

# Spirit and Solace: Black Churches and Domestic Abuse

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# Black Majority Churches

- Any denomination where congregants are mostly people of African or Caribbean heritage.
  - More than 100-year history, from their origins in Southwark in 1906 (Adedibe, 2013).
  - Over 500,000 in membership Brierley (2020).
  - Essential as spaces of safety, solace, education, employment and immigration support, fellowship, family, belonging and spiritual uplift (Adedibe, 2013; Cappel, 2016).
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# Domestic abuse in churches

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Domestic abuse occurs 'in churches too', similar to, or higher in prevalence as in wider community studies (Aune & Barnes, 2018; Nason-Clark et al., 2018).

Poor responses from churches and church leaders is a common finding. However, church leaders and churches can play a more prominent role in the community coordinated responses to domestic abuse (Aune & Barnes, 2018; Baird & Gleeson, 2018; Radford & Cappel, 2002).

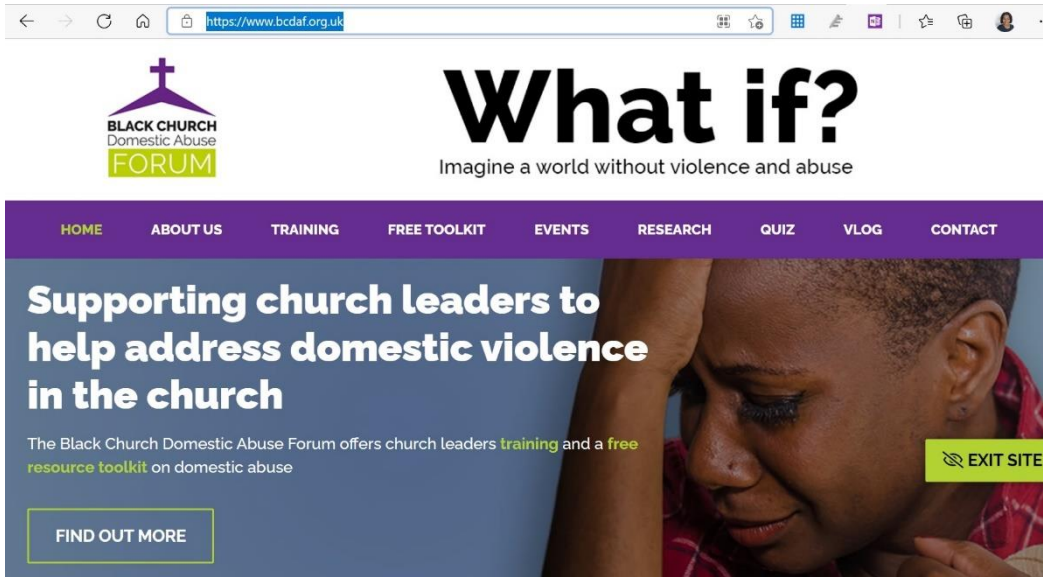
VAWG studies tend to only include faith when sample is minoritised, but faith is important for women from all backgrounds who encounter added pressures to stay with abusive spouse/partner and can experience spiritual abuse (Abhrams, Aghatie & Mulhivill, 2018).

# Studies with Black Majority Churches

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- Social justice, racialised gendered protection and male headship supersedes protection of female victim survivors of domestic abuse, may protect or conceal abusers (Bent-Goodley & Brade Stennis, 2015; Gillum, 2008; Potter, 2007; Richard, 2017).
- Church leaders underestimate the extent of domestic abuse in their churches yet wish to be more effective in responses (Richard, 2017 Williams & Jenkins, 2019) and require ongoing support to respond to congregants reporting domestic abuse (Drumm et al., 2018).
- Victim-survivors unwilling to seek further support, or ignored, church leaders lack skills and seniority to provide an effective response (Chisale, 2018; Nevutanda, 2019).
- Male headship (Adedibe, 2013; Cappel, 2016) sets domestic abuse at a lower priority
- ‘Bulimic responses’ of congregants who feel less entitled to seek support (Cappel, 2016).

# BLACK CHURCH DOMESTIC ABUSE FORUM



[www.bcdaf.org.uk](https://www.bcdaf.org.uk)


A group of concerned practitioners, theologians, academics, church leaders, lawyer, journalist, victim/survivors.

