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**Media Release**

## **Victims of domestic violence get help at RUH**

On International Violence Against Women Day, figures released today by the RUH show there has been a year on year increase in victims of domestic abuse accessing support through the hospital.

The ‘Patience Project’ is a partnership between the RUH and Southside, a Bath charity which gives support to families, which sees women who are living with domestic abuse and attending the Emergency Department offered specialist support.

Last year 97 women were referred by the Emergency Department to Southside, but there have already been 101 referrals so far this year. A further 57 women initially declined to be referred this year, but later approached Southside directly.

Southside provides the hospital with an independent domestic violence advocate, Caz Snell, who meets with those women who are referred by the Emergency Department with their consent.

According to the British Crime Survey 2009/10, 28% of women have been the victims of domestic violence, indicating many victims are still reluctant to come forward.

But Emergency Department Sister Sue Conway said women don’t need to suffer in silence.

“Research shows that woman in an abusive relationship may be abused in excess of 30 times before they will tell somebody about it. It doesn’t have to be like that.”

Our staff are trained to spot the signs of abuse, sensitively ask them about it, and help patients to get support from Southside.

Domestic violence is normally a very complex situation, and is much more subtle than a woman turning up in the Emergency Department with a black eye and not wanting to say how it was caused.

We will always ask a patient the circumstances of their injury, but it is obviously up to them if they tell us the truth.

The Emergency Department is a safe place to come and those who are being abused can come here and feel safe and supported. We don’t offer relationship advice, don’t judge, and don’t tell people what they should do. But we do know people who are experts in domestic abuse and can help, discreetly.”

Domestic violence towards women can have a huge impact on any children involved, even if they are not directly abused. Through witnessing abuse, they become a victim and we also work closely with social services, health visitors and school nurses to help them.

Advice guides asking 'are you here because someone you love is hurting you?' are freely available in the Emergency Department, and were produced in a small size to enable them to be discreetly picked up and kept.

Southside Director Penny McKissock says: "We have an extremely good working relationship with the RUH, which is why this project has been such a success.

"Women referred to Southside by the RUH are likely to be very high risk victims and if they had not accessed help at the hospital they could have gone off the radar."

## **Ends**

### **Notes to Editors**

- The violence and abuse pages on NHS Choices contain useful information and advice on how to get help – [www.nhs.uk/violence](http://www.nhs.uk/violence)
- From Jan-Dec 2009, 97 women were referred by the RUH to Southside. From January 2010 to the end of October 2010, 101 patients had been referred.
- Last year 45 patients declined to be referred, but were given information and later self-referred. So far this year the figure stands at 57.
- If you would like to arrange an interview, please contact the Communications Department on 01225 826230.