



SASW

The professional association for
social work and social workers

Learning from History: Domestic Abuse in the Post-War Period

Part of the **BASW Success in Social Work Series & the
SASW Conference Week**

Thursday 2nd September 2021



Welcome

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WORKING PATRIARCHIES?

POLICE AND SOCIAL WORK RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC ABUSE IN POST-WAR SCOTLAND

Dr Anni Donaldson

Before we start – Looking after yourself today:

- Domestic abuse is a topic which can evoke strong emotions
- You may find some of the material distressing and evocative of previous experiences in your own or others' lives.
- Please remember that these reactions are quite natural and that it is important to take care of yourself.
- If you need to - take a break.
- Sometimes it will be necessary to talk it over with someone or to seek support. This might come from friends or family.
- Information and support is also available from the National Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage 24/7 Helpline:
 - 0800 027 1234
 - <https://sdafmh.org.uk/>

Scots law



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Jameson, *Dalrymple, Viscount of Stair* (1744)



JOHN KNOX
1514-1572



Patriarchal Scotland

Domestic abuse – gendered abuse

- **Physical Abuse**

Assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will.

- **Mental and emotional abuse**

Threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends.

- **Financial abuse**

British Welfare State

- The male breadwinner/female homemaker economic model continued to dominate British, including Scottish, economic and social policy into the 1980s by:
- fully supporting the institution of marriage and the nuclear family;
- differential calculation of men's and women's national insurance contributions and state benefit entitlements;
- ensuring husband's earnings from paid work or benefits were sufficient to support his wife and children;
- housing allocated to male householders;
- underdeveloped state funded childcare sector provision not designed to support women combining paid work with caring responsibilities.

The British Welfare State reinforced women's dependent social and economic status.

Domestic abuse & the patriarchal family

- Male provider/female homemaker
- Family privacy
- Closed to external interference
- Patriarchal gender roles: private-female /public–male
- Male dominance
- Family ‘chastisement principle’



POLICING DOMESTIC ABUSE 1970S-1990S

Violence against wives in Scotland - 1970s and 1980s – common and gendered

- Wife assaults comprised 25.1% of all violent crime in one area of Glasgow and in the city of Edinburgh in the 1970s (Dobash & Dobash 1979)
- 1988 Scottish Crime Survey
 - women were the victims in a third of all violent incidents,
 - a quarter of which happened in the home;
 - 80% of offenders were male;
 - 40% of offenders either husband/ex-husband, current/former boyfriend, a male relative or other male member of the household. (Kinsey 1992)

The Parliamentary Select Committee on Violence in Marriage - 1975

‘Chief Constables should review their policies about the police approach to domestic violence’ (Parliamentary Select Committee, 1975: xxvi).

The police response to violence against wives remained minimal, consistent and unchanged from the 1960s until the late 1980s.

It [domestic abuse] lacked the recognition of the serious nature of what this was. That it was an epidemic.
(Police officer 1970s +).

Police forces in Scotland turn a blind eye to wife beating. Police attitudes to domestic violence were very unfortunate, both from the point of view of the women involved and for society as a whole. It seemed that Scots lived in a society which accepted the use of violence by a husband against his wife.

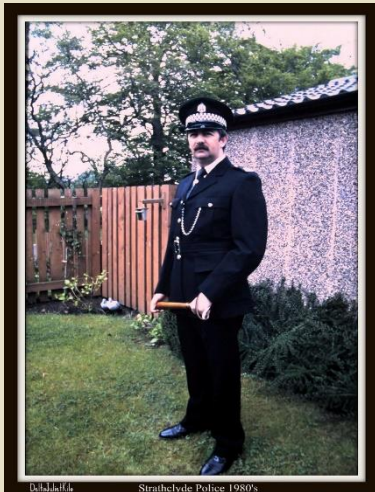
- [Dr Rebecca Dobash](#) The Scotsman 6/11/77.



Police response:

“See before we go in here son? This is between a man and a woman and we’re no’ getting involved in this.” And that was actually before we arrived at the front door and... Aye keep it in your own house, keep it private, this is what you do (Police officer 1970s+).

