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'I feel so trapped': women's experiences of antisocial behaviour intervention in social housing

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ABSTRACT

Antisocial behaviour and vulnerability have become tied together in policy since the death of Fiona Pilkington and her daughter following sustained ASB, however, whilst there is acknowledgement that perpetrators of ASB may be vulnerable, they are still generally seen as at least partially responsible for their actions. Whilst women and girls are traditionally more likely to be viewed as vulnerable, when their behaviour is seen as challenging, the status of vulnerability may be removed by services in order to justify more punitive sanctions. This paper proposes a more nuanced understanding of vulnerability to explore women's experiences of ASB intervention. Drawing on longitudinal, qualitative research with women living in social housing who are alleged to be engaged in ASB, this research finds women feel particularly judged and intimidated by their housing officers, are routinely punished for being victim of abuse and disability may be ignored and/or mental health exacerbated as a result of ASB interventions that do not appear to take into account vulnerability.

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1. Introduction

Antisocial behaviour (or ASB) entered public discourse and government policy in the UK in the 1990s and has recently returned to government discourse with both the Conservative and Labour Party declaring a need for more punitive and visible responses to ASB (Cameron, 2023; Johnstone, 2016). The term refers to a broad variety of behaviour that causes nuisance, annoyance, alarm or distress and, whilst ASB interventions can be used against the general population, they are most often used within the arena of social housing against social housing tenants (Carr & Cowan, 2006; Crawford & Flint, 2009; Hunter, 2006; S. Mackenzie et al., 2010). In the UK, social housing provision (affordable, not-for-profit housing provision) has experienced significant residualisation, with government funding reducing over time and fewer properties available for households otherwise excluded from the housing market. As a result, social housing providers largely provide housing for those who may otherwise be excluded from the wider housing market and has been argued to provide homes for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society (Fitzpatrick & Watts, 2017). Whilst initially subject to academic scrutiny, research surrounding ASB has dropped off in recent years, and research into the experiences of alleged perpetrators of ASB is, in particular, lacking. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of a gendered element to ASB experiences, with women more likely to be on the receiving end of ASB interventions related to the behaviour of (often male) others (Hunter & Nixon, 2001; Nixon & Hunter, 2009).

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Support for victims, and especially vulnerable victims has become a key element of ASB policy and practice in the last two decades. In 2007, one victim of ASB, Fiona Pilkington, had reported 33 incidents of ASB from local young people over the preceding ten years. The cumulative impact of these incidents led to Pilkington killing her daughter and committing suicide and the subsequent Serious Case Review outlined the failure of local police to support a vulnerable household who were experiencing sustained ASB, harassment and abuse (Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2009). Since then, the term vulnerability has become increasingly important in welfare practice more generally and ASB policy and practice and the strong control of perpetrators of ASB, alongside support and protection for victims has become ingrained in ASB practice (K. Brown, 2015; K. J. Brown, 2013; Dobson, 2019; Menichelli, 2021). The concept of vulnerability has also been applied to ASB perpetrators, although without the same rhetoric of support and protection. The terms troubled families or problem populations have increasingly been used interchangeably with the term vulnerable families, linking vulnerability with problematic behaviours (Crossley, 2017). The term vulnerability is not, however, neutral and the normative understanding of vulnerability often used in ASB policy and practice can come with connotations of weakness and/or an issue to be overcome (K. Brown, 2014, 2015). When applied to gender, women are girls are often viewed as more vulnerable than their male counterparts, however, this perception may come with an intent to control and, additionally, when women and girls behave in a way that is seen challenging or as contradictory to traditional conceptions of femininity the label of vulnerability may be removed and replaced with harsher, more punitive responses (K. Brown, 2015; Innes, 2003; Madden & Marcuse, 2016). This paper, however, argues that a more careful and nuanced understanding of vulnerability can be applied to better understand women's experiences of ASB intervention and could, if adopted in policy, lead to better outcomes for those at the receiving end of ASB interventions.

This paper is based on qualitative, longitudinal research conducted with women living in social housing and alleged to be engaged in ASB as part of a wider PhD study with alleged perpetrators. The paper will now turn to the varying understandings of vulnerability in order to justify who an intersectional conceptualization of vulnerability can be helpful in understanding women's experiences of intervention.

