



**‘It’s ruined me being a mother’  
MOTHERS’ EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE BY THEIR ADULT  
CHILDREN**

**Cambridgeshire DASV Champions Meeting**

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# AN 'INVISIBLE' PROBLEM?

**Domestic Abuse** : Focus on intimate partners

**Child to parent abuse** : Focus on adolescents

**Elder abuse** : Focus on older people



'dichotomies and disjoints'  
(Bows, 2018)



# WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Limited or unavailable data:

Home Office Homicide Index

46/357 (12.8% of all domestic homicides)

Local specialist domestic abuse court data

Standing Together (2020)

Crime survey estimates

Crime Survey for England and Wales

Local police data

Reported DA incidents

Older people's experiences of domestic abuse

Domestic homicides and domestic homicide reviews



# MY RESEARCH

Explored experiences of mothers who had been or were being abused by their now adult children:

*Dynamics of abuse*

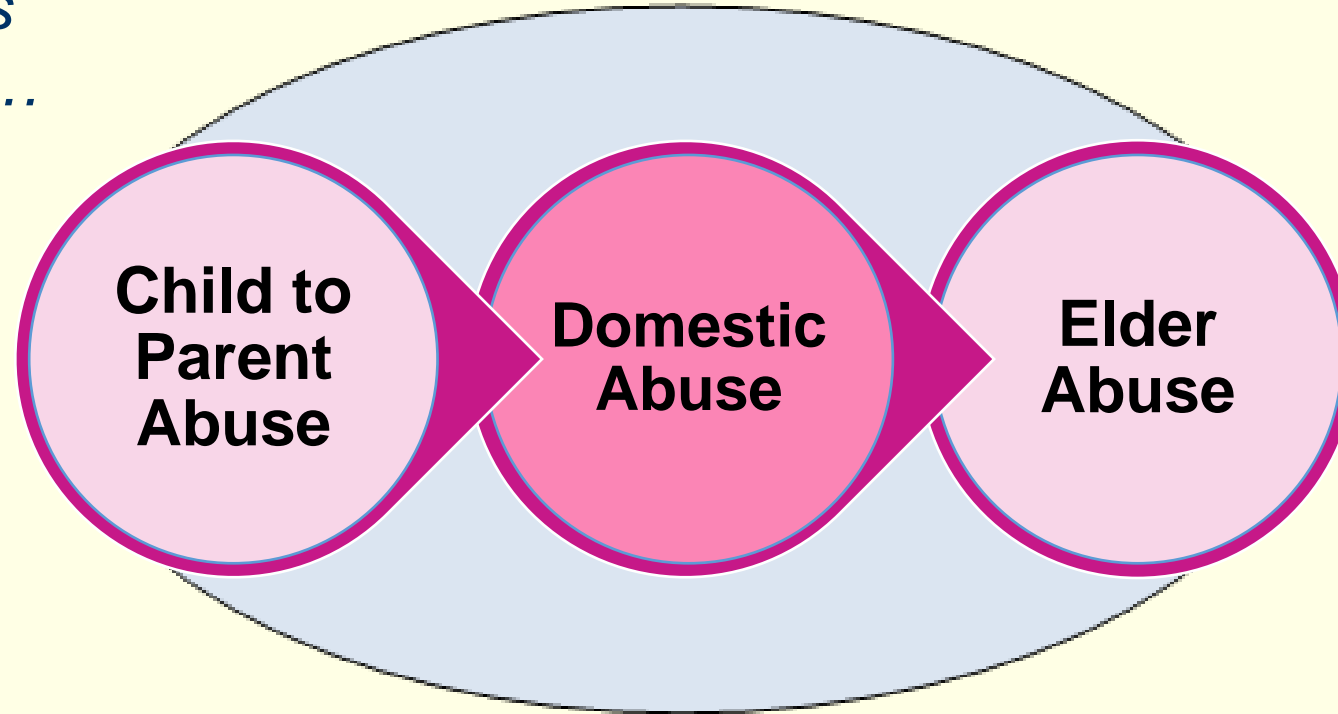
*Factors which influence mothers' help-seeking and access to support (including additional barriers), and their perceptions of effective support*

*How mothers make sense of the abuse and their relationships*



# CHILD TO PARENT ABUSE OVER THE LIFE COURSE

*It's just always  
been like that ...  
All the way  
along, all the  
way along ...*



*Well, got elder  
abuse to look  
forward to, you  
know! I mean, I'm  
confidently  
expecting that one!*

*(Mercy)*



'Everyday misery' (Mercy)

Coercive  
control

*He wants me to himself, and that way he can abuse me, he can be violent with me, he can control me (Lizzy)*

Verbal  
aggression

*He'll be expecting me to drive him to work whilst calling me stupid fucking cunt and shouting and threatening (Mercy)*

Intimidation

*He was getting knives from the drawer and threatening me with knives, and he'd done that a few times (Joan)*



Criminal  
damage /  
Attacks  
against the  
home

*breaking stuff, slamming  
doors, pulling doors off  
hinges, just smashing  
mirrors, anything, anything at  
all ... I've sort of given up [on  
the house] because she  
smashes and breaks  
everything (Clara)*