Convened in 2016 to provide resources for church leaders to better respond to reports of domestic abuse.

Now developed to work more closely with churches to build relationships with support services to better support women.

Co-production and empowerment framework.

Successfully launched in January 2021.



**Race, Culture, and Gender**

*Black Female Experiences of Violence and Abuse*

Ava Kanyeredzi

# Ava's route into BCDAF

Research with African and Caribbean heritage women  
(Kanyeredzi, 2014; 2018)

- Women shared their faith, the spirit, God as part of what kept them going, gave them solace, important
- Spaces where they could cry without feeling judged
- Provided food, shelter, social support for women abused in childhood
- Comfort that they would make it through adverse times
- For some, in churches, abuse was visible or 'seen'
- Mixed source of support as can be gossipy, abusers 'not seen'.



# Toolkit for training Church Leaders



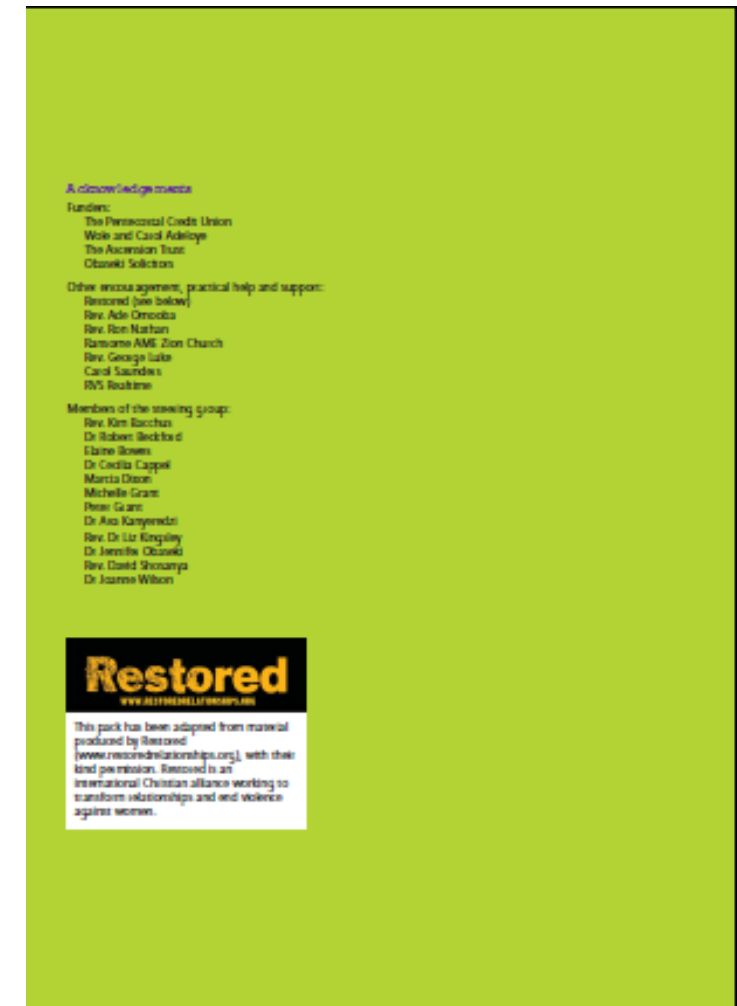
**BLACK CHURCH**  
Domestic Abuse  
**FORUM**

## Walk in the way of love

Ending domestic abuse in black majority churches in the UK

Click to add text

A resource toolkit from the Black Church Domestic Abuse Forum



**Restored**  
www.restoredrelationships.org

This pack has been adapted from material produced by Restored ([www.restoredrelationships.org](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)) with their kind permission. Restored is an international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women.

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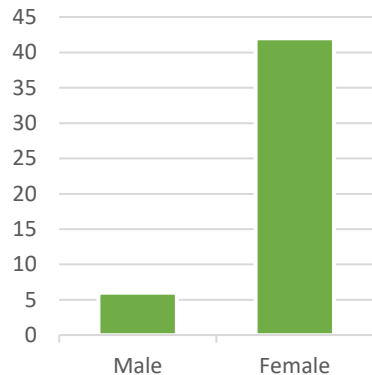
**Members of the steering group:**  
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Dr Robert Beckford  
Elaine Brown  
Dr Cecilia Cappel  
Marisa Dixon  
Michelle Gram  
Peter Grant  
Dr Ayo Kanyemebi  
Rev. Dr Liz Kingdley  
Dr Jennifer Okunleji  
Rev. David Shonuga  
Dr Joanne Wilson

# Before/After training questionnaire on knowledge of domestic abuse, and effective responses.

Attendees: 32 people, married, fulltime/self-employed.

