

# **DEAFHOPE** **FROM** **SIGNHEALTH**

University of Lancaster

Specialist domestic abuse service for Deaf people  
and children

# Deaf people in Society

- There are 87,000 people who are Deaf, whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL) in the UK
- Deaf people are in a *cultural linguistic minority*. We are united in our life experiences and in our language. We have our own community.
- This is what makes being Deaf different from other disabilities.
- Deaf people have their own culture, which is different to yours; and we call you 'hearing'.

# Deaf women compared to Hearing women

- Deaf women are twice as likely to go through domestic violence than hearing women.
- There are no other DV services for Deaf women in the UK. Hearing women have 100s of organisations where help is available
- Most DV services are accessible only by telephone helplines which Deaf women can't access

# Mainstream services dealing with a deaf person



# Barriers?

- Communication barriers
- Services lack awareness about Deaf people and cultural differences
- Lack understanding of competency in hearing Sign Language users (Level 1,2,3,4,6 and interpreter level)
- No awareness how to book BSL interpreters
- Not understanding Deaf person's needs
- Only 1000 registered interpreters in the UK to support 87,000 Deaf people. Most interpreters are not specialists in DV.

# Deaf person when accessing deaf services



# Our team

**Small team of 8 : 1 hearing, 7 Deaf**

Service Manager (also IDVA)

Deaf Hope Admin/Coordinator

3 Deaf IDVA workers

1 Children and Families worker

2 Young Deaf Hope Prevention Officers

*All fluent in BSL and can use International Sign*

## Why Deaf people need our service

- There are no barriers for a Deaf person asking us for support. We all use sign language and have access to interpreters when consulting with other professionals.
- We already understand the ‘Deaf perspective’ and cultural needs.
- We make sure interpreters are booked for them, taking pressure off them.
- If you meet someone with similar life experiences (i.e. being Deaf) the relief can be immense.



# Why specialist services are needed?

- Around 80% of Deaf referrals for specialist counselling have experienced domestic abuse
- 2:4 Deaf and disabled women at risk of DV  
*Making the Links report 2009 Women's Aid*
- 90% of Deaf people have non-deaf (hearing) parents. Most parents do not communicate with their children.



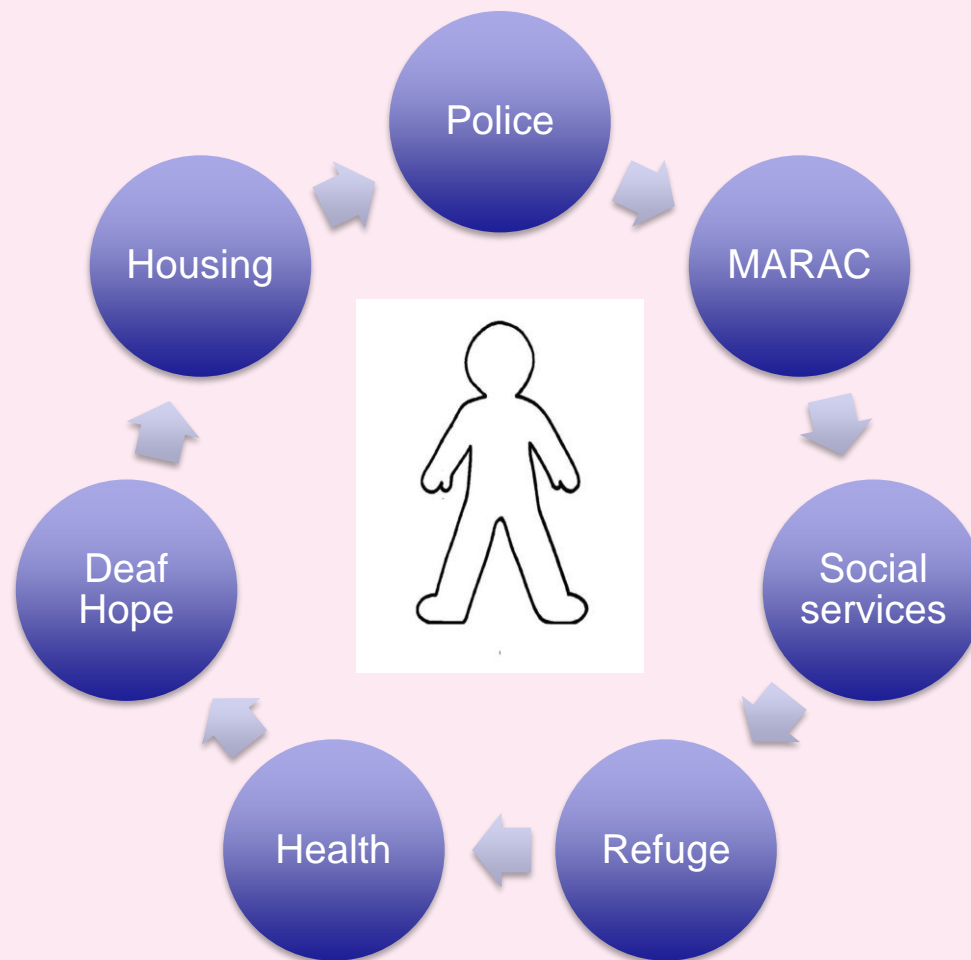
# Deaf Community issues - risks

- Communication barriers with mainstream services prevent Deaf people from disclosing abuse
- Lack of awareness about what Domestic Abuse is amongst Deaf Community
- Changes in tradition – Deaf people used to socialise much more at specific clubs but now the community is more of a diaspora, and we have seen more internet dating.
- Higher risk of Forced Marriage and Honor Based Violence – including Deaf LGBT

# Deaf Community issues - risks

- Hearing perpetrators use power and control, and also use a person's deafness as another way of abusing them
- Deaf perpetrators behaviour can be due to witnessing/experiencing domestic abuse in childhood and believing this to be normal behaviour.
- Lack of appropriate education for Deaf young people leads to lack of awareness of acceptable/unacceptable behaviour
- Deaf perpetrators will use their Deafness as an excuse to avoid prosecution. Court cases often dropped due to no interpreters.

# Client Centred – Multi Agency Approach



# How can you show best practice?

- Always check the preferred method of communication from the deaf person. (D/deaf, oral, lipspeaker, BSL interpreter, Deaf relay, speech to text etc)
- Always book a BSL Interpreter for ANY meetings with Deaf people. Use [www.NRCPD.org.uk](http://www.NRCPD.org.uk) to find a local qualified interpreter in your area.
- Go on a basic Deaf Awareness course. (but still book an interpreter!)
- Make your service accessible (text to contact etc)
- Learn some sign language (but still book an interpreter!)

# For more information

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