# Taking Action: Violence Against women

## Domestic Violence

#### What do you think ‘HOME’ means?

#### What do you tihink ‘domestic violence’ means?

#### Name 6 things that you think could be classed as ‘domestic violence’

### esther morgan (poet)

#### Read the 2 poems below written by Esther

##### House Rules Imperative

They are absolute. This morning don’t go down to the kitchen

They are mandarin. in bare feet. Put on your gardening gloves,

Sometimes merely folding a sheet Fetch the dustpan and brush from the cellar

or making a bed and sweep these pieces up quickly but carefully,

is to break them. making sure you get every last sliver

For instance there’s a right way from the darkest corners of the room

and a wrong way (later they may be held against you).

to clear up this mess – Wrap the fragments in newspaper

the spattered walls, so no one cuts themselves.

the tongues of broken china. Put back the dustpan and brush, the gloves’

Which is which? upturned, amputated hands.

You spend the evening trying to guess Make yourself a cup of tea

as you wait for his verdict, with six sugars and a nip of whisky

hands resting on the table Stop shaking – he’ll be down soon –

like meat thawing for dinner. Tonight he addresses your flesh heavy footsteps above your head, thudding Look what you made me do he says down stairs.

as a flight of stairs Stop shaking I said. Swallow this note.

throws you full length,

a door walks into your face.

### Answer the following questions about Esthers Poems

#### How her vivid picture of the situation and atmosphere is created.

#### Are there words or phrases that are particularly effective?

#### Is it possible that the woman ‘talking’ in the poem will ever be able to escape?

### INFORMATION SHEET: MEN BEHAVING BADLY (SUE lEES)

#### Read the information below

In a survey into domestic violence, abused women reported that what they had suffered was systematic, deliberate, and at the extreme, life threatening. So what had led up to the violence? There is a common assumption about a man who hits his wife: he must have been provoked by her unreasonable behaviour. But the abused women in the survey, reported that any annoyance could lead to a beating:

• ‘A really silly example that led into a beating: I’d made sausage casserole and I hadn’t put dumplings in it…’

• ‘I made a cup of tea and put maybe half a sugar too much in.’

• ‘I cooked too many potatoes for dinner.’

• ‘His dinner wasn’t ready on time.’

• ‘There wasn’t enough butter on his toast.’

• ‘Tins in the cupboard all had to be like perfect. If there was one tin just not turned facing frontwards, the whole lot would come out.’

• ‘His bath hadn’t been the right temperature.’

• ‘Whatever way I went I couldn’t win. I knew that I was going to get it. Really I should have just stood there and hit myself. It would have been easier.’

One woman explained how the control that the abuser exercised gradually increased until: You spend your whole time desperately trying to keep them happy.

*‘What would you like for dinner darling? Which shirt would you like to wear tomorrow darling? No of course I won’t do that darling. Yes of course I’ll do that for you darling... You’re just walking on eggshells the whole time... Trying not to give them an ‘excuse’ to be violent. Though of course, they don’t really need an excuse. If you’ve ironing their jeans the ‘wrong’ way, they’ll hit you.*

Women all complained about how the assailants had restricted their activity. At first the attention women received had been flattering. Women in the survey wanted to make clear that the men nevertheless appeared to be quite normal. Tanya, who almost died from the violence, explained how her ex-husband was initially ‘charming, he had a good sense of humour. I just expected it to be a happy relationship because I’d never experienced violence before’. He seemed over-attentive from the beginning – meeting her for lunch, from work, rarely letting her out of his sight. ‘I can see clearly now, but at the time, I wanted someone to love and someone who loved me. And my daughters were delighted to have a new loving daddy.’ Barely a year into their marriage ‘he would unplug the phone, lock the doors, send the children out and I knew I would be a punch bag. Sometimes I would hit myself, saying “Here, I’ll do it for you”. I had become nothing.’ It was five years before Tanya finally left and went into hiding. Her eldest daughter suffered terrible nightmares and tried to commit suicide by leaping from the bedroom window. Two years on they are coming out of therapy. Many other witnesses had assumed that their new boyfriend was very much in love with them, and were horrified when attention turned into unreasonable jealousy and increasing control, leading to their isolation from friends and family:

• ‘I wasn’t allowed to talk to my parents – I couldn’t see my parents.’

• ‘I wasn’t allowed to talk to my family. I wasn’t allowed to talk to my friends.’

• ‘Even talking to my neighbour across the garden was wrong.’

• ‘I wasn’t allowed out of his sight.’

Extract from ‘Television Research and Domestic Violence’ by Sue Lees who researched domestic violence for the Dispatches Channel 4 documentary, Men Behaving Badly, 1998 www.bunker8.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/Sue/tvdv.htm

### Answer the follwing questions about the text above

#### Why may women find it difficult to leave?

#### Find out about UK legislation relating to domestic violence and any initiatives in your area (eg by the police) to tackle domestic violence (find at least 3)

#### Can you find any perpetrator programmes designed to help men who are violent to change their behaviour and develop respectful, non-abusive RELATIONSHIPS?

## the facts

### read the following passage

In 1998 the Zero Tolerance Trust conducted a major research study into young people’s attitudes to violence, sex and relationships. Over 2,000 young people aged 14-21 from Scotland (Glasgow and Fife) and England (Manchester) were asked their opinions.

• Half the boys and a third of the girls in the study said that it was acceptable for a woman to be hit in certain circumstances (eg if she nagged).

• Both boys and girls considered forced sex to be more acceptable than hitting a woman.

• More than half of those interviewed thought that women provoked male violence in a number of ways (eg by the way they dress, by flirting).

• Over half of those questioned knew someone who had been hit by their male partner.

• Exactly half the sample knew some-one who had been sexually assaulted.

#### what do you think about these findings?

#### where do you think young people learn about these attitudes?

#### what steps do you think need to change to change these attitudes?

## OPINION POLL

### Create some questions to ask those in your own or another class

Carry out your own small scale survey among a sample of young people of your age, perhaps in another class in their school, to check out attitudes to aspects of gender and violence. The survey should be strictly anonymous. Research into images and messages Groups investigate how men and women are portrayed to the public through the media, how they behave and how they relate to each other

Groups report their findings back to the class and explain how people of different genders were being portrayed in their area of investigation.

#### What were your key findings?

#### Were these responses expected? Why?