence agencies such as refuges, advocacy services and any local perpetrator programmes.<sup>17</sup>
- 14 Anyone can report an incidence of domestic violence. Faith leaders should be aware that only the Crown Prosecution Service can 'press charges'. The victim only has the power to decide to support a prosecution or not; the decision to prosecute is not (and never has been) within her control.

- 15 Pressure from family and the community can sometimes prevent court processes from taking place because the victim is pressured into withdrawing their support. Faith leaders can be ideally placed to challenge any moves to block the court process and promote the survivor's safety. It should be noted, however, that if sufficient evidence exists, victim withdrawal will not prevent court proceedings.

Please see Appendix A for full details of the faith groups that contributed to the discussion.

Additional themes raised by leaders for further discussion included:

- the need to support women who have no recourse to public funds<sup>18</sup>
- recognising that female perpetrators are in the minority and require specialist services
- the need for sustainable funding of voluntary sector domestic violence services, especially for culturally-specific ones
- the importance of additional roles faith leaders may have in society, eg as school governors, magistrates etc
- the role that faith communities could play in addressing the media's depiction of gender roles, which is often contrary and confusing.

### Examples of good practice shared by delegates

#### Case study 1: Jewish Women's Aid (JWA)

JWA operates refuge services, offering drop in, helpline, outreach support and counselling services.

JWA works to reduce the incidence of domestic violence by raising awareness of domestic violence throughout the community from secular non-practising Jews through to members of the orthodox Charedi community.

JWA also educates and talks to community organisations, synagogues and children and young people in schools. Its work in schools and in youth organisations involves age-appropriate discussion of a variety of topics including healthy relationships, mutual respect, and the nature of abusive relationships.

#### *Judaism's teachings on family life*

The Jewish community sets a high value on family life, as do many religions. To marry and to have children is a religious duty. Family and children are vitally important, and the home is the centre of Jewish religion.

November 2004 marked a significant step for the Jewish community, when for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November), Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks (the Chief Rabbi of the United

Synagogues in the United Kingdom), published a sermon about domestic violence in the Jewish community. He said, ‘...it is all too easy for us to pretend that this is not a Jewish problem. For the highest of reasons, we carry an idealised image of the Jewish home as something special, sacrosanct, a place where violence and abuse do not happen. That after all, is the Jewish ideal. But no less important than ideals is the courage to face problems honestly when they arise - and they do arise.

‘We have the concept of peace in the home - “Shalom bayit”. If there is peace in the home then we can begin to hope for peace in the world.

‘But, if within the home people seek to impose their will by force then violence will continue to haunt us. There is nothing shameful about admitting that a marriage isn’t working; about seeking help and refuge, when necessary. That is what the Jewish community is there for: to heed the cry, protect the vulnerable, create safe space and create care and shelter to those who need it, so that the wounds, physical and emotional can heal.’

The Talmud, one of Judaism’s holy writings, says of a husband and wife, ‘he is required to love her as himself but to honour her more than himself.’ This is even written in the Jewish marriage certificate, the Ketubah. ‘Marriage is to be founded on mutual trust and respect between wife and husband.’ That is the teaching. Under Jewish law, domestic violence of any kind is unacceptable. Judaism does accept divorce.

As the Chief Rabbi said, ‘When we don’t talk about these problems openly and honestly, it makes it harder for people to call for help. And that is wrong, morally and spiritually. Faith is not denial. It is not seeing the world as we would like it to be. Faith is the courage to see things as they are and the willingness to work together to make them more as we would wish them to be... Faith is the ability to hear someone’s cry for help and to respond.’

### **Case study 2: Archbishops’ Council, Church of England**

#### **Towards the development of a national policy**

The Church of England (CoE) has until now been handling domestic violence locally which means it has had a variety of different responses. Consequently, there has been much campaigning to try to get a national policy implemented, and the development of this is now underway.

The CoE is hoping that by working together with the relevant agencies it can develop a policy that is robust, useful and practical and to disseminate information on this issue out to every single member of the faith community.

