

RCFV - ANONYMOUS

I am the perpetrator of family violence. I was charged after hitting my ex-partner in the mouth. What makes my story unusual, and thus potentially useful to this enquiry, is that I am female and I was violent to my male partner. I also have other comments around the family violence that was targeted at me by the same person.

My recommendations to the commission relate to Q8, Q9 & Q17:

- Family violence must be tackled as a whole family – not just the immediate perpetrator. There are doubtless many cases in which the woman (or other family member) is in grave danger, however there would be at least as many more where the family dynamic is such that the relationship becomes toxic and the figure cannot be pointed at any one individual over another. The whole thing must be in context.

Although I was a perpetrator, hitting my partner in the mouth, I was also the subject of psychological and verbal abuse, as well as having him break and damage my property and personal items on a regular basis. I thus think it is unfair that the hit in the mouth brought me to the attention of police and subsequently to court, whereas none of the incidents perpetrated against me did – these were all part of an ongoing dysfunctional relationship; it was not a simple one off domestic violence incident.

- When an incident is taken out of context in this way, it can lead to unfair outcomes. I was charged with recklessly causing injury for 2 of the 3 accusations that my ex-partner made about me - two of these were entirely fabricated by him. None of what he did was of interest to police (maybe because it did not result in a physical injury?) and my solicitor advised it wasn't worth perusing it in court as the magistrate would likely view it as a tit-for-tat charge as he was charging me.

In this case I consider that using the court and having me charged was just another way he could inflict pain on me – after he had wrecked my home (see below) he was able to have me charged and got off completely free from the things he had done to me and my son. His still hurts after a decade – but it also really makes me feel for other (especially men) who might also be in this situation. Using the court system as a psychological weapon cannot be underestimated, and checks and balances must be put in place to ensure it cannot be used in this way.

Also, there needs to be transparency around police and court cases. I'll never know exactly why my ex-partner was believed when he made up stories to the police about how I had injured him, but why the police did not see the violence against me as significant. (The fact that the remaining false charge against me was dropped when a different officer took over the case, shows that it was not a credible story – given the gaps and inconsistencies in the story, I cannot see why the first officer took it seriously in the first place).

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- When investigating cases of family violence, it should be the family violence, and only the family violence that is being investigated. Other issues surrounding the family situation can make vulnerable people unwilling to get help. For instance in my situation, a previous incident where my partner was unacceptably, although not physically, violent I felt unable to call the police as my son and I were living illegally on our [REDACTED] (as the house was still under construction), and I was scared that they would inform the council. On a later occasion, my fears proved to be correct. On this subsequent occasion, my partner was smashing fish tanks in our living area, breaking crockery and generally trashing the place – I was in fear of my son's and my own safety. I called 000 and left the [REDACTED] for the evening. Police did not attend that evening (I was told later that they had transcribed my phone number and street number wrong), but came to the [REDACTED] the following day after I made a follow-up call to the station. A couple of days later the council arrived to tell me I could not stay on my own [REDACTED] as I didn't have a permit – the police had reported us (ironically as my partner had dumped the contents of a [REDACTED] potty onto my bed, the police stated there were 'hygiene issues' with our living arrangements and that this was the reason for calling the council).
I regret calling the police as, 1. They were no help in the immediate crisis and 2. It subsequently meant my son & I were homeless as well as having to deal with the emotional fallout from our experience.
- As a professionally trained [REDACTED], I would also like to add that in considering the situations of those in domestic violence situations that pair bonding, as a physiological phenomenon is a very big factor. Out pair-bonding instinct is as likely to keep us in a toxic relationship as emotional or economic manipulation.