

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: London Metropolitan University		
Unit of Assessment: 25 Area Studies		
Title of case study: Moving on up: shaping new responses to domestic abuse		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009-2016		
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:
Prof Liz Kelly	Research fellow, Senior researcher, now Professor	1987-date
Dr Nicola Sharp Jeffs	Research Fellow	2013-2018
Prof Renate Klein	Visiting Professor	2007-2016
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Risk discourse has predominated in responses to domestic violence, with interventions focused on short term risk reduction: this narrowed lens fails to address the many medium and longer term challenges facing victim-survivors. Community-based research by CWASU has exposed the limitations of such approaches, and demonstrated the significance of coercive control, including through economic abuse in constraining the capacity of victim-survivors to rebuild their lives.

The research has led to legislative change, a new model for intervention in domestic violence, policy change in the UK banking and finance sectors on economic abuse, in the GLA in terms of social housing allocation and for all housing tenures through the Whole Housing Approach, the establishment of an award-winning charity – Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) and enhanced participation, through renewed involvement of victim-survivors in the design and delivery of support and the amplification of their voices.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

This research was inspired by a London Metropolitan MA dissertation on economic abuse by Nicola Sharp Jeffs (2006-08), who joined the Child and Women Abuse Study Unit (CWASU) as a researcher in 2013, and was the fieldworker in the research projects on which this case study is based. Both studies were co-produced with domestic violence organisations - *Finding the Cost of Freedom* with Solace Women's Aid [R1] (funded by the Big Lottery Research Grants Programme), and *Money Matters* [R3] (in partnership with Refuge, funded by the Cooperative Bank).

Solace Women's Aid wanted to know what happened after victim-survivors had accessed support services. CWASU, led by Liz Kelly, saw this as an opportunity to create the first longitudinal study in Europe on how abused women rebuild their lives. Four waves of in-depth interviews documented changes over three years: embedded in these were three bespoke measurement tools: a coercive control (then in the process of being recognised in law) scale, CCUK; post-separation abuse; and a Space For Action scale, SFA [R2]. The concept of Space For Action sits at the heart of the research, tracing how the impacts and consequences of living with domestic abuse shift over time. The SFA scale had eight domains – children and parenting; sense of self;

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housing, home and community; friends and family; help-seeking and competence; health well-being and safety; and education, employment and the financial situation. Theoretically, the concept connects individual agency to resources and external support, all of which affect the extent to which survivors are able to regain control over their lives. The initial sample was 100 women, with 65% retained to wave 4, which was in part due to the methodological innovation of locating a research coordinator within Solace.

Key research findings include:

- separation does not create safety – over 90% experienced post-separation abuse;
- whilst Space For Action increased after separation, a series of practical hurdles limited change over the medium term;
- statutory agency interventions were frequently ineffective, since they failed to recognise the long-term impacts of coercive control or post-separation abuse;
- holistic support offered by Solace enabled women to deal with the legacies of abuse for themselves and their children, giving support in complex negotiations with other agencies;
- access to economic resources including housing, alongside financial insecurity was a major barrier to settling safely, with ongoing economic abuse intensifying for some following separation [R1].

The research raised serious questions about the usefulness of short-term risk reduction approaches whilst also revealing a series of unmet support needs post separation. Alongside the final report [R1] a series of briefing documents were created by the research team, which Solace Women's Aid used to advocate for policy changes in London.

The critical role of ongoing economic abuse in constraining women's Space For Action provided a spur to explore this issue further through two linked projects with Refuge, a major UK provider of domestic violence services, and the Cooperative Bank: a literature review on the international knowledge base and current policy [R4 and part of R5] and *Money Matters* [R3], a prevalence survey on the extent and nature of financial abuse. The three studies created a new knowledge base, made available by open access on CWASU and NGO websites. The literature review highlighted the limitations of using the terms financial and economic abuse interchangeably since financial abuse (involving control of money and finances) is a sub-category of economic abuse which is a broader concept and involves the control of economic resources (such as food, housing, transportation).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

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- R1. Kelly, Liz, Sharp-Jeffs, Nicola and Klein, Renate (2014) *Finding the costs of freedom : how women and children rebuild their lives after domestic violence*. Project Report. Solace Womens Aid, London. [https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Costs_of_Freedom_Report_-_SWA.pdf].
- R2. Sharp-Jeffs, Nicola, Kelly, Liz and Klein, Renate (2017) *Long Journeys Toward Freedom: The Relationship Between Coercive Control and Space for Action - Measurement and Emerging Evidence*. Violence Against Women, 24 (2). pp. 163-185. ISSN 1552-8448
- R3. Sharp-Jeffs, Nicola (2015) *Money Matters: Research into the extent and nature of financial abuse within intimate relationships in the UK*. Project Report. London Metropolitan University/Refuge, London. [<https://www.refuge.org.uk/files/Money-Matters.pdf>]
- R4. Sharp-Jeffs, Nicola (2015) *A Review of Research and Policy on Financial Abuse within Intimate Partner Relationships*. Project Report. London Metropolitan University/Refuge. London [<https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/media/london-metropolitan-university/london-met-documents/faculties/faculty-of-social-sciences-and-humanities/research/child-and-woman-abuse-studies-unit/Review-of-Research-and-Policy-on-Financial-Abuse.pdf>]
- R5. Postmus, J. L., Hoge, G. L., Breckenridge, J., Sharp-Jeffs, N. and Chung, D. (2018) *Economic*

