

## **Fifth of all domestic violence victims are men**

MORE than a fifth of all victims of domestic violence in North Yorkshire are men, The Press can reveal.

New figures show 420 - or 21 percent - of the 1,992 incidents of domestic violence reported between April 2006 and January this year, the victims were male.

The number of male victims appears to be on the increase - with 425 incidents against men reported all year during 2005 and 344 in 2004.

PC Phil Arnold, domestic violence co-ordinator for North Yorkshire Police, said: "There is a hidden population who won't report it until it becomes very serious or we become involved."



PC Phil Arnold

He said victims - both male and female - were often reluctant to pursue a prosecution even though court orders could help offenders tackle their behaviour, such as through anger management and alcohol abuse problems.

In the same 10-month period, police arrested 597 people in connection with reports of domestic abuse, but in more than a third of those cases - 222 - the victim declined to prosecute.

"Sometimes that's because of pressure from the offender, family considerations, loss of income or fear of social stigma," PC Arnold said.

The figures come after The Press told how a pensioner who stabbed her husband of 52 years with a carving knife was jailed for three years.

Seventy-six-year-old Doris Aspinal attacked her life-long companion John, 77, with a nine-inch-knife at their home in Ripon after suffering a "sudden burst of temper" at his lack of interest in her.

York Crown Court heard last month how the respected housewife attacked her husband with a knife on two separate occasions after becoming depressed about the amount of time he spent in the local working men's club.

Mark Brooks, of men's charity Mankind, which offers help and support for male victims of domestic abuse, said that social stigma can make it even harder for male victims of domestic abuse to come forward than for female victims.

He said: "Male victims of domestic violence are probably the most forgotten victims of crime in this country. There are probably many more cases than those which are reported, a greater proportion of which are likely to be men.

"If you compare the number of refuges for female victims there are about 400, and yes, there should probably be more, but for men there are only about four in the whole country."

They are all in the South of England, despite the high proportion of male victims in North Yorkshire.

He said: "It's very difficult for male victims of domestic violence to get support and it is an issue that is basically swept under the carpet.

Figures from the British Crime Survey show that just under a fifth of domestic violence victims nationally are men, and just over half of their abusers are female.

The number of female victims is also increasing. In North Yorkshire there were 1,442 female victims of reported incidents of domestic violence during 2005, but in the first ten months of 2006-2007 that had already increased to 1,572.

### **"When she left marks I had to say the cat had scratched me"**

Alan, 34, suffered almost six years of domestic violence at the hands of his partner, who he lived with in North Yorkshire.

He was married to his wife for two years and they were together for six years in total.

He said: "It started out with her screaming at me all the time. She would lash out at me during arguments. When she left marks I had to tell colleagues the cat had scratched me again. Really it was my wife, but how could I tell them that? It's not something that you can just drop into the conversation?"

"She used to bully me, made me feel small. It wasn't a one off - it started to happen more and more often until it was continuous, almost every day.

"In the end it just wore me down."

The final straw came when his wife hit him with a piece of wood, and he plucked up the courage to leave.

At first he received abusive phone calls but they eventually stopped.

He never reported the abuse to police.

"I don't think I ever even considered that as an option at the time," he said. "I didn't really want to admit what was happening, not even to myself.

"I still don't really feel comfortable talking about it."

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