Physical  
violence

*She would have  
me up against  
the wall by my  
throat (Kate)*

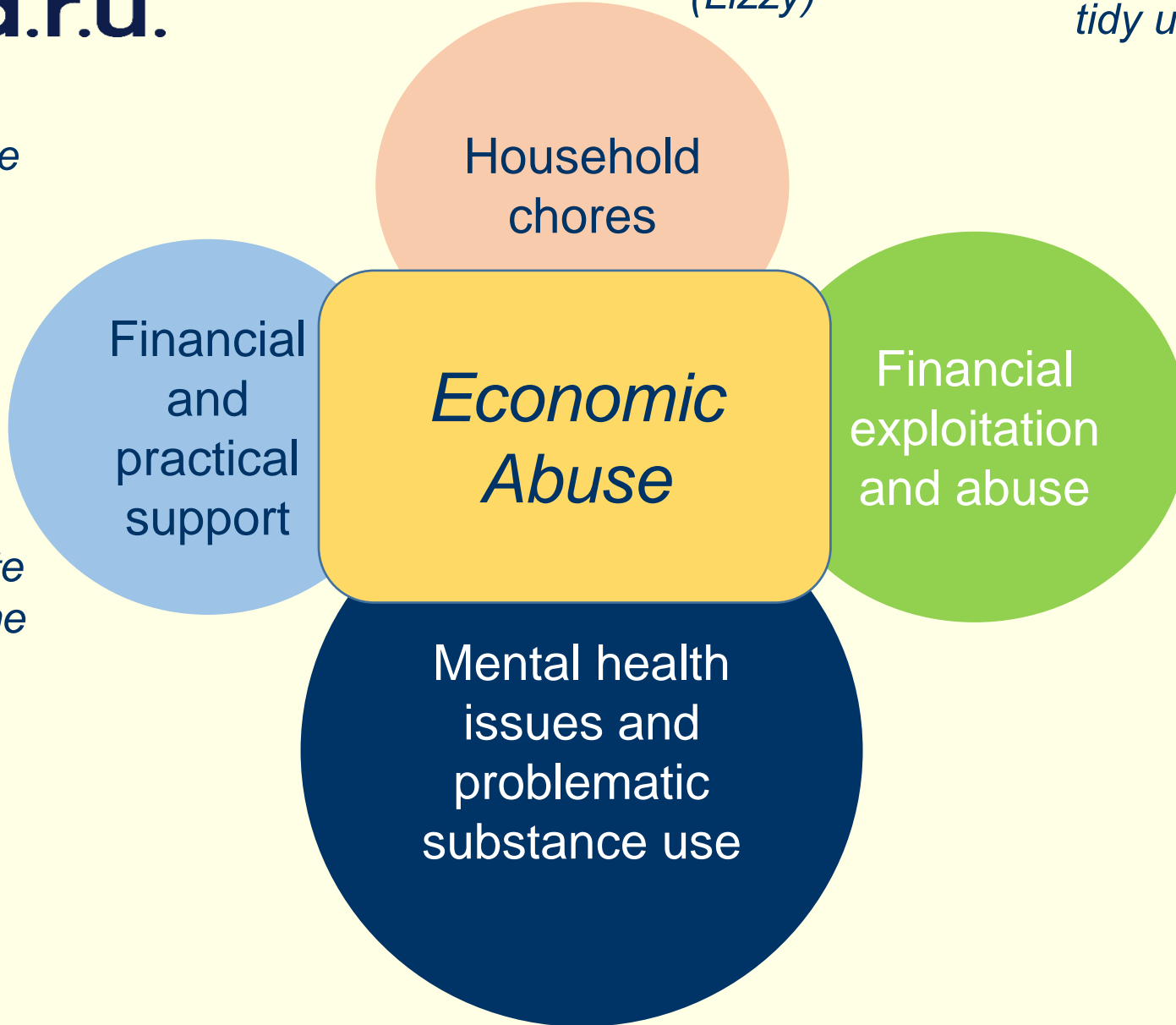
*She's sort of gone after me with a big bit of wood  
before and smashed through the bathroom door to  
get to me (Kate)*



*[He does] nothing,  
absolutely nothing!  
(Lizzy)*

*And the cleaning! I clean and  
tidy up, and after an hour, it's all  
messy (Alexandra)*

*... every time she  
runs out of  
money, every  
time she has an  
argument with  
someone, every  
time she would  
go out and then  
not plan her route  
home and call me  
at two o'clock in  
the morning ...  
you know, every  
single thing ...  
(Kate)*



*he was literally draining  
me, you know. I got  
myself into so much  
debt, I had a credit card,  
and I used the credit  
card a lot, but it was  
mainly for foods and  
stuff like that, because I  
couldn't keep on going  
(Joan)*





Dismissal or  
indifference

Lack of  
awareness /  
understanding

Mother-  
blame

*Invisibility*

*I went to the doctors repeatedly. No one did anything, no one said anything, I tried finding social services, [I remember the woman saying to me: 'You're her mother, do your job], there was no advice, there was no support ... There was nothing (Kate)*