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The concepts of Space For Action and economic abuse defined by London Met's CWASU have changed understanding and provided a route to craft new interventions that are needs rather than risk based [S3]. The project methodology has also enabled the participation of survivors in policy formation. The beneficiaries of CWASU's research are, therefore, survivors of economic abuse who are now more likely to be recognised and supported and the domestic violence sector more broadly.

Understanding: Space For Action and economic abuse

The original concept of Space For Action (SFA), coined by Kelly et al in 2003 has resonated within the domestic violence sector since it recognises the range and complexity of impacts and consequences for survivors, alongside the importance of support and resources in dealing with them. SFA has been used by providers, for example, as an addition to the framework for commissioning domestic violence services in Leeds; and as the concept underpinning outcome measurement in a Lottery funded community project by Rise in Brighton. *The concept of 'space for action' has been widely referenced and has been instrumental in understanding coercive control and its impact on women's lives, moving understandings from a short-term risk reduction focus, to the medium and longer term needs women have if they are to be able to rebuild their lives* [S1].

A number of organisations, including Women's Aid England, Welsh Women's Aid and Standing Together, have produced infographics using SFA to illustrate their approach to supporting victim-survivors [S4]. This and the parallel concept of 're-building lives' are embedded within *Change that Lasts*, a new approach to interventions piloted 2016-2021 in England and Wales by their respective Women's Aid Federations [S3]. In Portugal a replication of CWASU's longitudinal study was funded in 2020.

Changing Policy

The independent charity, Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA), was established in 2017, as a direct outcome of the research at London Met, and aims to both "*raise awareness of economic abuse and transform responses to it.*" SEA's CEO notes that CWASU's research findings demonstrated a need "*around supporting victim survivors to create not just physical, but economic safety: that this was essential with respect to rebuilding lives*" [S2].

Previously, work to address violence against women and girls in England and Wales followed policy definitions, which referenced 'financial abuse.' Advocacy and lobbying by SEA, informed by CWASU's research, ensured economic abuse was included within the statutory definition of domestic abuse contained within the Domestic Abuse Bill (2019-2021) [S6]. In the consultation response published alongside the draft Bill, the UK government stated that it would '*specify economic abuse as a distinct type of abuse, as it encompasses a wider range of behaviours than financial abuse*' [S5, p7]. This recognition also led to the term 'economic abuse,' drawing on Sharp-Jeff's academic definition, to be defined in the draft legislation, and is in the process of being incorporated into law, with the Bill reaching the House of Lords committee stage in January 2021. Recognition of economic abuse in the context of domestic abuse as a result of this research is demonstrated by the increase in mentions in Parliamentary debates from once in 2017 to 32 times (to mid Oct 2020). As at December 2020, the current draft of the bill used the term 30 times [S5].

Alongside recognising and defining economic abuse, in 2019 the UK government made available

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GBP500,000 in grants to develop responses to it. This formed the foundation for further policy and practice advocacy impact, enabling SEA to partner with domestic abuse charities and grow rapidly to 20 members of staff in 2020. CWASU has maintained a strong link with SEA, training staff and trustees and Kelly is the academic advisor on a global study of economic abuse being carried out “in partnership with SEA’s sibling charity in the US” [S2].

Launched to coincide with the first reading of the Domestic Abuse Bill in the House of Commons and the first definition of ‘economic abuse’ in law, the award winning short film *Drowning* [S7] made by Media Zoo uses CWASU’s research. It was given the gold EVCOM Industry Award for Learning and Development in November 2019 and nominated for the 2020 Charity Film awards. Rachel Pendered, Managing Director, Media Zoo (who produced the film) said: *Victims of this abuse often describe a feeling of drowning. Media zoo created a film that was powerful enough to let the audience experience just a little of what it must be like to be a victim* [S7].

Based on a recommendation from Kelly et al’s *Money Matters* the voluntary Finance Abuse Code of Practice was implemented in 2018 by UK Finance, the representative body for the UK banking and finance [S6]. By 2020, 24 banks and building societies have publicly committed to implementing the code, including two of the UK’s largest banks, Lloyds Banking Group and NatWest Banking Group. Linked to this initiative is the recognition by financial institutions of the term ‘coerced debt,’ the concept identified by Sharp-Jeffs. In 2020, NatWest announced a review into this issue and Lloyds has committed to a pilot in 2021 of the Economic Abuse Evidence Form, developed by SEA with Money Advice Plus (MAP), the form enables money/debt advisors to verify to creditors that a victim has experienced economic abuse [S2]. In November 2020, an independent panel of experts recommended a nationwide pilot of the form to the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), SEA and MAP will facilitate the pilot in 2021 [S2].