“Leave it alone, it’s a private family matter.” ...it was kind of “better not, it was up to them to sort it out” (Civil Servant, Scottish Office Justice Dept. 1970+)



Dub, J. J. Strathclyde Police 1980's



Drunken time-wasters?

It would be very much drink fuelled the Friday night Saturday night drinking culture...the accused in these cases returning home from the pub drunk taking out his drunken frustration on his partner (Procurator Fiscal 1970s+).

“We’re fed up with going to this address every Saturday night. He comes home, she calls the police, we go, both drunk and then Monday morning she comes and says she wants to change her mind or we take him away and keep him in the cells overnight...what good are we doing and how much good public money is being wasted here?” Not seeing in fact that there’s a sub-text going on here (DA Perpetrator CJ Groupworker 1980s +)

Making matters worse?

I sees the lady walking wi' her messages. I stopped the car and says, 'How you doin'? How did you get on at court?' She says, 'Oh I went to court, they kept him in'. She says 'I went to court on the Monday and I said I didnae want to speak up because I've money and stuff and ..'. I said 'you gonnae be a'right?' And you could see her eyes filling up at that point 'aw I'll be fine son I'll be fine '. You know and she went straight back into the house and he's in the house at that point...it kinda ran through my mind that we were wasting our time with this, you know there wisnae any way out of this clearly we couldnae jail our way out of this kind of thing. I also remember that incident because of him being king of the castle and you could see he was the school bully.

(Police officer 1970s+)

At that time in the eighties,...we were chasing drug dealers and guns and robbers and Starsky and Hutch an' a' that stuff... If you were a detective, I was in the CID pretty young...I didnae want tae go tae domestics. I had people robbing banks still, we had cash deliveries and shotguns and you know heroin dealers and folk slashing folk and murders every other week, ninety odd murders in my first year in the CID and that was the exciting stuff. Domestics were...[trails off]. We clearly saw our job as em... not about prevention or protection or any of that stuff it was just about giving people the jail....When I reflect on it, it's absurd. (Police officer 1970s+).



The policing circles that I was in, the value system, “Oh he’s a great thief catcher” or when we recovered loads of drugs, that was the stuff that got there. The other stuff was a bit you know Tufty Club...[1980s Children’s Road Safety Campaign] so we didnae get involved in that stuff...that was nothing to do with us. (Police officer 1970s+).



Police: Family and child units (FACU) 1987+

- ‘Specially trained female officers assisted both CID and uniform personnel in the investigation of crime and incidents involving women and children and emphasised the support needs of women and child victims’
- (Strathclyde Police Annual Report for 1988)

[FACUs] were a real acceptance of women’s role...they were able to reach out to a certain extent to victims that we couldnae do as men. (Police officer 1970s+)

[FACUs]marked a change in attitude and a time where no human being should be treated like that by any other and women who had been, sometimes quite horrifically abused by their partners beginning to be seen as people in their own right, rather than “just his wife” (Social worker 1980s+)



SOCIAL WORK RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

Progressive vs conservative policies

1960s Labour governments influenced by contemporary sociological and class-based analyses of society :

- 'Judith Hart was particularly devoted to the social work cause...and confided to the professionals her belief that social work would play a pivotal role in a fifty-year struggle to overcome the problems of modern society' (Scottish Office Minister Judith Hart 1960s)
- The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 - radical vision of promoting social welfare

Conservative Policies

- introduced market-based and community care models of service provision,
- local government budget cuts,
- competitive tendering,
- external service auditing and inspection regimes
- aimed to reduce the dominance of local authority social work departments in the provision of services.