*'It's up to you, they say (Alexandra)*

*I went down to [Service] and I said, "So, what are you guys doing?" "No, it's private." "Now, **it's private for you, but not for me, because he lives at my place** and I get to see everything, and I don't know what you guys are working on that I could be working on with him, too. [...]  
*What is the problem to be talking to us? (Ilse)**



# WHAT WORKS? MOTHERS' WISH LIST

Awareness

*People understanding the dynamic of this and how difficult it is, and support and guidance for the parents, so knowing somewhere to go (Kate)*

Ask  
Validate  
Act

*I actually went to the doctor and told her what was happening, and that then started the ball rolling. She was the first person I told! I hadn't told anybody else up until then! (Stella)*

Trauma-  
informed

*I honestly think they should try and find what the trauma is, that should be their very first thing before they start doing any drink tests, drug tests ... I think if somebody just spared time with Andy and asked a few of these questions, I think you'd get a lot out of Andy (Lizzy)*



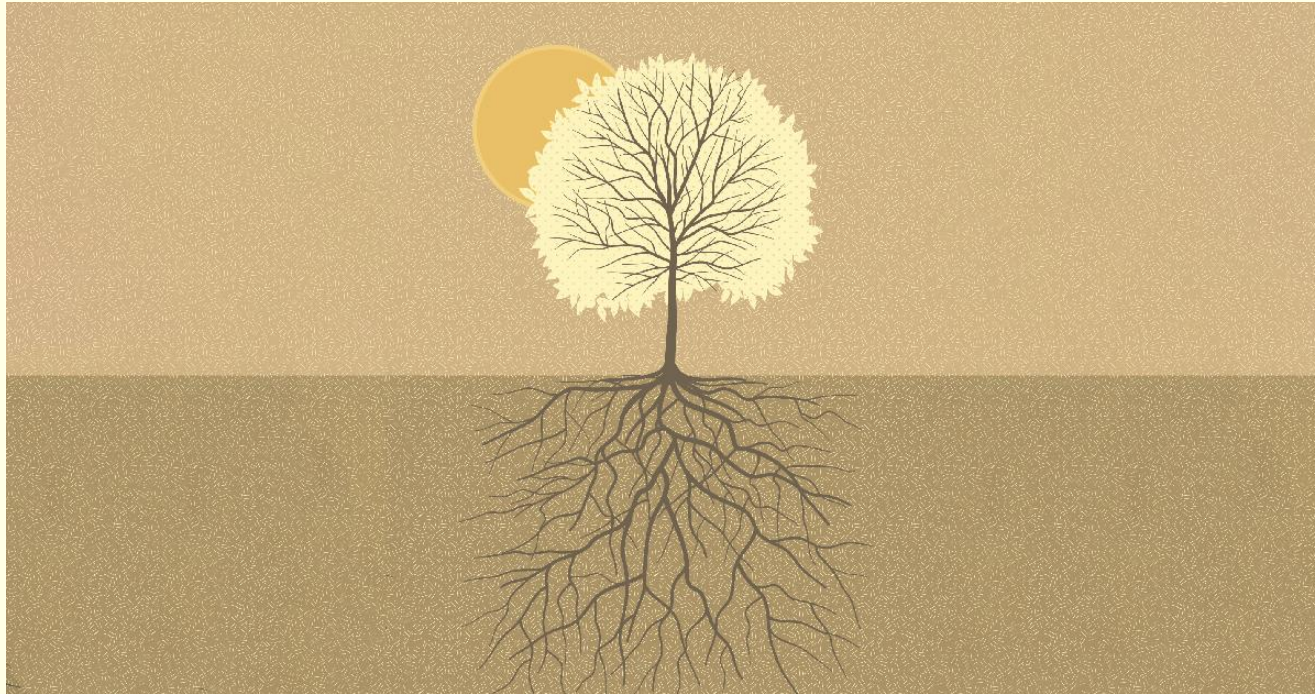
## WISH LIST CONTINUED

Communication  
& Consultation

*They do not need to deal with me because he's an adult. But he is an adult living at my place. I see him 24/7. You don't. We are the only ones that support the ones that are in trouble (Ilse)*

Long-term and  
flexible

*[IDVA Service] still called me for- if I needed some other type of support, which I said "I don't know!" because if I didn't, they would close the file. And of course I am afraid of closing any files on the situation that we have. But we ended up closing the file (Ilse)*



*I've never asked for anything, I never wanted anything, what I wanted was a fresh start for us to be safe. But [...] we've done all this stuff, he's done nothing, he just walked away, just **threw a grenade into the life of all these people and walked away***  
(Kate)

‘Society needs to deal with the **root cause**, not the symptoms’



Violence Against Women

Adult Safeguarding

Child to Parent Abuse

Intimate Partner Abuse

Elder Abuse

Child Protection

Awareness raising and training

Specialist support for parents/mothers (alongside domestic abuse services)

Gender-informed understanding, service provision, and coordinated community response



Thank you for listening!

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