### Theology: what does the Bible say about domestic violence?

- *Psalms 11:5* 'The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.'
- *Proverbs 10:11* (on verbal abuse) 'The mouth of the righteous [is] a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.'
- *John 13:34* (the words of Jesus) 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you.'
- *1 Peter 3:7* 'In the same way, you husbands must give honour to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together... she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.'
- *Ephesians 5:29* Husbands are to love their wives as they do their own bodies: 'No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church.'
- *1 Corinthians 3:16-17* those who hurt others are hurting God's own property: 'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.'

### The Archbishops' Council has formed a domestic abuse advisory group

The domestic abuse advisory group meets together to set the national policy and code of conduct for domestic abuse for all of our churches. The national policy and code of conduct explain domestic violence, providing practical guidance for all those encountering survivors of domestic violence and abuse. The report and guidelines will be publicly available in late 2006.

### A commitment to action

The CoE has made a commitment to:

- **produce national guidelines** to be issued to all churches
- **look at the needs of minority ethnic communities.** The council will consult communities and other faiths to make sure that what they are saying is compatible and collaborative with all faiths.
- urge all dioceses (church area groups) to consider ways in which they could **work in partnership with other agencies**, co-operating sensitively with those serving minority communities
- **speak out about domestic violence as being an evil in society**, because justice and safety in homes is central to the goal society is trying to achieve.

### What happens at the moment?

Anyone with a query about domestic violence can contact their local diocese and ask to speak to the Social Responsibility Officer. Social Responsibility Officers can make referrals where appropriate.

The CoE recommends community members utilise the national specialist domestic violence agencies: Women's Aid or Refuge. The telephone number for the freephone national domestic violence 24-hour helpline is 0808 2000 247.

### **Case study 3: Al-Aman Family Safety Project, part of the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP)**

Al-Aman is an outreach project providing services for individuals in some of London's largest Arabic-speaking communities. Arabic-speaking workers offer advice, support and safety planning to women who have experienced domestic violence. The project also provides a perpetrator programme delivered on a one-to-one basis in Arabic.

In January 2003, Al-Aman held a groundbreaking conference on domestic violence in Arabic. This was attended by 100 delegates and opened up the debate within the Arabic-speaking communities of the UK. Many of Al-Aman's target population are more likely to approach community or religious leaders than state bodies for help, so in response to this, Al-Aman has delivered training to community leaders from a wide range of Arabic-speaking groups, including Imams.<sup>19</sup>

Al-Aman received an award from the Mayor of London in November 2004 in recognition of its outstanding and innovative work to further the aims of the London Domestic Violence Strategy and to make London a safer place for all its citizens.

### **Case study 4: The Evangelical Alliance**

The International Evangelical Alliance has set up a taskforce to stop abuse against women.

Two publications entitled 'No place for abuse' and 'Women, abuse and the Bible' can be ordered from their website: <http://www.abuseofwomen.org/>

The Baptist Union, which is a member of the Evangelical Alliance, has also produced a leaflet on this topic for Baptist leaders called 'It doesn't happen here'.<sup>20</sup>

## 6 Discussion

During a lively and wide-ranging discussion, there was acknowledgement that:

- domestic violence **occurs in all faith communities**
- domestic violence **is unacceptable in all faiths**
- it is crucial that faith leaders and communities **have the courage to face problems honestly** when they arise.

There was recognition that:

- in the past both **faith communities and the state have tended to see domestic violence as a private matter**
- there is a sense of **shame and discomfort** that domestic violence happens in 'our own' faith community, but also that **denial can no longer be an option**
- more needs to be done to **reduce the stigma** of domestic violence
- responding to domestic violence can be overwhelming for faith leaders when they are unaware of the effective interventions available.

Several areas for future development were proposed to:

- respond effectively to victims and perpetrators
- provide leadership for faith communities on this issue
- engage in prevention work by educating children and young people about domestic violence
- develop partnerships between faith communities and the domestic violence sector.

## 7 Conclusion and recommendations

There are several actions faith leaders can take.

