

<b>Institution:</b> Lancaster University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 18, Law		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Domestic and sexual abuse: Improving criminal justice responses, victim support, and policy and practice nationally and internationally		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014 to 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Charlotte Barlow	Lecturer	August 2016 to present
Dr Siobhan Weare	Senior Lecturer	January 2014 to present
Dr Leslie Humphreys	Lecturer	January 2014 to present
Dr Joanne Hulley	Research Assistant	August 2018 to January 2019
Dr Kelly Johnson	Research Assistant	July 2017 to April 2018
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> January 2016 to December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Innovative research into domestic and sexual abuse by Barlow and Weare of the Centre for Crime, Law and Justice (CCLJ) has impacted upon policy and practice nationally and internationally. It has: (i) influenced government policy on domestic and sexual abuse by informing the 2019 Domestic Abuse Bill in the UK, and psychological violence legislation in Denmark in the same year; (ii) changed outdated assumptions regarding gender-based abuse via its application in training to more than 1,900 police officers, social workers, healthcare professionals, lawyers, local governmental organisations, and third sector support services in England, Wales, and the Republic of Ireland; (iii) enhanced support for male victims of sexual abuse by shaping the National Male Survivor Service Standards – the first national quality assurance framework in the UK for services supporting adult male victims of sexual abuse – and a review of the National Male Survivors Helpline and Online Service.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Barlow and Weare have built on their history of research on gender, abuse and harm, to lead participatory research projects involving non-academic partners and victims of domestic and sexual abuse as direct collaborators, beneficiaries, and end-users of the research from the outset. Project outputs have been consciously written and disseminated with participants and beneficiaries in mind, in order to improve academic, practitioner, policy-maker and public understandings of the nature, extent of, and responses to domestic and sexual abuse. Their work is one strand of research in the CCLJ, which is home to research in the Law School concerned with criminology, criminal justice and law, empirical and theoretical multi-disciplinary scholarship, and collaborative research with academic and non-academic partners.</p> <p><b>Research on coercive control: exploring the responses of police and criminal justice agencies.</b> Coercive control was criminalised under the Serious Crime Act 2015, and since 2016 Barlow's team (Humphreys and Johnson (Law), Walklate (Liverpool University)), have explored the responses of police and criminal justice agencies to this form of domestic abuse. Coercive control is a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim, and to regulate their behaviour. A key aim of their research was to improve the support provided to victims [R1, R2, G1, G2]. Barlow analysed body-worn camera footage and police data, and conducted focus groups and interviews with victims and police officers, and found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low crime recordings, arrests, risk assessment gradings and charge rates for the coercive control offence when compared with other domestic abuse related offences.</li> <li>• issues with police understandings of and attitudes towards coercive control, including problems in understanding the impacts on victims, limited knowledge of the legislation, and problematic understandings of the risks associated with this form of domestic abuse.</li> <li>• limited knowledge of the offence negatively affecting confidence levels when responding to victims of coercive control.</li> </ul>		

## Impact case study (REF3)

- a 'tunnel vision' focus on physical violence when responding to domestic abuse led to missed opportunities for identifying coercive control, meaning victims received limited or inappropriate support.
- capturing victims' perspectives improves police understandings of their responses to coercive control.

### Research on female-to-male sexual abuse: understanding male victim's experiences.

Weare's victim-centred research has addressed the experiences of men in the UK who have been 'forced-to-penetrate' (FTP) women - a form of sexual abuse where a man is forced to engage in sexual intercourse with a female perpetrator [R3]. Weare's team (Hulley) has undertaken the only empirically based scholarly analysis focusing specifically on this form of sexual abuse in the UK. This involved collecting and analysing data from an online survey which Weare designed [R4], and conducting interviews with male FTP victims [G3, R5]. The findings highlighted:

- the contexts within which this form of sexual abuse occurs, including that the perpetrator was most frequently the man's female partner or ex-partner, and that their FTP experiences were one element of domestic abuse and/or post-separation abuse that they experienced.
- that being FTP had severe negative impacts on men's mental health, emotional well-being, and personal lives and relationships, resulting in, for example, anxiety and depression, self-harm, suicidal thoughts/ideation, feelings of guilt and self-blame, and sexual issues or dysfunction.
- that participants had overwhelmingly negative perceptions of, and experiences with, the police and criminal justice system. Concerns raised included bias against men and inequality of treatment, and disbelief that they could be victims of female-perpetrated sexual and domestic abuse. These issues acted as barriers to men disclosing and engaging with criminal justice organisations and associated services.

