



Press Release

Grant aid for vulnerable survivors of domestic abuse

Standing Together Against Domestic Violence has successfully raised nearly a quarter of a million pounds to benefit pregnant women and their unborn babies put at risk by abuse in homes across West London.

A Big Lottery grant will enable Standing Together to carry out a domestic violence, health and maternity project in partnership with Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust over a five year period.

The project will provide support to pregnant women experiencing domestic abuse. In addition, the project will consult with staff and patients; continue to train midwives and maternity staff, and ensure safe referral routes for women from the West London Boroughs served by that maternity service.

Pregnancy can be a time of danger for many women and their babies, and abusers isolate them from sources of support. Maternity services are used by all pregnant women so are ideally placed to offer early intervention and advice.

A survivor (confidential, name withheld) said:

'I wish someone had asked me when I was at the clinic, then I would have known that I was not alone.'

Therese Chapman Consultant Midwife, Public Health said:

'Domestic violence has been shown to start or intensify in pregnancy. And that sometimes it increases further in the postnatal period, putting babies and their mothers at serious risk of injury, or even death. The Big Lottery funding, supporting this joint project between Imperial College Healthcare Trust Maternity Services and Standing Together is a very exciting initiative that will make a real difference.'

The benefits

Early intervention in a history of domestic violence improves the chances of a better life and future for both mother and child. Women need support and specialist help with the many problems related to being abused, controlled and isolated i.e. health, housing, welfare, education, immigration and children's schools. This project will enable many survivors of domestic abuse to have a better chance to live healthier, safer, more active lives.

Midwives at Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital sampled 130 files of vulnerable cases and 1 in 3 had been identified as suffering domestic violence, without routine screening. Screening is expected to identify and offer help to many more women.

Standing Together Chief Executive, Anthony Wills said:

'We are very grateful to the Big Lottery. Their help brings hope to some of the most isolated women in our communities, at a time when so many support projects struggle for their existence. We are keen to ensure that women from minority ethnic communities really benefit from this project and that the widest definitions are used to reflect the needs of those living in the catchment area of Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital'.

Notes to editor

1. 45% of babies born at Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital are from the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF, Dr Zenner research 2009). This grant will enable them to bring

these benefits to other areas of West London served by Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and will build on their work with the health services in LBHF.

2. Domestic abuse begins (about 30% of all cases) causing an increased rate of miscarriage, low birth weight, foetal injury and ante natal death (Mezey 1997). One third of teenage mothers reported experiencing violence during their pregnancy to Bristol University researchers in 2009.

3. Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital found that 99% of women found it acceptable for a midwife to ask them about abuse, but generally only 13-20% of patients experiencing abuse are ever asked about it (Roberts 2005).

4. Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling behaviour held together by the threat and use of violence. Isolation from sources of support and advice is a primary tactic of abusers. The most abused women find it difficult to access services. Language, culture, uncertainties about immigration status or basic rights will be further barriers as are deprivation and poverty.

5. Living free of domestic violence enables women to choose to play an active role in the life of their communities which is impossible while they are living in an abusive and controlling relationship. It also frees their children of the stigma and secrecy and the resulting isolation, which results from domestic violence in the home.

About Standing Together

Standing Together believes that that domestic violence is a serious and high volume crime which no one agency can deal with effectively if acting alone. It destroys families and damages society. The facts about domestic violence are shocking and all communities, classes and ages are affected. Established in 1998, Standing Together Against Domestic Violence works with partner agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to ensure a fully coordinated response to incidents of domestic violence and to place responsibility for action with the partner agencies. We work in partnership to prevent domestic violence escalating; enable earlier intervention; provide safer options for survivors and their children and hold their abusers to account. Standing Together influences national policy and practice by initiating and driving innovation.

Ends

For further information www.standingtogether.org.uk

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Women's Aid HELP LINE NUMBER FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE: 0808 2000 247

Job Advertisement

The post of Project Coordinator has been advertised for appointment in November 2010. The Job Pack can be viewed on www.standingtogether.org.uk



LOTTERY FUNDED