

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 20 - Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Achieving justice and improving support and protection for victims-survivors of gender-based violence		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Marianne Hester	Professor, Chair in Gender, Violence and International Policy	04/1994-03/1999 & 09/2003-present;
Emma Williamson	Reader in Gender-Based Violence	7/1998-present;
Nadia Aghtaie	Senior Lecturer in Gender & Violence	01/2011-present;
Natasha Mulvihill	Lecturer in Criminology	09/2014-present;
Geetanjali Gangoli	Senior Lecturer in Policy Studies	08/2003-07/2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

University of Bristol (UoB) research led by Marianne Hester has changed how criminal justice practitioners and service providers in the UK support victims-survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), intervene with perpetrators and prevent GBV. The research has:

- Changed the understanding and conversations about what 'justice' means for victims-survivors of GBV – going beyond formal (criminal) definitions to achieve justice in ways that are more meaningful to victims-survivors.
- Developed a toolkit for measuring these diverse forms of justice, used by Women's Aid and its members.
- Leveraged over GBP7.2 million in funding to expand a GBV-prevention programme in the UK. This initiative is shown to reduce abuse by high-risk perpetrators by up to 88%.
- Ensured coordinated, more accessible and needs-based sexual assault services in the Teesside region.
- Promoted specialist, more effective advocacy in court for domestic and sexual violence victims-survivors.
- Underpinned new UK family court guidance to protect children from domestic abuse.

2. Underpinning research

Since 2010, Marianne Hester has led an internationally recognised body of work with significant implications regarding the nature, processes and application of 'justice' for the diverse forms of GBV (domestic and sexual violence/abuse, forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence). The research has involved over 1600 victims-survivors in the UK and over 500 of the most harmful perpetrators. Importantly, the researchers have identified diverse forms of 'justice' sought by victims-survivors. Policymakers have identified a 'justice gap' for GBV victims in the sense that very few reports of GBV to police result in prosecution or conviction. However, the research shows that, for victims-survivors, 'justice' has a much wider meaning beyond this formal definition. For victims-survivors, 'justice' also involves accountability of perpetrators and communities, as well as empowerment through advocacy of victims-survivors themselves.

Rape attrition study (2010-2013). Concern by the criminal justice sector in North East (NE) England about criminal justice system (CJS) practice in rape cases led the charity Northern Rock Foundation to commission research from Hester's research group. The researchers tracked CJS progression of 87 rape cases [1], finding that victim vulnerability, especially mental health issues, undermined victim credibility. The most vulnerable victims were least likely to progress through the criminal justice system. Victim-focus, i.e. belief in victims and multi-agency support, led to the highest proportion of cases proceeding through to charges, more cases going

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to court and was a significant factor in convictions. The study recommended greater victim-focus and attention to vulnerability to close the 'justice gap'.

Specialist sexual violence services in Teesside (2014-2015). In 2014, Northern Rock Foundation commissioned a follow-on study [2] to examine the impact on CJS outcomes of specialist sexual violence services in rape cases in NE England. Existing CJS data [1] was supplemented by interviews with 15 victims-survivors plus ten services staff. The research showed how the needs of victims-survivors varied at different stages of their 'journey' through the CJS, with specialist services playing a crucial role. It recommended specialist services remain varied and flexible to enhance victims-survivors' experience of the CJS (and beyond). This research, along with the rape attrition study [1], demonstrated the complex landscape of referral pathways for victims-survivors seeking support. A large number of organisations, mostly third sector, provide a wide array of services, such as counselling and financial and housing support, and present a complex pathway for service users to negotiate.

Justice, Inequality and Gender Based Violence (2015-2018). Hester led a large-scale, multi-method study funded by ESRC [3] which identified how 'justice' (in its widest sense) was understood, sought and experienced by approximately 1500 victims-survivors, and the implications of intersectionality (including economic and immigration status, and mental health). Conducted in collaboration with the universities of Cardiff and West of England, and in partnership with the key NGOs English and Welsh Women's Aid, the UoB researchers led the systematic review, CJS tracking and extensive interviews, and conducted all data analysis. The study found evidence that independent domestic and sexual violence advocates narrow the 'justice gap' by significantly increasing the chance of conviction (e.g. increased conviction in rape cases by 1.9, $p < .01$); and the need for 'justice' to involve a more nuanced meaning beyond formal systems, with emphasis on accountability for perpetrators and empowerment of victims-survivors. It also highlighted the devastating impact on victims-survivors of the presumption of contact in domestic abuse cases in the family courts. In terms of migrant women accessing criminal justice, the data suggested a justice gap: markedly fewer cases involving black, minority and migrant women proceeded from police report to a criminal charge, and migrant women were quite often not asked whether they wanted a charge to be pursued [4].

