



# In Churches too

A response from CTiC Steering Group

# Context



- An estimated 26% of women and 15% of men have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 (ONS 2018)
- The Church is a significant social institution:
  - UK's biggest institution, present in 50,000 communities
  - Christianity the biggest faith group with 59.3% of the population identifying with it
- CTiC pivotal in encouraging and empowering churches to address domestic abuse
- There had been a lack of robust, up-to-date academic research on the relationship between Christianity and domestic abuse in the UK

# The Study



- A Collaboration between Universities of Coventry and Leicester, Restored, Churches Together in Cumbria
- Sample of 230 churches selected, of which 129 agreed to participate - then opened to all churches / Christian groups in Cumbria
- 438 usable responses - largest ever UK survey on this topic
- 75% were female, 97% were white, mix of Anglican, Methodist, Catholic and other denominations

# Findings



- 71% of participants were aware of Domestic abuse - but only 37% considered it a problem in 'churches'
- Only 2 in 7 thought their churches were equipped to deal with disclosures
- Over 60% reported that their churches never covered the issues in sermons / prayers / studies / contact with support groups / POS material

# Even more worrying:



- 42% of respondents reported experiencing some form of Domestic Abuse - far higher than national figures
- 12 women reported between 10-20 incidents
- Not just historical. 25% reported experiencing abuse in their current relationship!
- Fewer than 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men would seek support from within the church

# Even more worrying:



- Reasons for not seeking support from church included:
  - *Feeling too embarrassed or ashamed (32.4%);*
  - *Feeling that it was their duty to make the relationship work (27.0%)*
  - *Not knowing or trusting anyone well enough (25.7%)*
- Only 2 in 7 respondents thought their church was equipped to deal with disclosures
- Response from Churches was likely to be no more than offering a listening and sympathetic ear

# Survivor voices:



"A victim I knew, who has stuck to church going through very distressing physical and mental abuse, but had very seldom been visited by her Minister (once a year for money) - when she finally left her husband, she was told by her minister "we don't want your sort here"! "

"The fact that the church is an open door can be a blessing and a problem, a blessing as it welcomes the stranger, and a problem as it allows them somewhere to hide" (female survivor)

# Survivor voices:



*"After 14 years of abuse, I was told by my Priest "It's a storm in a teacup." (female survivor)*

*"The priest took me back to my husband" (female survivor)*

*"After pouring out my heart (it took a long time to summon the courage) the vicar blamed me for the abuse" (female survivor)*

# Survivor voices:



"Churches need to encourage reality of life, that they are there as 'hospitals for the broken' and not 'palaces for the perfect'. A place where the broken and insecure can feel safe and find healing, filled with real people and not perfect/plastic people" (female survivor)

# Conclusions



- Domestic Violence is happening in Churches too! But we are largely unaware, turn a blind eye, or unsure of how to respond
- Churches are generally failing to help, and much more needs to be done
- Only 12% of participants had attended any training on Domestic Abuse provided by CTiC



# Our recommendations

- RECOGNISE / RESPOND / REFER / RECORD
- Consider adopting CTiC Charter for domestic abuse
- Every church to have a 'champion' who has been trained - along with their church leaders
- Churches to be made aware of where to sign-post people and what agencies operate in their area
- Churches should strive to cover the issue of Domestic Abuse in sermons, teaching, displayed POS material, contact with local support groups

# Links



- Churches Together in Cumbria (Emma Brown)

[ebctic@outlook.com](mailto:ebctic@outlook.com)

- Restored

[www.restoredrelationships.org](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)