

# Bristol Survivors' Conference 2011 Report

In May 2011, twenty survivors of domestic violence and abuse (as well as assorted children, support workers, and interested professionals) arrived at a conference venue in Clifton.

Their mission?

To tell the agencies they'd worked with as survivors what these agencies had done well and what they could (and should) do better.

This report summarises what came out of the day: what agencies have said they'll go away and do; what survivors thought of the day; and what we're thinking about changing ready for next year's conference.

## **We'd like to thank the following people for their support:**

### **Workshop leaders**

Representatives of Avon and Somerset Police Public Protection Unit, and Operation Bluestone

Representatives of Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership, Bristol Royal Infirmary Accident and Emergency, and Bristol Maternity Unit

Representatives of Bristol City Council Housing Team, and Children and Young People's Services

### **Funding**

Avon and Somerset Police

Safer Bristol

Novas Scarman Group

### **Also...**

SPAN for providing crèche workers

Engineers House staff for their support on the day

Support workers who encouraged women to attend, accompanied them on the day, and sorted out transport

All the volunteers who sat on the reception desk

Sarah O'Leary for giving the opening speech

DCI Dave McCallum and Lou LaRoche for giving the closing speeches

### **And finally (and most importantly!)**

All the women who came along and spoke up, or came along and listened – we couldn't have done it without you, thank you for your courage.



## Agencies' Aims

At the end of the day, every agency who sent a representative along was asked to tell us what their aims were for the next year – what they're going to go back and do or say or change.

### Police

The police focussed on two areas: support for survivors, and communication.

Support for survivors:

1. Explain the options for support
2. Link up support and police call-out reports
3. Look at the lack of out-of-hours support
4. Make sure everyone knows what support is out there

Communication

5. Keep PCSOs informed
6. Use local shops to advertise support
7. Find out if it's safe to send letters or make phone calls to survivors

### Survivors' Comment

*It was nice to see the agencies making an effort to understand how they could improve things*

### Social Services (Children and Young People's Services)

1. Improve reputation and public confidence – survivors feel scared of what will happen if the look for support
2. Need to understand how perpetrators manipulate everyone; especially important for social workers
3. The police "Bloody Domestics" training DVD might be useful to give survivor and perpetrators perspectives

### Housing

1. Reduce application times for rehousing, especially from safe houses
2. Training around domestic violence and abuse, especially for frontline staff like Customer Service Points
3. Survivors of long-term abuse shouldn't be penalised for needing to keep moving because they keep getting found
4. Deposit bonds for private sector renting

### Survivor's Comment

*I found it was a very good day all round. My voice and views I felt were heard*

**Survivor's Comment**

*(I'd like) shorter workshops/ longer day so don't have to pick and choose*

**Mental health**

1. Do more to tell people what's on offer, and what that service is like, especially through GPs
2. Talk about more training for GPs at the meeting at the end of June
3. Right Steps and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership need to talk to each other better
4. Mental health problems still carry a stigma – survivors need to know it's okay to be "messed up" after what they've been through

**Survivor's Comment**

*(The best part for me was) feedback. It will be good if this feedback is put into writing and delivered to survivors*

**Accident and Emergency & Maternity**

1. Ask the question about domestic violence in private
2. Take women seriously and listen to what they say
3. Training to help understand the emotional impact, as well as recognise signs
4. Health workers challenge young people's attitudes
5. There may only be one chance to ask the question – take it

**General comments**

1. Lots of good work has been done, but there is still more to do
2. The GP appointment system – no more than one day in advance – makes it difficult to see the same person, so there's no on-going understanding
3. Agencies need to work together
4. The Freedom Programme works!

## Survivors' Feedback

At the end of the day, everyone was asked to fill out an evaluation form, telling us what they liked, what they didn't like so much, and what improvements they'd like to see next year.

### People really liked...

The variety of workshops

The venue

Lunch

Meeting other survivors

Being heard

### People thought these things could be better...

More time

More information

Agencies being better prepared

More agencies present

### Things to think about for next year...

1. Need to give out better information in advance, especially about who's going to be there, and how the day will work
2. Some people want to spend more time with some agencies, and some want to see more agencies. How can we structure the day so this is possible?
3. Financial support is really important to help people attend; especially travel costs
4. Hearing feedback from agencies on what's changed since May 2011 needs to be a big part of 2012's conference – people really want to know this

**Keep up-to-date about what's happening for survivors:**  
**<http://www.bdaf.org.uk/help-and-support/survivors-forum-wings>**