

The following information is provided to Centre for Women's Justice for use in a super-complaint about failure by police to use protective measures.

West London Rape Crisis Centre has 3 ISVAs and is part of the Women and Girls Network. The organisation also has 3 advice caseworkers who work across a range of violence against women and girls (not just domestic violence), with one of them being a specialist young women caseworker, and are part of our Advice Service which is separate to the Rape Crisis Centre. They also operate a Freephone Advice Line as part of the Advice Service and provide specialist confidential advice, information and support to women and girls who are experiencing VAWG and for professionals and family and friends who are supporting them. We also have three Young Women's Advocates as part of our young women team and work with young women who are experiencing or at risk of childhood sexual abuse / child sexual exploitation.

Below are some comments from myself in relation to our ISVA work and our Advice and Helplines manager Tal Rosenzweig in relation to the domestic violence/ sexual violence work that they do via their Advice Line and case work.

1. **Failure to arrest for breach of civil injunctions, in particular non-molestation orders, and for breach of restraining orders**

This is something that our Advice service and Advice Caseworkers often encounter, particularly in circumstances where the breach was contact from perp' which was deemed not 'threatening/abusive' by police and where previous breaches of the non-mol have been reported. Additionally, the police often do not follow up on breaches when the whereabouts of the perpetrator is unknown (e.g. if they are homeless) or when the survivor present with additional vulnerabilities.

We have experienced similar issues within our ISVA service where survivors are reporting repeated breaches of civil orders and yet the police fail to act or say there is not enough evidence. In sexual violence cases it can be very frustrating because the sexual offences team then wont deal with this issue and the survivor has to keep logging via separate officers via 101 which creates inconsistency and lack of action.

2. **Failure to utilise Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders**

Our advice service rarely see the police using DVPN or DVPO to provide safety to survivors. The police appear to advise survivors to try and obtain a civil injunction instead of accessing the resources available to them in the form of DVPOs and DVPNs. Additionally, we found that in many instances where there is a need to remove the perpetrator from the home the police are still reluctant to issue DVPNs despite it being the best tool to use at those circumstances.

We've never seen a DVPN or DVPO used in the ISVA service.

3. **Failure to apply for restraining orders at point of sentencing (whilst this involves failures on the part of the CPS also, it can result from initial failure by the police to request an order).**

Our advice service came across numerous cases where a request for a restraining order at the point of sentencing was only put forwards thanks to our caseworkers/advisors advocating for the police to request it and if it wasn't for our involvement the request for a restraining order would have not been put forward to the court.

This is likewise true for the ISVA service where this is rarely raised without prompting by the client/ISVA.

4. Failure to impose bail conditions:

- a. **Where suspects are interviewed as volunteers and not arrested, bail cannot be used;**
For the ISVA team, a huge proportion of the cases that we work on involve the perpetrators being voluntarily interviewed and so no bail conditions are imposed. If bail is used it is only in very particular circumstances and we almost never see an extension beyond 28 days.
- b. **Where suspects are interviewed under arrest, release pending further investigation without bail, or release on bail without bail conditions.**
- our advice service came across a number of cases where the perpetrator has been constantly contacting/harassing the survivor however as there were no bail conditions in place the police would not take actions to prevent the perpetrator from continuously contacting the survivor. Additionally, on a number of occasions where no specific bail conditions were in place the police told the survivor following reporting the perp' harassing her that the contact from perp' was 'not malicious or harassing in nature'

For the ISVA team, where arrests are made, many are released pending further investigation without bail. If perpetrators are bailed we very rarely see that bail being extended beyond 28 days, so often conditions are simply dropped after this time even though risks haven't necessarily changed.

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Find us on social media!

Advice Line 0808 801 0660

Open Mondays to Fridays 10am to 4pm and Wednesdays 6pm to 9pm.

Sexual Violence Helpline 0808 801 0770

Open Mondays and Fridays 10am to 12pm and 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 10am to 1pm and 6.30pm to 9pm.

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