Evaluation of Drive, high-harm perpetrator intervention (2016-2019). Hester's research group were commissioned by the domestic abuse charities, Respect and SafeLives, together with the consultancy Social Finance, to conduct a pragmatic randomised control trial to evaluate Drive, an intensive intervention which works with high-harm and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to challenge their behaviour and prevent further abuse. Involving over 1100 participants, this was the largest study of its kind, internationally [5]. The group analysed outcomes for 509 perpetrators on the Drive intervention during its three-year pilot phase, and 610 in a control group who had not used Drive. The evaluation found sustained reduction in abuse by high-harm perpetrators and an increase in safety of victims-survivors among those that were in the intervention. For example, physical abuse reduced by 82% and sexual abuse reduced by 88% with significant reduction in the risk perpetrators posed ($p < .001$). Where the Justice study [3,4] had showed that one form of justice for victims-survivors is for perpetrators to admit/accept that they are accountable for their behaviour, it was Drive that helped achieve this accountability.

3. References to the research

- [1] Hester, M & Lilley, S-J (2017) Rape investigation and attrition in acquaintance, domestic violence and historical rape cases. Special Issue Paper. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*. DOI:10.1002/jip.1469.
- [2] Hester, M & Lilley S-J (2018) More than support to court: rape victims and specialist sexual violence services. *International Review of Victimology* 1-16 DOI: 10.1177/0269758017742717
- [3] Lilley-Walker, S-J., Hester, M., McPhee, D & Patsios, D (2019) Rape and the criminal justice response in England: the importance of age and gender. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. DOI: 10.1177/1748895819863095
- [4] Gangoli, G., Bates, L. & Hester, M. (2019) What does justice mean to black and minority ethnic (BME) victims/survivors of gender-based violence?, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2019.1650010](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1650010)

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[5] Hester, M., Eisenstadt, N., Ortega-Avila, A., Morgan, K., Walker, S-J & Bell, J (2019) [Evaluation of the Drive Project – a three-year Pilot to address high risk, high harm domestic abuse perpetrators](#). London: Drive Project.

4. Details of the impact

Domestic abuse was committed against 1.6 million women and 786,000 men during the year ending March 2019 in England and Wales alone, where almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime and two women a week are killed by a current or former partner¹. The economic and social cost of domestic abuse is considerable and has been estimated at GBP66 billion per year² in England and Wales through physical and emotional harms, property damage and responses from police, health and other services, among other factors. Further, 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some form of sexual assault since the age of 16³. The UoB research led by Hester has made major strides in addressing the devastating problem of GBV by: underpinning changes to UK family law, improving the practices of GBV support organisations and strengthening public services for victims-survivors. These impacts have improved support and wellbeing for victims-survivors and, ultimately, narrowed the 'justice gap'. Testament to the research's significance, Hester was one of three finalists for outstanding societal impact in ESRC's Celebrating Impact Prize 2020⁴. In a short film accompanying the Prize, Women's Aid describe her research programme as "*transformative*" [A].

1. Impact on national policy: Practice Direction 12J

UoB's research has led to changes in legal guidance which protects the wellbeing of children in domestic abuse cases. In 2016, Hester submitted research evidence regarding survivors' experiences of child contact proceedings [3] for Justice Cobb's review of Practice Direction 12J, a protocol for family courts in England and Wales concerning Child Arrangement and Contact Orders in cases where the child is at risk of domestic abuse. Hester's contribution is acknowledged in Paragraph 4 of the review, published in January 2017 [B]. Combined with Women's Aid evidence the review led to revisions in Practice Direction 12J which came into force in September 2017. These removed the presumption contained in section 1(2A) of the Children Act 1989 that operates to require 'contact at all costs' with both parents, without proper evaluation of the risk to children's safety in domestic abuse cases [B]. This guidance represents a major shift for the courts, who hold a "*pro-contact' culture – a deeply held commitment to maintaining contact between a child and both parents... I have lost count of the numbers of women who have told us about the harrowing experience of having to facilitate contact with their abuser, which they know is unsafe and which has long term, traumatic impacts on their children*" (Campaigns & Policy Manager, Women's Aid) [B].