Social work practice & domestic abuse 1980s+

- Patriarchal, class-based values and practices
- ‘family values’ ideology revived by Conservative government policies of the 1980s
- Prevent family breakup and consequent financial burden on state
- Women’s responsibility to protect children

- **‘It therefore becomes possible for social workers to see domestic violence as rational, if not legitimate, aggression, when it is used to chastise a wayward wife’ (Maynard 1985).**

Keeping the family together

The prevailing culture would have been trying to keep families together'.
(Social worker 1980s+)

You didn't have the social work inspectorate in these days, it was the Central Advisory Service and ...there was still a kind of keeping away from it a bit. They were still very committed to the whole notion of trying to keep a family together. They wanted to work with people but putting people through the criminal justice system may not be the way to do it.
(Civil Servant, Scottish Office Justice Dept. 1980s+)

The focus of the work, the meetings and everything we had was to try and reconcile the family, but the focus of the work was definitely around her alcohol consumption. Unwittingly we were overlooking the fact that her alcohol consumption might be related to the life she was living....We weren't ignoring it but we were overlooking it.
◦ (Social Worker 1980s+)

‘Failure to protect’ or double jeopardy?

When there were issues of domestic abuse and social workers were carrying out assessments...If the child was at risk in the family home whether it be sex abuse or the risk of violence then the child was removed. Women were faced with a treacherous double bind. It's every woman's nightmare, she's been assaulted by her husband, hit by plates and we're gonnae take that child off her into care unless she leaves this man.

(Social worker 1980s+)

You won't leave this man? That was implied all the time. "If you're no' gonnae leave this man, we can't leave this child."

(Social worker 1980s+)

Preserving family privacy

I had discomfort about asking that direct question, that discomfort would come from a notion of intrusion in someone's private life...that I didn't feel comfortable about and also the idea I suppose that the person might be experiencing a bit of shame ...and by opening up that dialogue I suppose some of us felt that we were eh...it was easier, it was easier to be "are you ok?" and leave it at that.

(Social worker 1980+)

Dealing with abusive men

- Minimal social worker contact with perpetrators
- hyper-masculine, highly punitive and often aggressive response to excessively violent husbands.

The manager would speak to the perpetrator and say, “enough’s enough, this has got to stop, we’re watching you. If this continues...”. And there was always a kind of a veiled threat of “We’ll be taking these children away, we can’t put up with that.” I wouldn’t say it was as strong as machismo, but there was certainly a degree of eh... masculinity it was like ‘you’d better stop that.’ That was the approach, it was terrible to say that but it was.

(Social worker 1980s+)

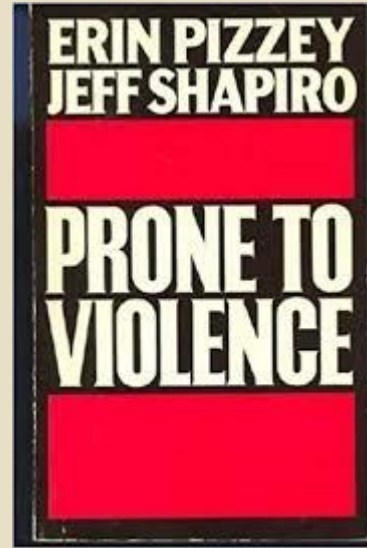
‘Cycle of violence’ discourses

- transgenerational transmission
- social ‘cycle of violence’ of family and domestic violence
- causal link was central to the notion of the ‘cycle of poverty’ applied to the working class
- ‘problem’ families who continually recreated the means of their own poverty and deprivation
- women blaming – battered woman syndrome who ‘invited violent relationships’
- conflation of the working class with the ‘violent’ family who breach clear social and moral codes.
- favoured by ‘law and order’ and ‘family values’ ideology – continued into 1980s

In all women’s refuges in Britain, the women and children who come for help are in effect, dustbin families...ready made for prisons, borstals, dole queues, hospitals for the disturbed, and the divorce courts...Scotland is infinitely worse off than England as far as legal protection for women is concerned (Erin Pizzey, Daily Record 28 February 1979).

ANTI- WORKING CLASS BIAS

Members of these families have a tendency to be attracted to violent relationships or are themselves violent.... These are the violence-prone adults of tomorrow. These families have failed to build the structures necessary to provide the community with law-abiding citizens. (Dunn and Pizzey 1979)



Some of these women might well deserve the batterings they get from their husbands.