### 1 Respond effectively to victims and perpetrators

#### Supporting victims

- Make your place of worship available as a safe place where abused women can come to receive help and male abusers can be supported in changing their abusive behaviour.
- Keep an updated list of resources for abused women in your area to enable you to **provide community members with information** about domestic violence and where to get help.<sup>21</sup>
- Make contact and **work in partnership with local domestic violence fora** and local specialist domestic violence service providers to help survivors and their children.<sup>22</sup>
- Recognise that the only safe way to love a violent individual is at a distance. **Do not encourage forgiveness, attempt to mediate or suggest/provide couple-based interventions.**<sup>23</sup> Recognise that the abusive behaviour is not the fault of the survivor or something they are responsible for 'fixing'. Some faiths offer couple counselling and mediation services which can be valuable except in abusive relationships, where it is not safe. **Couple-based interventions are extremely dangerous and ineffective in domestic violence cases.** See Appendix B for further information.<sup>24</sup>
- Create an environment that makes the victim/survivor feel supported and holds the abuser accountable. Secrecy is one of the most dangerous aspects of domestic violence because victims are suffering in silence. If a place of worship can provide a place where a victim feels loved and supported, where they will be listened to and not judged, they will be more likely to speak out about the problems in their marriage. You can create a supportive environment by displaying information in the form of posters, brochures and bulletin inserts. Domestic violence helpline numbers can be given in faith community bulletins and newsletters.
- **Respect the privacy of the victim.** It is very hard to disclose violence and abuse to anyone. Therefore, the victim may prefer you not to disclose information about the violence and abuse to their family or other members of the faith community. Wherever possible these wishes should be adhered to.
- Ensure that faith communities do not punish or judge those who leave a relationship for their own safety or that of their children, or who seek divorce from a spouse who presents a danger to them.
- Direct more time and resources towards repairing the mother-child(ren) bond where this has suffered adversely as a result of domestic violence.
- Recognise the dual issues of domestic violence in the home and racism in the wider community that black minority ethnic women may face. It is essential that the complexities of both issues are addressed.
- Provide assistance in finding a safe place for abused women.

### Holding abusers accountable

- Faith leaders should ensure they do not condone violence and abuse.  
**Abusers who use religion to support or condone their behaviour should be challenged.**
- **Careful consideration should be given on how to address issues such as suffering, repentance, atonement and forgiveness** to ensure no ambiguous messages are given to perpetrators and victims.
- **Cases where faith leaders are perpetrators of domestic violence should be treated seriously.** Robust procedures should be developed to respond appropriately to the survivor and to hold the perpetrator accountable for their behaviour.

## 2 Provide leadership

- **Speak out** against domestic violence and challenge myths and stereotypes.
- **Raise awareness and understanding** of the issue and ensure that the faith community is aware that domestic violence is morally and legally wrong.
- **Challenge the myths and stereotypes** of domestic violence to reduce the stigma for victims and reduce tolerance for perpetrators.
- **Understand the religious aspects** of domestic violence. For example:
  - a Christian woman may feel compelled to stay in an abusive relationship by scripture mandating her to 'submit to her husband' or 'turn the other cheek'
  - a Jewish woman may feel pressure to not bring shame to her community by revealing the abuse in her marriage, or she could feel responsible for maintaining 'shalom bayit' - peace in the home.
- Ensure that faith leaders and those with influence in their faith **acknowledge that domestic violence does exist** and that their communities know where to go for help.
- Recognise that domestic violence is not a private family matter and will often require the involvement of other agencies such as the police.
- **Provide talks** on domestic violence and use other opportunities to communicate key messages about abuse to congregations, so that women can begin to recognise and name what is happening to them. A sermon does not need to explore the dynamics of domestic violence. However, speaking against violence sends the message to both the abuser and the victim that domestic violence is wrong and can never be justified by religion.
- **Link up with a trained counsellor or experienced faith leader.** Consulting someone about an issue that is outside your area of expertise shows strength, not weakness. Domestic violence is a serious issue and is not to be taken lightly. It is essential that faith leaders use wisdom when speaking with a victim, an abuser or a couple, because of the influence of their position.

