

Case Study

Research Theme: Society

Supporting Victim-Survivors of Domestic Violence and Abuse in Later Life



RESEARCHERS

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THE OVERVIEW

Research produced by Dewis Choice, an initiative run by Aberystwyth University, challenged previous responses to Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) which assumed gendered violence only occurs in women under 45 years old. The Dewis Choice Initiative improved access to justice and wellbeing for older victim-survivors of DVA across Wales, through the delivery of a unique co-produced service integrating justice and wellbeing, which safeguarded older victim-survivors; informed more effective provision and delivery of public services for older victim-survivors of DVA across the UK; and informed national guidance and campaigns within Wales on the protection and safeguarding of older people.



THE CHALLENGE

Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) occurring in later life sits under the umbrella term 'elder abuse' which serves to marginalise older victim-survivors. Research by Dewis Choice shows the discourse in this context can be ageist and sexist, contributing towards discriminatory responses by professionals.

It highlights the importance of framing the significant harms as DVA, not elder abuse, to ensure equality of opportunity, access to justice and improved quality of life for people aged 60 years and over.

THE SOLUTION

Dewis Choice, a groundbreaking initiative based in the Centre for Age Gender and Social Justice at Aberystwyth University, led by Sarah Wydall since 2018, is the first dedicated service in the UK for older people who have experienced DVA. The service provides client-led informed choice during all stages of the help-seeking and justice-seeking journey, during crisis incidents, safety planning and recovery.

The Dewis Choice Initiative has produced a grassroots intervention that has been designed by the community specifically to support older victim-survivors of DVA make informed choices about justice including civil, criminal and restorative and to ensure they are not treated differently on account of age, gender, sexuality or disability. The research is also the first of its kind to conduct a prospective longitudinal study examining decision-making in the context of DVA in later life.



“ [Dewis Choice is] changing the world and making a real difference...I personally value what you are doing to transform older people’s lives and it’s probably no exaggeration to say to save lives as well. ”

**OLDER PEOPLE’S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES
 FEBRUARY 2020**

THE IMPACT

ON THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF PEOPLE

Dewis Choice provides a unique service across Wales, as the only route for older people experiencing Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA). This addresses gaps in DVA services, and improves justice-seeking responses, which reduces the risk of DVA and future harm, and changes and enhances the lives of the older victim-survivors supported.

ON PRACTITIONERS AND DELIVERY OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Dewis Choice informed more effective provision and delivery of public services for older victim-survivors of DVA across the UK.

ON PUBLIC POLICY, LAW, AND SERVICES

Dewis Choice contributed to Welsh Government committees, documents, and campaigns. Informing guidance and practice to help protect older people from DVA.