Following this research, in 2019 Weare was commissioned by the Male Survivors Partnership to conduct a Home Office-funded review of the National Male Survivors Helpline and Online Service (NMSHOS). The NMSHOS provides emotional support, advice, and information to and regarding men and boys who have experienced sexual abuse living in England and Wales [G4, R6]. Her recommendations included:

- improving data collection processes in relation to Helpline and Online Service usage through the use of appropriate software packages.
- increasing levels of funding to ensure that service growth can be accommodated whilst maintaining service quality.

### 3. References to the research

[R1] Barlow C, Johnson K, Walklate S, Humphreys L, (2019). Putting Coercive Control into Practice: Problems and Possibilities. *British Journal of Criminology*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azz041>. [G2]. *Peer reviewed journal*.

[R2] Barlow C, Whittle M, (2019). Policing Coercive Control. *British Academy Project Report*. [Funded by G1].

[R3] Weare S, (2018). 'Oh you're a guy how could you be raped by a woman, that makes no sense' – Towards a case for legally recognising and labelling 'forced to penetrate' cases as rape. *International Journal of Law in Context*, 14(1), 110-131. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744552317000179>. *Peer-reviewed journal*.

[R4] Weare S, (2018). 'I feel permanently traumatised by it': Physical and emotional impacts reported by men forced-to-penetrate women in the UK. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518820815> *Peer-reviewed journal*.

[R5] Weare S, Hulley J, (2019). Experiences of men forced-to-penetrate women in the UK: Context, consequences, and engagement with the criminal justice system. *British Academy Project Report* [Funded by G3].

[R6] Weare S, Hulley J, Pattinson B, (2019). A Review of the National Male Survivors Helpline and Online Service. *Project Report* [Funded by G4].

#### Peer-reviewed research grants:

[G1] Barlow (PI), *Police Responses to Coercive Control*, British Academy: (2018-19) GBP9,987

[G2] Barlow (PI), *Policing Coercive Control*, N8 Policing Research Partnership: (2017-18) GBP28,845

[G3] Weare (PI), *Experiences of men 'forced-to-penetrate' women in the UK: Context, consequences, and engagement with the criminal justice system*, British Academy: (2018-19) GBP9,956

[G4] Weare (PI), *A Review of the National Male Survivors' Helpline*, National Sexual Violence Support Fund, UK Home Office: (2019) GBP20,000

[R1], [R3] and [R4] are in the top 5% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric. [R2], [R5], and [R6] have been downloaded more than 1,700 times from Lancaster University's research repository. The research has received extensive media coverage via a variety of outlets, including BBC News – online print (reach 1,900,000), Channel 4 News (reach 2,800,000), BBC Woman's Hour (reach 3.280,000), You Magazine – Mail Online (reach 2,000,000), The New York Post (reach 101,651), and The Huffington Post (reach 913,143).

#### 4. Details of the impact

Barlow and Weare's research on gender, abuse, and harm, and their information sharing and knowledge exchange, has contributed to (i) national and international policy development, (ii) impacted organisational policies and practices, and (iii) improved service provision and victim support relating to domestic and sexual abuse. Barlow's research has influenced government policy development in England, Wales and Denmark, and her evidence was included in the UN's 'International Bill of Rights' for women. Her work has led to sustained collaborative partnerships with, and the provision of training, advice and guidance to over 1,200 practitioners from a range of organisations, including 5 police forces, 5 third sector organisations, and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). Weare has provided research-informed training to over 700 police, professionals and practitioners working in third sector support services, healthcare services, and child and adult safeguarding services within local authorities. This has changed practices, with female-to-male sexual abuse being properly acknowledged for the first time. Her research has also improved the quality of services available to male victims of sexual abuse and secured additional funding for services supporting such victims.