### 3 Engage in preventative work by educating the whole faith community - including children and young people

- Faith leaders can influence children and young people. Many faiths work specifically with adolescents, and are particularly well-placed for providing information about relationships, reasonable expectations from a partner, and ways of dealing with conflict.
- Domestic violence should be raised as a discussion topic, with clear communication of the message that domestic violence is unacceptable and incompatible with the religion.
- **Religious texts can be used to promote healthy relationships** based on mutual respect and a commitment to non-violence.
- A resource library with brochures, books and other information on domestic violence can be made available for faith leaders and members of the congregation.
- Education about domestic violence can be part of pre-marriage counselling. Speaking about the issue at this point may prevent a couple embarking on an unhealthy and abusive marriage.
- Faith leaders speaking out against abuse tells both victim and abuser that domestic violence is unacceptable and contrary to religious teachings.

### 4 Build partnerships

- **Develop national policies and guidelines** in consultation with black and minority ethnic communities.
- **Commit resources or help fundraise** for domestic violence voluntary sector agencies serving the local community.
- Use the expertise of the domestic violence sector to **develop and implement domestic violence training packages** for faith leaders, ministers of religion and their communities.
- **Contact your local domestic violence forum** to discuss ways you might work together.

### What faith leaders want from the domestic violence sector

The domestic violence sector can help faith leaders by:

- **providing information on local services and partnerships**<sup>25</sup>
- **developing ongoing partnerships with faith leaders**
- ensuring that refuges and other domestic violence support services allocate resources to **support service users with religious beliefs**. For example, this could be done by displaying details of local places of worship in residential services and by making provision within refuges to allow for religious observance. This could include setting aside space for worship, observing dietary rules or permitting the lighting of candles.

Whatever their religion, women and children who escape domestic violence experience massive loss. They may have lost their home, security, confidence, friends – even family, job, school, pets, toys, clothes and possessions. Some lose everything. Because so much is new, alien and frightening, it's essential that anything familiar is safeguarded. **For many, nurturing religious identity and practising faith can give a much-needed sense of stability and comfort.**

### Final remarks

Domestic violence is a complicated and challenging subject to address. However, faith leaders' opinions were shared openly and honestly with a view to improving responses to this social problem.

The event summarised in this report marks an important first step in the process of developing closer working relationships between domestic violence agencies and faith leaders in pursuit of more integrated and safer interventions for survivors of domestic violence.

In addition to this report, good practice guidelines for faith leaders and clergy will be produced and circulated to this network.

It is hoped that members of faith communities affected by domestic violence will, as a result of this ongoing process, have improved access to domestic violence support services that are sensitive to their religious beliefs and practices. It is also hoped that by increasing faith communities' awareness of this issue, community members will be less likely to experience social isolation as a result of abuse they have experienced.

We believe faith communities and domestic violence service providers must join their efforts and work together to improve services for those affected by domestic violence. This can be achieved not only by following the recommendations in this report, but by respecting service users' religious beliefs and practices while also recognising their human rights.

**'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.'**

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

Chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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*Children and Domestic Violence: its impacts and links with woman abuse*, presented by Linda Regan at the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children Conference, London (2001). [http://www.cwasu.org/publication\\_display.asp?type=7&pageid=PAPERS&pagekey=50](http://www.cwasu.org/publication_display.asp?type=7&pageid=PAPERS&pagekey=50)

*Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research Study 276, Walby, Sylvia and Allen, Jonathan, London: The Stationery Office (2004)

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*Domestic violence and pregnancy*, Mezey, Gillian C. and Bewley, Susan, British Medical Journal 314, 1295 (1997).

<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/314/7090/1295>

*London Domestic Violence Strategy and Annual Reports of the London Domestic Violence Forum*. [http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom\\_violence/index.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom_violence/index.jsp)

*Multi-Agency Work and Domestic Violence: A national study of inter-agency initiatives*, Hague, Malos and Dear, Bristol: The Policy Press.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/SP101.asp>

*National Domestic Violence Action Plan*, Home Office (2005)

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence51.htm>

*Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards for Practice for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Women's Services, Respect* (May 2004). For copies email [info@respect.uk.net](mailto:info@respect.uk.net)

*Women's Mental Health: Into the Mainstream - Strategic Development of Mental Health Care for Women*, London: Department of Health.