2. Theorising vulnerability: moving towards an intersectional understanding of vulnerability

How vulnerability is generally viewed in ASB policy and practice is important to understanding the experiences of women alleged to be engaged in ASB, as how vulnerability is understood by institutions can impact how services choose to act. Whilst being labelled as vulnerable can be feel stigmatizing or disempowering, it can also come with some benefits such as additional support (K. Brown, 2015; Menichelli, 2021). As vulnerability is generally viewed in Western society as an individual deficiency to be overcome, people who could be classed as vulnerable are often seen as an issue to be resolved (Brown, 2015). Vulnerability may be seen as innate (such as being a child), related to biological circumstances or situational difficulties, such as experiencing domestic abuse (K. Brown, 2014). However, whilst the idea that people are victims of circumstance can help alleviate perceived personal blame for their situation or behaviour, this is weighed up against the perceived dangerousness of the threat posed by these behaviours and those classified as vulnerable. This means that whilst some people may be seen as needing extra care or support, extra controls may also be placed on them to control their behaviour (K. Brown, 2015). In relation to experiencing domestic abuse for example, alleged perpetrators of ASB may sometimes be associated with markers of vulnerability but also appear to be held responsible for the behaviour of their abusers which is framed through the lens of antisocial behaviour (Hunter & Nixon, 2001; Nixon & Hunter, 2009).

Behavioural factors are also important in who is deemed vulnerable, with those who are seen to 'perform vulnerability' and appear more grateful or deferential towards services arguably more likely to be seen as vulnerable and subsequently more likely to be offered support (K. Brown, 2015;

Dehaghani, 2018). In practice, those who could be classified as vulnerable may still struggle to secure support where it is dependent on service providers' discretion as when service providers are given discretion to allocate (often scarce) resources there may be favouritism, stereotyping and stigmatization. This means that certain groups (for example, Black and Ethnic Minority groups, disabled people, those who identify as LGBTQ+ or women seen as not meeting normative standards of femininity and behaviour) are at increased likelihood of exclusion (Madden & Marcuse, 2016). Those presenting challenging or problematic behaviour, rather than appearing simply grateful, fall less neatly into normative categorizations of vulnerability meaning those alleged to be engaged in ASB are less likely to be perceived as vulnerable as their behaviour is viewed as problematic (K. Brown, 2014, 2015; Dobson, 2019). Even where there is recognition that some alleged perpetrators who could be classed as vulnerable may not be able to fully control, or understand the impact of, their behaviour, they are still generally viewed as having a level of responsibility for ASB (K. J. Brown, 2013).

Whilst the normative understanding of vulnerability is prevalent in ASB policy and practice, it is not the only understanding possible; multiple possible interpretations open the door for more progressive approaches which could provide opportunities for shaping and understanding experiences of ASB intervention (Carr, 2013; Gilson, 2016b). Vulnerability can be viewed as simply a characteristic of existence; every person can be at risk of illness, injury or other harm (such as economic, institutional or social harms). This suggests that vulnerability is universal (Carr, 2013; Fineman, 2013). Accepting vulnerability as universal leads to the suggestion that societal institutions should work to protect all citizens, providing opportunities to build resilience, skills and capabilities to protect against vulnerability and crisis. Whilst not possible to remove vulnerability completely, it is argued to be possible to increase the assets and coping mechanisms of those who could be classed as vulnerable (Fineman, 2013). Fineman's (2013) view of vulnerability has, however, been critiqued for situating vulnerability and autonomy as oppositional, suggesting the state needs to provide protections for vulnerable people and potentially leading to paternalist policies that may, in eventuality, disempower citizens (Butler, 2016; C. Mackenzie, 2013). Instead, it is argued that we should not view vulnerability and empowerment as necessarily oppositional; the state can intervene to support people who could be classed as vulnerable whilst also promoting autonomy and empowering citizens to fully engage within a democratic society (C. Mackenzie, 2013). For women who are alleged to be engaged in ASB, this could mean supporting these individuals and households to remain in their social housing homes (should this be where they live), helping them to avoid further ASB interventions that could threaten their security of tenure.

Building on this universal approach to vulnerability, which can be argued to be a useful starting point to challenge the current, more normative understandings of vulnerability in policy and practice, a more intersectional approach to vulnerability could provide deeper insight into the differential experiences of ASB perpetrators. By understanding vulnerability as universal it is possible that vulnerable groups can be homogenized, ignoring how different intersecting social divisions or individual characteristics might impact vulnerability. An intersectional approach, which includes consideration given to different and overlapping social identities, divisions and circumstances, is arguably needed to better understand individual differences in experiences of vulnerability more generally (Kuran et al., 2020) and, as this paper argues, ASB interventions more specifically. Whilst we can acknowledge that anyone could be vulnerable, it is still important to recognize that structural divisions underline inequalities and individual experiences, meaning some groups are more vulnerable than others to oppression and societal harms related to, for example, gender inequality in society, racism and ableism (Cole, 2016).