2. Impacts on practitioners and public services

The UoB researchers' close work with social care and other practitioners and specialist NGOs has changed professional practices and public services which, in turn, have improved support and wellbeing for victims-survivors, including in how justice is achieved.

New ways of achieving, understanding and discussing 'justice'. The research has "*really transformed our understanding of what justice means for survivors and for what that means for policy and practice. It helped us to understand that justice is about recognition, it's about accountability and empowerment. And that's been critical in shaping our response to domestic abuse*" (Head of Research & Evaluation, Women's Aid Federation of England) [A]. An example of how this new understanding has changed professional practice is provided by My Sister's Place, an influential domestic abuse organisation and Women's Aid member which supports victims-survivors across Cleveland, NE England. Hester's research group formed a Knowledge Exchange partnership with My Sister's Place and, together, they embedded the wider 'survivor-focused' justice findings [3], which led directly to changes in how advisors talk about justice with

¹ ONS (2019) [Crime Survey statistics – domestic abuse](#); ONS (2019) [Home Office Homicide Index statistics](#)

² Home Office (2019) [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse](#)

³ ONS (2017) [Crime Survey statistics – sexual offences](#)

⁴ <https://esrc.ukri.org/research/celebrating-impact-prize/previous-years-winners/impact-prize-winners-2020/>

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survivors/clients. This has had a positive, empowering effect on both My Sister's Place practitioners and survivors. An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) with My Sister's Place explains: *"I have found this has been particularly effective when women have been frustrated with "criminal justice" and we talk about the other types that can be achieved. A particular client of mine regularly says to me how "she knows now justice isn't about what happens in the court room". It is really empowering for [the client] to know that justice comes in many forms.... I am thrilled that these wider justice outcomes can be captured."* [C]. My Sister's Place feel this change has led to a number of positive outcomes, including: *"Client feels like they can move on with their life/no longer fearful; Client (and their children) feel safer/better protected as a result of court outcome; The perpetrator acknowledged their own abusive behaviour/pleaded guilty at court/ACCEPTED A CAUTION."* [C].

Justice toolkit. Working with My Sister's Place and Women's Aid, the UoB researchers went on to develop the 'justice toolkit', which enables frontline specialist services to identify and measure the wider forms of justice, such as perpetrator accountability and victim empowerment, that they create with victims-survivors. It has particular value for specialist services and funders who are *"not always aware of the crucial contribution that these services make to creating justice in a range of different ways for survivors. This toolkit not only enables them to better understand and support survivors to achieve a form of justice that is meaningful to the survivor herself, but to measure this and therefore ensure that this work is recognised and valued."* (Head of Research & Evaluation, Women's Aid Federation of England) [A]. As of September 2020, the toolkit's use has been requested by 13 Women's Aid members, two sister national networks and the Women's Aid federations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland [A].

Coordinated sexual assault services. In 2015, UoB's research findings regarding the complex referral pathways between sexual violence services [1,2] directly informed recommendations for more coordinated services in the Tees Sexual Violence Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JNSA) [D], produced by the charity, Safer Communities (formerly Safe in Tees Valley). This led to co-ordinated commissioning of a new integrated sexual assault service across Teesside and has since benefited victims/survivors by offering a more needs-focused service through a single, more-accessible referral pathway which provides a flexible and tailored service. Evidence provided by Arch, a key sexual violence support service in Teesside, confirms that the new integrated service, enabled by Hester *et al's* research, makes it *"easier for referral agencies and victim/survivors to refer in and access. There is a clear service offer and steady referral response and assessment times, which means that no matter which part of Teesside you live in you can expect a consistent response"* (CEO, Arch) [D].

Promoting specialist support in court. In 2018, the research [2,3] was used by South West and North East police forces in England to support the case for providing specialist advocates for sexual and domestic violence cases [E]. For example, citing Hester, Northumbria's Police and Crime Commissioner stated: *"There is considerable evidence... that where a domestic abuse complainant has the support of an IDVA or other specialist support worker, s/he is more likely to attend court and is likely to be more confident and to give better evidence."* [E]. The Commissioner used this evidence to state in the report that *"Where a witness summons is issued for the complainant, police and [Crown Prosecution Service] should encourage/arrange for IDVA or specialist adviser support"*. The Commission pledged continued training and commissioning of specialist support services in 2018-19 [E], including Rape Crisis Tyneside & Northumberland (RCTN) which received a 22% increase in referrals in 2018-19 with high levels of positive outcomes reported by survivors in the Tyneside and Northumberland area (RCTN annual report 2018-19). This research [3] was further used to explain the importance of specialist support by Sarah Champion MP in a parliamentary debate on the newly launched Victims Strategy: *"Bristol university has just demonstrated the vital role of independent sexual violence advisers—ISVAs—in improving criminal justice outcomes"* [E].