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/Consultations/ClosedConsultations/ClosedConsultationsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4075478&chk=yY6aB3](http://www.dh.gov.uk/Consultations/ClosedConsultations/ClosedConsultationsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4075478&chk=yY6aB3)

## 9 Resources

- **National domestic violence freephone helpline (24 hours):**  
0808 2000 247. Operated jointly by Women's Aid and Refuge.
- **Women's Aid:** provider of accommodation and outreach services to abused women and children. [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- **The Hideout:** a website providing help, information and support for children and young people. Operated by Women's Aid. [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)
- **Refuge:** provider of accommodation and outreach services to abused women and children. [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)
- **Jewish Women's Aid:** providers of accommodation, outreach services and a confidential helpline. Run by Jewish women for Jewish women and their children. Email: [info@jwa.org.uk](mailto:info@jwa.org.uk). Tel: 020 8445 8060.  
Freephone Helpline: 0800 59 12 03 (staffed Mon, Wed, Thurs 9.30am-9.30pm)
- **Al-Aman Project:** offers a violence prevention programme and women's support service for members of the Arabic-speaking communities across West London.  
Women's Service: 020 8563 2250.  
Violence Prevention Programme: 020 8748 2577
- **Imkaan:** a national second-tier charity, providing Asian women's domestic violence services. [www.imkaan.org.uk](http://www.imkaan.org.uk)
- **Broken Rainbow:** phonenumber for the lesbian, gay and transgender community on 08452 60 44 60
- **Rights of Women:** voluntary organisation which informs, educates and empowers women concerning their legal rights. Provide training and information plus an advice line offering free and confidential legal advice to women. [www.row.org.uk](http://www.row.org.uk)  
Legal advice line: 020 7251 6577 (textphone: 020 7490 2562)  
Sexual Violence Legal Advice Line for women by women: 020 7251 8887 (textphone: 020 7490 2562)
- **Respect:** phonenumber for perpetrators of domestic violence. 0845 122 8609
- **Greater London Domestic Violence Project (GLDVP):** a second-tier service for the London domestic violence sector. [www.gldvp.org.uk](http://www.gldvp.org.uk)

## 10 Appendices

### Appendix A: Attendees

- Rabbi James Baaden - South London Liberal Synagogue
- Helen Bowes -Community Safety Team, GLA
- Revd Graham Buckle - St Paul, St. Marylebone Church
- Clive Clarke - Link Officer, Islington Faiths Forum
- Joanne Creighton - London Domestic Violence Strategy Development Officer, Greater London Domestic Violence Project
- Dr Abdelghafour Dahbi Skali - Forum of Faiths, Kingston-Upon-Thames
- Rochelle Dancel -Administrative Co-ordinator, Greater London Domestic Violence Project
- Claire Goodman - Executive Director, Jewish Women's Aid
- Revd Dr Barry Goodwin - Social Responsibility Adviser, Croydon
- Abida Iqbal - Southwark Muslim Women's Association
- Rowshan A. Islam - Bangladesh Women's Association in Haringey
- Revd Canon Peggy Jackson - Church of England
- Davina James-Hanman - Director, Greater London Domestic Violence Project
- Dr Abdul Raheem Khan - Muslim Council of Britain
- John Lester - Havering Inter-faith Network and the Ba'hai Community of the United Kingdom
- Anni Marjoram - Mayor's Policy Adviser (Women's Issues), Greater London Authority
- Ann Memmot - Adviser to the Archbishops' Council, Church of England
- Nina Rahel - Camden Faith Communities' Partnership
- Param Sandhu - Network of Sikh Organisations, UK
- Father Steven Saxby - London Borough Faith Network
- Dr Natubhai Shah - London Council of Jain Organisations
- Rabbi Leivi Sudak - Lubavitch Foundation
- Gareth Wallace - Parliamentary Officer, Evangelical Alliance

### **Appendix B: Position statement on couple counselling and mediation<sup>26</sup> (London Domestic Violence Forum)**

During the consultation phase of the London Domestic Violence Strategy (2001), the absence of any proposals for mediation as an intervention was raised. The practice of mediation is explicitly excluded since it contravenes one of its key aims of increasing safe choices for abused women and children.

