

CASE STUDY 2

names have been changed

Mary

Mary is from an Irish travelling family and is married but currently living apart from another traveller. Her children are all grown up and settled. She lives on a caravan site.

She has suffered from terrible domestic abuse; the police have been involved on several occasions.

- *She is put in touch with her local domestic violence outreach worker for support by the police after they were called to a domestic incident at the site.*
- *She fears for her life, but is also worried about police involvement and the effects it will have on her and members of her immediate family.*
- *She wants to leave, but fears that her mother, who also lives on the site will be ostracized by other members of the community.*

Mary has a good relationship with the (female) domestic violence (DV) outreach worker, but wants to tell her information without it going any further. She also has a good relationship with the (female) police domestic violence officer. The DV outreach worker also fears for Mary's safety if she remains living on the site, near to her husband.

Whilst out one day, Mary's husband follows her and chases her vehicle at

some speed on the motorway across two counties, threatening to kill her. Mary fears for her life. Speeds reach in excess of 100 mph

Traffic police from the county Mary does not live in stop Mary's husband's vehicle. Mary stops on the motorway nearby.

Police go to speak to Mary's husband; they then go to talk to Mary. Mary hopes that her husband will be arrested for breaking the speed limit so that she can get away safely.

Police then go to talk to Mary. They say to her 'I hear that you are a travelling woman. You'll be back with him tomorrow.'

Mary loses all confidence that the police are there to assist her. She phones the DV outreach worker and tells her she wants no further contact. She feels let down.

Issue – Police have made an assumption and a judgement about travelling families and domestic abuse. There is a general lack of knowledge about travelling families' way of life.

Travelling women are not sure how to seek assistance from outreach services because of a general fear of being judged. The gorja (non-gypsy) world feel that travelling women 'are used' to domestic violence, so put up with it.