When considering ASB perpetrators, it could be argued that all ASB perpetrators within social housing may be classed as vulnerable, either because we understand vulnerability as universal or because previous research has highlighted that they are more likely to experience intersections of poverty, disability, crime and/or violence (Batty et al., 2018; Flint, 2018; Jones et al., 2006; Nixon & Parr, 2006). Within this group, gender and disability appear to be particularly relevant to understanding experiences of ASB interventions, as previous research suggests women and disabled

people are more likely to be subject to interventions for behaviour often outside of their control, for example, the behaviour of other household members or behaviour that is related to their disability (Hunter & Nixon, 2001; Nixon & Hunter, 2009; Krayer.; Krayer et al., 2018; Parr, 2009). However, it can feel uncomfortable to suggest that women and/or disabled people are automatically vulnerable, especially as there are significant differences and overlaps within these identities. When acknowledging this difficulty, Butler et al. (2016, p. 2) stated, 'There is always something both risky and true in claiming that women or other socially disadvantaged groups are especially vulnerable'. If gender or disability is automatically perceived as a vulnerability it can suggest that non-male or disabled people are inherently 'other' or 'lesser' than male, able-bodied counterparts, disregarding decades of activism by marginalized groups (Ecclestone & 2014). However, acknowledging vulnerability exists does not make these groups necessarily 'lesser' than others (Butler et al., 2016; Gilson, 2016a). Instead, recognizing these groups as potentially vulnerable can provide recognition of social inequality and acknowledge society's responsibility for dealing with this. Vulnerability does not necessarily have to have negative connotations and can instead provide recognition of difference and otherness that structures lived experiences of the social world (Ecclestone & 2014).

Crenshaw (1991) proposed that how individuals experience the social world is impacted by multiple overlapping (or intersecting) identities which structure their experiences. Initially, Crenshaw's (1991) definition of intersectionality focused on the intersection of ethnicity and gender which, she argued, meant Black women experienced discrimination across two intersecting identities of being Black and being female. Subsequently, understandings of intersectionality have developed to include further social identities and divisions, circumstances and life experiences that can intersect in unnumerable ways to structure experiences of the social world (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). As highlighted by Kuran et al. (2020), applying this concept of intersectionality to vulnerability allows us to both accept that vulnerability could be universal, but also to see vulnerability as being made of intersecting factors of identity, division, circumstance and experience that can increase the likelihood of, or heighten experiences of, vulnerability. This conceptualization of vulnerability can allow us to better understand different experiences of vulnerability in welfare provision and, as this paper argues, ASB intervention.

3. Women and ASB intervention

Women's experiences of ASB intervention are particularly interesting to explore as previous research has highlighted significant differences between their experiences of ASB intervention in social housing in comparison to male social housing tenants. More generally, in a society where women are marginalized, controlled and subject to violence, women's lived experiences of vulnerability are different from men, and how gender intersects with ethnicity, (dis)ability and social class is likewise vital to understanding these experiences (K. Brown et al., 2021; Cole, 2016). For women, welfare conditionality experienced in their houses is compounded by the longstanding oppression within home which represents a site of unpaid domestic labour and patriarchal control (Madden & Marcuse, 2016). Women already face additional forms of control within the home, including domestic abuse which can be argued to represent the ongoing patriarchy within wider society and which is a significant factor that increases women's vulnerability. For the purpose of this paper, domestic abuse is defined as an intentional pattern of controlling behaviour where power over a partner is maintained, including emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse. While there is abuse from women towards men and within same-sex couples, domestic abuse most often manifests through men dominating individual female partners (Botein & Hetling, 2016; Friedman, 2013). This violence and abuse within heterosexual relationships reinforces men's privileged position, placing women as subordinates (Botein & Hetling, 2016).