When agencies, family members and friends do intervene, attempts are sometimes made to mediate between parties, frequently with the aim of reconciliation. Of course, women have the right to choose mediation, but it must be recognised that reconciliation attempts are often made many times before approaching agencies for help. The role of agencies is to provide alternatives. Their role is to encourage and advise women to change abusive situations through law enforcement and by providing welfare and legal services. Mediation compromises their position, often creating a conflict of interest, undermining their legal and moral duty to protect women from abuse.

The dangers of mediation are highlighted by the case of Vandana Patel, who, in 1991, was stabbed to death by her husband in the supposed safety of Stoke Newington Police Station's Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) in North London. The police had agreed that the meeting could take place at the DVU following a request from the women's refuge where Vandana was staying after she had left her husband as a result of domestic violence.

Despite the death of Vandana Patel, legal professionals and other service providers, particularly Social Services, continue to undertake mediation in cases of domestic violence and forced marriage. Some of this activity is unwitting - for instance when messages and letters are passed on between parties under pressure from family or community members. However, many service provide this facility as a formal or informal part of their service.

Although mediation is a useful option in some situations of conflict resolution, it cannot be advocated in situations of abuse.

The power dynamics involved in abusive relationships can be exploited by the abuser to exert pressure whilst the victim may be intimidated into making agreements, which do not work in her best interest, thus minimising protection. Agencies have a legal duty to encourage women to take up alternatives and to maximise protection. To do otherwise is negligent and potentially a breach of human rights legislation.

## Appendix C: How faith leaders can make contact with local domestic violence services

### What is a domestic violence forum (DVF)?

A DVF is a multi-agency partnership body encompassing all key local services working with both victims and perpetrators. In general, domestic violence fora engage in five main areas of work:<sup>27</sup>

- co-ordinating and facilitating the development of local agency responses and services
- improving the practice of agencies and their service delivery - for example, through training
- supporting existing projects that assist domestic violence survivors, and setting up new ones
- awareness-raising among the general public
- preventative measures such as perpetrators' programmes and work in schools.

Most London borough domestic violence fora are a sub-group of the statutory partnership called the Crime and Reduction Partnership. The DVF is usually co-ordinated by someone in the local authority, with the exception of a handful of boroughs.

### How can I contact my local DVF?

Details of all DVFs can be obtained via the Women's Aid website [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) or from the Community Safety Policy Officer at London Councils. (Tel: 020 7934 9999).

### What is a Domestic Violence Co-ordinator (DVC)?

Most local authority areas now employ a DVC. Their function is to help support and guide local domestic violence fora. The co-ordinator facilitates, rather than leads, the forum. If you wish to join your local DVF please contact your local DVC.

### How can I contact my local DVC?

Details of your local DVC are available from your local authority website or switchboard.

You can also obtain contact details for DVCs by contacting the Community Safety Policy Officer at London Councils (Tel: 020 7934 9999).

### How can I contact local domestic violence services?

Since April 2005, local authorities have a requirement to produce a directory of local domestic violence services which must be revised and updated every two years. Information on obtaining copies of these directories should also be available via the local borough DVC and/or via the local authority website.