Changing Practice

The methodological approach of the Kelly et al longitudinal study fed into the creation of SEA’s Experts by Experience group, now numbering 100 [S8], the Women’s Voices initiative at Solace [S1] and Voices within Change that Lasts [S9], which ensure that victim-survivors’ voices influence interventions, practices and policies.

Solace Women’s Aid incorporated CWASU’s research findings to gain funding to increase trauma-based support for two new specialist housing workers and to develop ‘Women’s Voices’ “[*The research demonstrated that many faced post-separation abuse and a series of other challenges in rebuilding their lives. [We have] set up local women’s support groups – named by participants as ‘women’s voices’. Women’s Voices offers ongoing group work and a variety of ‘holistic’ interventions based on what women decide supports them best*]” [S1].

As Solace works with over 10,000 victim-survivors a year across London, the benefits and reach of these new provisions is significant. A direct result of their advocacy work in London, using CWASU’s project briefing papers, was the ‘*pan-London reciprocal agreement ... to ensure that women with social housing tenancies are able to transfer to safe and secure tenancies*’ [S1]. The agreement, reached in 2017, involved all London local authorities and 45 housing associations. Run by Safer London, by November 2019, 250 women had used the scheme. A similar scheme across Cambridgeshire was established in May 2019.

Informed by Kelly et al’s research, in 2016 Women’s Aid built the *Change That Lasts* programme (S9), aimed at supporting practitioners to move away from risk to needs-based assessment and support planning: it has been funded by four major donors - the Home Office, the Lottery

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Community Fund and Comic Relief. The Welsh pilot is funded by the Welsh government. The manager of *Change That Lasts*, has credited the research by the CWASU team for informing the decisions to fund the programme and inspiring the paradigm shift from risk reduction to safer and freer lives [S3]. Space For Action and its eight domains (parenting, sense of self, community, friends and family, help-seeking, competence, well-being and safety, financial situation) sit at the heart of the tools and training [S8] and within the Voices strand, which is direct engagement with victim-survivors [S8]. This programme aims to transform how survivors are seen and responded to and the three teams implementing the pilot were trained by Kelly. A programme manager for Standing Together reported how Kelly's research and training had: *"inspired a shift in how I think of my role as a domestic abuse practitioner. It made me reflect on my own practice and how frontline domestic abuse services are delivered... [the previous risk based] focused approach strips a woman's choice and control over what happens to her when she accesses a service [this gives] time and space to establish feelings of safety and trust, taking actions that are led by what women say they need and want"* leading to a *"needs-led, empowerment approach"* [S10].

By the end of 2020 SEA had received GBP750,000 in funding, including from government departments (the Home Office, DCMS and Housing, Communities and Local Government) [S2] to: train over 1,000 professionals - 314 police officers across 20 police forces, 327 professionals within the domestic abuse sector, 101 in money/debt/financial capability sector, and 136 in housing and financial services sectors - on economic abuse; work with MAP to run a national casework service for survivors; address the issue of coerced debt; work with employers; and support banks and building societies to respond more effectively. This included two years funding from the Home Office to work with UK Finance and to support banks and building societies to implement the principles set out within the Code. The SEA team supported the setting up of a specialist domestic and financial abuse team at Lloyds [S9]. Since 2019, a member of the SEA team has been seconded on a full-time basis to sit within the bank. In 2019 in response to SEA advocacy based on CWASU's research, Lloyds implemented a policy change allowing one of the account holders to be removed without their consent from a joint account where there has been financial abuse.[S9]

A training package for money/debt advisors has also been developed in partnership with national charity Money Advice Trust and a referral pathway has been set up with the national StepChange Charity. SEA resources: Tools for Support for professionals and Tools to Thrive for survivors draw on research by Kelly et al [S7]. SEA's achievements were recognised in the 2020 Third Sector Charity awards: SEA's CEO was named Rising CEO and SEA was awarded charity partnership of the year with Money Advice Plus. Also in 2020, SEA's CEO was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Honours for services to victims of domestic and economic abuse.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

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- S1: Testimonial from former CEO, Solace Women's Aid
 - S2: Testimonial from CEO Surviving Economic Abuse
 - S3: Testimonial Manager of Change that Lasts, Women's Aid England
 - S4: Infographic from Standing Together
 - S5: Consultation response and draft Domestic Abuse Bill
 - S6: UK Finance Code of practice on financial abuse
 - S7: SEA resources: Short film 'Drowning' <https://www.endeconomicabuse.com/>; Tools for Change
 - S8: Women's Aid Change that Lasts. Training material Voices manual
 - S9: "Lloyds offers guidance to financial abuse victims" ftadviser.com
 - S10 Testimonial Standing Together