**(i) Influencing national and international domestic abuse policy.** Barlow's research on police responses to coercive control informed the recommendations of, and was included in, the UN's CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women] Executive Summary and Shadow Report 2017 [S1]. Hundreds of individuals and organisations submitted evidence to the CEDAW Executive Committee, and Barlow was 1 of 3 academics whose evidence was selected to feature in the Executive Summary. The UK Government is required to respond to these recommendations, and a key aspect of their response was drafting the Domestic Abuse Bill in 2019 [S2]. Barlow made a submission to the Home Affairs Committee Domestic Abuse Inquiry, the initial Domestic Abuse Bill Consultation, and a further iteration of the consultation for the final draft of the Bill [S3]. For the latter, she recommended that greater understandings of coercive control were needed throughout the criminal justice system, particularly within the police, and that this required national level training. She also recommended that, as a minimum, statutory guidance should be developed for the police related to Stalking Protection Orders to ensure that it is clear that these orders can be used in domestic abuse contexts as appropriate, including coercive control. These recommendations were included verbatim in the draft Bill [S2, S3, R1, R2]. Additionally, in her submission to the Home Affairs Committee Domestic Abuse Inquiry, Barlow recommended that coercive control offences should be made an exception to the crime recording practice of the 'Principal Crime Rule'. She proposed that recording coercive control as an addition to the most serious crime reported at the time would better capture and measure coercive control [R1]. In April 2019, the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime guidance was changed to reflect these recommendations, using Barlow's wording verbatim. This revised crime recording policy is now in place across England and Wales [S3, S9].

Life Without Violence, a Danish charity, consulted Barlow to support their submission in relation to the development of psychological violence legislation in Denmark in 2018, having read a blog related to her work on coercive control. Her work informed the charity's submission by providing guidance on how to successfully implement psychological violence as a criminal offence. Due to

her work with the charity, Barlow was invited to present her research findings [R1, R2] to 100 members of the *Folketing* (Danish Parliament) in 2018. The creation of the criminal offence is ongoing, with Barlow's work informing the consultation process [S6].

**(ii) Training practitioners and improving their responses to domestic and sexual abuse.** In 2018, Barlow developed a coercive control learning tool/training package based on the findings of her research [R1, R2]. It was designed to improve police and other agencies' understandings of, responses to, and investigations of coercive control. Since 2018, end users have engaged with the research through the tool: 1,000 officers in Merseyside Police (*all* emergency response officers, investigators and call handlers); 65 staff members in adult and child safeguarding in Merseyside and Cumbria; 75 police officers at Cumbria Police; 20 staff members at the IOPC; and 15 staff members at Lincolnshire Social Services. After using this tool there have been:

- improvements in practitioners' identification, understanding of, and responses to, coercive control [S4]. For example, an evaluation of the training at Merseyside Police demonstrated that 95% of participants considered that the training had improved their knowledge and confidence in responding to coercive control cases [S5].
- a three-fold increase in crime recordings for coercive control by trained officers in Merseyside Police, and an increase in arrest rates from 14% to 28%. Barlow's analysis of police case files revealed that trained officers engaged in more thorough investigations, compared to non-trained officers, and were more likely to use victim-centred practices. This included taking more detailed victim statements, signposting victims to appropriate support services, and ensuring regular follow-up calls [S5].
- an increase from 28% to 75% of coercive control cases being recorded as such by trained call handlers at Merseyside Police [S5].
- improvements in working practices of staff at the IOPC and Cumbria Adult and Child Safeguarding Board, where 85% of those trained now use Barlow's tool to inform their work. One IOPC delegate stated, "*I have identified at least 5 missed opportunities for using the offence in various domestic abuse cases since completing the training, which I have passed on to the relevant forces*". Another said, "*I made 16 recommendations following the investigation of a high-profile domestic homicide case, and the training helped me to make these more meaningful and apply coercive control to these recommendations, which I would not have had the knowledge to do before the training*" [S8].

Barlow's training will now be delivered annually at Merseyside Police, with the N8 Policing Research Partnership supporting its delivery to other police forces across the UK.

Since 2017, Weare has delivered training, developed from her research [R3-5] and to improve police responses to FTP cases, to over 250 police officers across the UK and Republic of Ireland, including Avon and Somerset Police, Lancashire Police, North Wales Police, and the Irish Garda. Participants have included frontline police officers, the heads of the Public Protection Units at Lancashire Police and North Wales Police, and officers from specialist rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) teams. Training on FTP cases has also been delivered to over 500 professionals and practitioners working in third sector support services, such as Survivors Manchester, ManKind Initiative, and Victim Support; in health-care services such as Cumbria Sexual Health Service and St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Manchester; the Crown Prosecution Service; and child and adult safeguarding services within local authorities, including North East Hampshire and Manchester. Following this training there have been:

- improvements in practitioners' understanding of, and responses to, male victims of sexual abuse, particularly where the perpetrator is female. In feedback on the training, 95% of respondents said their knowledge had changed, and 80% said their practices were going to change as a result of attending the training. Doctors and nurses from Cumbria Sexual Health Service, for example, said they would begin routinely asking men who access their service about their non-consensual sexual experiences regardless of their sexual orientation, something they had not previously done [S8].
- challenges to and changes in attitudes around sexual abuse; in particular, around victims and perpetrators and how female-on-male sexual abuse occurs. In feedback following training, one healthcare professional, for example, commented that previously they had "*made the assumption probably like everyone, how could this happen to a man – [this training] has made me look at this in a different light*" [S8].

**(iii) Improving the quality of support service provision for male victims of sexual violence by shaping standards and reviewing services.** In 2017, Weare was commissioned as an expert reviewer and advisor to LimeCulture (a national sexual violence and safeguarding organisation), in order to create the National Male Survivor Service Standards [S7]. These Standards are a national quality assurance framework developed to improve consistency, practice, and the overall quality of services supporting adult male victims of sexual abuse. Weare's research directly informed their development, by acknowledging the issue of female-to-male sexual abuse. LimeCulture supports organisations to deliver high-quality services to victims of rape and sexual assault, advises the government on the development of policies and initiatives around sexual violence, and accredits services against these Standards. To date, 22 services across the UK have been accredited, including Survivors UK (London), Victim Support West Yorkshire Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service, Hope House Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Gloucestershire), and The Birchall Trust (Lancashire). A further 13 organisations - third sector support services, sexual assault referral centres, and universities - are currently going through the accreditation process. As a result of these Standards, the quality of service delivered to male victims of sexual abuse has improved across the UK by, for example, promoting services to maximise engagement with victims, introducing new practices to address the barriers faced by victims when engaging with support, and reflecting the specific ways they may utilise support services. Several Police and Crime Commissioners now require services to be accredited against the Standards before receiving further government funding. They also use them to provide funding for male specific roles within organisations [S7].

Weare's review of the National Male Survivors Helpline and Online Service (NMSHOS), which has been accessed over 15,000 times by male survivors, their families and professionals since its launch in 2015, has directly informed improvements to service delivery, thereby benefitting male victims [S10]. As a result of her review, Safeline has reorganised the NMSHOS to increase capacity to answer telephone calls from male victims and reduced the hours for webchat, text and email. This reflected Weare's findings that, over 4 years of operation, there was a sustained preference for victims to engage with the service via telephone [R6]. Altering the service platform in this way allowed Safeline to strike an *"ethical balance"* between accommodating those who prefer to access the NMSHOS electronically and increasing the number of male victims who can engage via telephone. At the same time, Weare's research findings resulted in increased investment in the NMSHOS, with the introduction of a new, cost-effective live-chat service for survivors who want to access support this way [S10]. Weare's recommendation that investment in technology would improve data collection processes was used by Safeline to secure additional funding for a new technology interface, Virtual Voice Control [R6]. This integrated platform has built-in data recording software, allowing Safeline to more accurately capture data associated with the use of the NMSHOS. Improving data accuracy and capacity has resulted in more detailed understandings of the help-seeking behaviours and profiles of male victims, thereby enabling Safeline to provide the most responsive and highest quality service possible [S10]. Weare's research findings continue to inform the business case for further extension to and investment in the NMSHOS [R6], which is currently under evaluation; particularly in relation to increased opening hours and additional leadership to support service delivery and expansion [S10].

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- [S1] CEDAW Executive Summary (2019)
- [S2] Draft Domestic Abuse Bill (verbatim recommendations at pages 11, 52 and 53) (2019)
- [S3] Barlow's submission to the Domestic Abuse Bill Consultation (2017)
- [S4] Letter from ACC, Merseyside Police confirming impact on police training (UK) (2020)
- [S5] Evaluation report of coercive control training at Merseyside Police (2020)
- [S6] Confirmation statement, Life Without Violence, Denmark. Impact on police training (2019)
- [S7] Testimonial from LimeCulture regarding National Male Survivor Service Standards (2020)
- [S8] Feedback from training participants (2017-2020)
- [S9] Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime (verbatim wording at page 23) (2020)
- [S10] Testimonial from Safeline about impact of the NMSHOS review on the service (2021)