Roll-out of Drive. Hester *et al's* evaluation of Drive [5], which found sustained reduction in abuse by high-harm perpetrators and increased safety of victims-survivors for users of this intervention, has led directly to considerable financial investment in Drive [F]. This has included GBP3,700,000 Home Office grant funding via the Police Transformation Fund to roll out the initiative from its three pilot areas (Essex, South Wales and West Sussex) to five new sites

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(Croydon, Cardiff, Worcestershire, Sandwell and Birmingham) from 2018-2020, statutory funding from Police and Crime Commissioners and Local Authorities to ensure continued delivery from 2020-2021, and GBP3,500,000 funding from the National Community Lottery Fund to roll out Drive to a further three sites from 2020, as well as deliver national systems change activity across England. The Director of Drive comments: *“Findings from [Hester et al’s] evaluation demonstrate the positive impact that the Drive intervention is having on the lives of victim-survivors of domestic abuse and on perpetrators of domestic abuse. Without independent evidence documenting this impact, we would not have secured the level of investment needed to continue delivering and having this impact at greater scale.”* [F].

Practitioner training. UoB’s research has been shared with practitioners through training courses which have changed awareness of GBV issues and participants have reported subsequent changes in their practices. In 2018 the research [2][3] was used by Women’s Aid in their nationally recognised Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDVA) qualification training (delivered to up to 50 practitioners across the UK in 2018) [A]. The UoB research was *“particularly useful in discussing with training participants the difference that advocacy skills can make, and the relevance of a sense of justice to survivors’ empowerment and moving on”* (Women’s Aid England) [A].

In 2018, national organisation Research in Practice commissioned the UoB team to write and deliver a UK training programme based on the research which covered a range of issues relating to justice for GBV [1][2][3]. Content included social services’ and family court professionals’ attitudes towards children’s behaviour, the presumption of contact in domestic violence family court cases, the importance of specialist GBV support services and the results of the Drive intervention. The training was delivered to 159 practitioners (including social workers, family court advisors, service managers, commissioners, safeguarding leads and a range of specialist national organisations) across the UK. At least 84% of participants reported very high/high likelihood of the workshop having an impact on their own practice. A three-month follow-up survey indicated the training had led to enhanced practice and increased capacity of services. For example, participants reported: *“greater awareness and consideration of victim/survivors of domestic abuse within [my] report-writing and recommendations to court”* (Family court advisor, CAF/CASS). The knowledge was also used to notify the *“senior management team of the need for specific training which has been taken on board”* (Safeguarding manager); to develop *“a new [domestic abuse] response system... the information in the workshop was useful to inform our direction of travel”* (Commissioning manager) and *“to ensure that families receive the right support”* (Social Worker) [G].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] Women’s Aid England (2020) Supporting statement - Head of Research and Evaluation | ESRC (2020) [Celebrating Impact: Understanding justice for inequality and gender-based violence](#) (video)

[B] Hon. Mr Justice Cobb (2018) [Review of Practice Direction 12J FPR 2010 Child Arrangement and Contact Orders: Domestic Violence and Harm Report to the President of the Family Division](#) | Women’s Aid (2020) [“Abuse does not end when a relationship ends” When perpetrators use family proceedings and child contact arrangements to continue to control and abuse”](#) (blog)

[C] My Sister’s Place (2019) Supporting statement - IDVA

[D] Strange, G (2015) [Tees Sexual Violence Needs Assessment](#). Final Version. 31st March 2015. Stockton: Safe in Tees Valley (relevant pages provided in evidence pack) | Arch (2020) Email correspondence – CEO

[E] SW police evidence: Wright, M and Goodland, H. (2018) Thematic Assurance Report: Priority 1 of the Police and Crime Plan – to “Protect the most vulnerable from harm” (26th July 2018). | NE police evidence: Baird, V et al (2018) [Specialist Domestic Violence Courts – How special are they?](#) (See p61 for quote and Recommendation 7 on p64) | Parliamentary debate evidence: House of Commons Hansard, 11 October 2018, Volume 647 [Victims Strategy debate](#)

[F] Drive (2020) Supporting statement – Director

[G] Research in Practice Impact Report Aug 2019