Nicholas Fairbairn Scotland's Solicitor General 1979-1982

The conflation of discourses of class with domestic violence '...lent weight to the view that domestic abuse was a self-created problem confined to the working classes'
(Mullender 1996:40)



Working patriarchies?

- The police, criminal justice system and social work retained a role in enforcing patriarchal norms in Scotland until the 1990s.
- Their lack of effective intervention and prevention in cases of domestic abuse
 - played an important role in the oppression of Scottish women
 - upheld the dominant role of men in the family
 - upheld the chastisement principle of non-intervention in cases where men assaulted their wives.
 - inhibited women from coming forward to public agencies

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Thank you!

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Reflections on Dr Donaldson's Research

Detective Chief Superintendent Samantha McCluskey
Police Scotland



Reflections on Dr Donaldson's Research

Catriona Grant, Independent Social Worker


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In context

- Social worker in the 1990s to present time
- Worked in Domestic Violence Perpetrator Project from 2000 to 2007
- Seconded to Lothian & Borders Police 2007 -2010
- Consultant to Caledonian System for Women and Children's Work 2008 -2018
- Child Protection Development Officer 2011-2014
- Manager of a women's trauma project for women in recovery from addictions, domestic abuse and trauma 2012 – 2021
- Independent social worker and domestic abuse consultant 2009 - present



Where are we today

- Coercive control legislation
 - More statutory powers
 - Greater understanding of domestic abuse
 - A growing violence against women's sector
 - Increased funding
 - Improved training and tools for social workers and police
 - MARACs and MAPPAs
 - Clearer guidance
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Social work practice

- Dedicated teams – multi disciplinary in some areas
- Caledonian System throughout Scotland
- Safe & Together
- PAIR programme and Turn to Us
- Caring Dads
- Cedar Programme



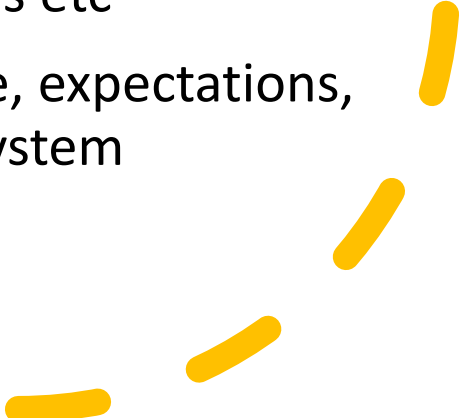
Are we still
not getting it
right?

- Still focus on “failure to protect”
- The “toxic trio” – domestic abuse, poor mental health & addiction
- Focus on the survivor – still not holding perpetrators accountable
- Children seen as “witnesses or experiencing domestic abuse” through their parent’s abuse rather than coercive control has direct effect on them (Katz; Stark)
- Trauma aware but not trauma responsive
- Very little programmes that are not court mandated
- Child protection ignored in the courts
- Parental alienation

Is domestic abuse practice in Scotland still oppressive practice?

- Children are still being separated from their mothers due to domestic abuse
- Mothers feel threatened by child protection processes “if there is another police call out then we will.....”
- Ignoring intersectionality of domestic abuse, poverty, addiction, poor mental wellbeing, disability and trauma
- Mothers seen as not protecting their children when they are
- Survivors being accused of parental alienation in court processes when trying to protect their children
- Perpetrators still not being the focus of intervention and how their parenting affects children
- Mothers not believed in court processes
- Men and fathers who are survivors of domestic abuse have little support

Practice of the future

- Safe and Together approach – partnering with the survivor, supporting the parenting of the child affected by domestic abuse, holding perpetrators to account
 - Coercive control as tangential child abuse, not separate from survivor
 - Caledonian System and perpetrator programmes (with partner services throughout Scotland)
 - ADVANCE – working with preparators of domestic abuse in addiction services
 - Changes to the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 – regulation of contact centres, Child Welfare Reporters etc
 - Whole system change where the language, expectations, responses are the same throughout the system
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Q&A



Closing Remarks / Contacts

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[Safe & Together™ CORE Training by SASW](#) – our next cohort starts on 9th November 2021