## Notes and references

- 1 *The 1998 British Crime Survey: England and Wales*, Table A2.3, Home Office (1998)
- 2 *Second London Domestic Violence Strategy* (2005), Greater London Authority [http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom\\_violence/index.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom_violence/index.jsp)
- 3 This section of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 amends the Children Act 1989, which came into force on 31 January 2005
- 4 *Children and Domestic Violence: Its Impacts and Links with Woman Abuse*, presented by Linda Regan at the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children Conference, London, October 2001
- 5 Walby, Sylvia and Allen, Jonathan (2004) *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research Study 276 (London: The Stationery Office)
- 6 Definition adapted from Refuge <http://www.refuge.org.uk/forwomen.html#q22>
- 7 '*Multi-Agency Guidance for Addressing Domestic Violence*', Home Office (2000)
- 8 Walby, Sylvia and Allen, Jonathan (2004), *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research Study 276 (London: The Stationery Office)
- 9 '*Crime in England and Wales 2001/2*', Home Office (2002)
- 10 *Second London Domestic Violence Strategy* (2005), Greater London Authority [http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom\\_violence/index.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom_violence/index.jsp)
- 11 *National Domestic Violence Action Plan* Home Office, (2005)
- 12 Mezey, Gillian C. and Bewley, Susan (1997) *Domestic violence and pregnancy*, *British Medical Journal*, 314, 1295
- 13 Department of Health (2002) *Women's Mental Health: Into the Mainstream - Strategic Development of Mental Health Care for Women* (London: Department of Health)
- 14 Hughes, H.M., Parkinson, D., & Vargo, M. (1989) Witnessing spouse abuse and experiencing physical abuse: A "double whammy?", *Journal of Family Violence*, 4, 197-209

- 15 March 2005, survey of over 2,000 teenagers aged 13-19 years old (average age 15) <http://society.guardian.co.uk/children/story/0,1074,1463304,00.html> and <http://society.guardian.co.uk/children/story/0,1074,1442374,00.html>
- 16 For the survey, BBC News online and ICM interviewed 1,020 adults aged over 18, between 25 and 31 January. This was as part of the BBC's 'Hitting Home' season investigating domestic violence.
- 17 To obtain contact details for local Community Safety Units visit [www.met.police.uk](http://www.met.police.uk)
- 18 This is an immigration regulation
- 19 Extract from the *Third Annual Report of the London Domestic Violence Forum* (2004) GLA. [http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/domestic\\_violence/docs/dvar2004.rtf](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/domestic_violence/docs/dvar2004.rtf)
- 20 Copies can be obtained direct from the Baptist Union. Phone 01235 517747/517745 or download from [www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk)
- 21 See resources section on page 22 for details
- 22 See Appendix C for further information
- 23 Relate's domestic violence policy can be obtained from Relate Central office on 0845 456 1310 (lo-call) or 01788 573241
- 24 See Appendix B for details
- 25 See Appendix C for details
- 26 This statement has been adapted in agreement with Southall Black Sisters from 'Forced Marriage: An Abuse of Human Rights' July 2001 and endorsed by the London Domestic Violence Forum (*London Domestic Violence Strategy* (2001), Greater London Authority and Association of London Government)
- 27 Taken from *Break the Chain* multi-agency guidance for addressing domestic violence. Originally in Hague, Malos and Dear, *Multi-Agency Work and Domestic Violence: a national study of inter-agency initiatives*, The Policy Press, Bristol pp. 18-21 and 41-51

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### Chinese

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### Vietnamese

Nếu bạn muốn có văn bản tài liệu này bằng ngôn ngữ của mình, hãy liên hệ theo số điện thoại hoặc địa chỉ dưới đây.

### Greek

Αν θέλετε να αποκτήσετε αντίγραφο του παρόντος εγγράφου στη δική σας γλώσσα, παρακαλείστε να επικοινωνήσετε τηλεφωνικά στον αριθμό αυτό ή ταχυδρομικά στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση.

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinizde hazırlanmış bir nüshasını edinmek için, lütfen aşağıdaki telefon numarasını arayınız veya adrese başvurunuz.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਕਰੋ:

### Hindi

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित नंबर पर फोन करें अथवा नीचे दिये गये पते पर संपर्क करें

### Bengali

আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই দলিলের প্রতিলিপি (কপি) চান, তা হলে নীচের ফোন নম্বরে বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دئے گئے نمبر پر فون کریں یا دیئے گئے پتے پر رابطہ کریں

### Arabic

إذا أردت نسخة من هذه الوثيقة بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو مراسلة العنوان أدناه

### Gujarati

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી આપેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે સંપર્ક સાધો.

## GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

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The Queen's Walk Enquiries **020 7983 4100**  
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