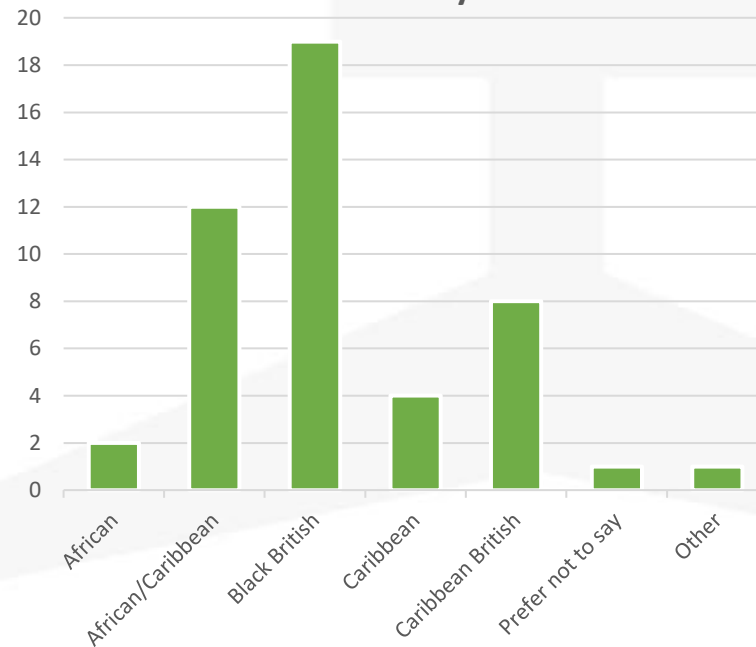


Gender



Knew a lot about domestic abuse.

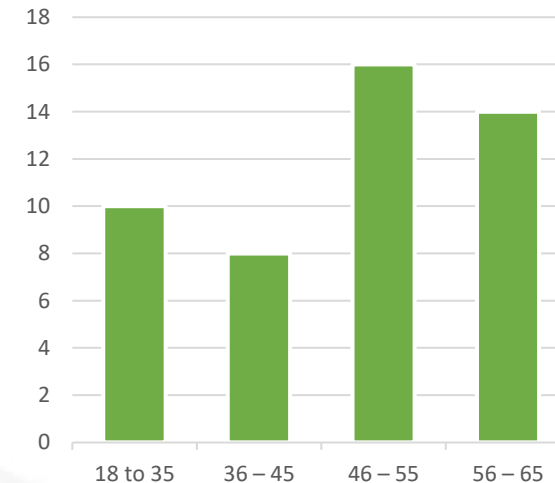
Ethnicity



Knew less about the UK legal framework and causes of domestic abuse.

Covid-19 pandemic increased church leaders' awareness of domestic abuse in their congregations.

Age Range



After training, more effective responses to domestic abuse.

We carried out follow-up sessions with churches on creating a 'domestic abuse responsive church'.



# Study with church leaders and congregants

Mixed methods, participatory with stakeholder steering committee

- Online questionnaire on awareness, experience, reporting and responses to Domestic Abuse
- Focus groups with church leaders who have supported congregants
- Interviews with churchgoers who have reported or supported fellow congregants

Outputs

- Guide for church leaders on responding to domestic abuse
- Guide for practitioners on working with Black Majority Churches and victim-survivors.

[www.spiritandsolace.com](http://www.spiritandsolace.com)

Spirit and Solace Research

## Black Majority Churches and Domestic Abuse study





Progress so far...

Survey is live and steadily increasing responses, hoping for 1000 respondents.

Recruitment of participants for 20 individual interviews and 5 focus groups with church leaders (up to 25 in total) underway.

Recruiting a research assistant for study.

<https://tinyurl.com/DomesticAbuseBMC>



Thank You!



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