Hunter and Nixon (2001), who investigated evictions from social housing for ASB, found that the majority of complaints were made against families with children and in particular against single mothers. However, unlike ASB reports about male-headed households, complaints were more likely

to be about predominantly male visitors or children at the property rather than the female tenant themselves. Outright or suspended possession of the property was more likely to be granted against female tenants than male tenants and was less likely to be overturned in an appeal, with examples of women seen as antisocial for experiencing domestic abuse due to being unable to control the male's behaviour. When Nixon and Hunter (2009) repeated this study, they found women were still at risk of losing their home because of the behaviour of male partners and children rather than their own behaviour. Women reported being held responsible for the behaviour of violent partners even after they had asked them to leave. Within court, abuse was viewed as a peripheral issue rather than the cause of ASB, despite women often feeling powerless to prevent it. The cause was, instead, viewed as the individual responsibility of the female tenant.

In court, women were expected to show remorse in order to prevent eviction from their homes, a difficult task as they were asked to show remorse for behaviour they themselves did not commit. Whilst male tenants were also expected to show remorse for ASB, only women were found to be required to be remorseful for the behaviour of others (Nixon & Hunter, 2009). Newer research into ASB practice in Australia also found evictions for nuisance behaviour particularly impacted women who were victims of abuse (Martin et al., 2019). Violence towards women was routinely reframed as behaviour that should be controlled by female tenants. Additionally, there was an over representation of Indigenous women on the receiving end of legal action, suggesting an additional element of vulnerability in the form of ethnicity (Martin et al., 2019). As tenants are held responsible for visitors' or family members' behaviour through clauses related to ASB in their tenancy agreements, they are seen as allowing breaches in tenancy if they fail to prevent the ASB. However, one could question whether a victim of abuse can ever be seen as 'allowing' the breach. As Friedman (2013) argues, threat or experience of physical, psychological and/or emotional abuse limits the amount individuals should be held responsible for their actions or inaction as alternate actions may lead to more abuse.

Overall, existing research into women's experiences of ASB have generally focused on evictions from social housing, with little research undertaken in recent years and even less research into experiences of early ASB interventions, which could include, for example, home visits, warning letters and mediation. This paper seeks to address this research gap, considering women's experiences of ASB intervention in social housing.

4. Research methods

This paper is drawn from PhD research which utilized qualitative, longitudinal methods. Up to two, qualitative interviews were conducted with social housing tenants living in the North of England who were alleged to be engaged in antisocial behaviour. Fifteen tenants were interviewed, ten of whom identified as female. Out of this ten, nine engaged with two interviews and one had a single interview, making a total of nineteen interviews with female tenants from which the discussion in this article is drawn. Initial semi-structured interview guides were constructed around the research questions and making use of academic literature to guide conversations with tenants whilst allowing for flexibility, improvement and adaptation. Individual guides were written for second interviews based on the ongoing analysis of each tenant's first interview in order to follow up on key themes and issues raised in the first interviews with each individual tenant. Vulnerability (in addition to gender) within this group included physical and mental health conditions, family illness, bereavement, experiences of domestic abuse, financial hardship, debt and problematic alcohol use. Whilst sample sizes were small, the interviews were information rich, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes providing detailed insight into the individual experiences of each tenant. Focus was placed on the views, understandings and experiences of the tenant participants with an attempt to capture messiness and contradiction as features of real life (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Jenson & Laurie, 2016; Mason, 2002). Whilst tenant experiences were kept to the fore, contextual, qualitative interviews were also conducted with five key informants based within four social housing providers, including ASB and housing managers. Interview recordings were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo for

longitudinal, thematic analysis. The researcher actively identified themes from the transcripts. Whilst this can mean the organization of codes and themes from the data is not analytically neutral, the researcher developed a clear justification on how the data was organized, making use of the research questions and theoretical framework of intersectional vulnerability as guides (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Mason, 2002). Using the method of longitudinal thematic analysis method outlined by Neale (2019), the data was subject to multiple readings using case, thematic and integrative analysis. Each case was systematically analysed, followed by broader conceptual and temporal readings of cross-case data for both waves of data collection. Finally, a full-scale integrative analysis was conducted to synthesize existing analysis and to identify and develop similarities and differences across case, themes and time (Lewis, 2007; Neale, 2019).

Ethical approval was granted by the University of York's Social Policy and Social Work Ethics Committee (ref: SPSW/P/2–19/7). Ethical focus was on informed consent, voluntary participation, transparency and safety. Interviews were viewed as presenting a power imbalance between the researcher and the participant, especially for female participants (see Oakley, 1981). Attempts were made to limit the power imbalance by providing participants opportunities to ask questions, to end the interview at any time, to review the interview transcript and to ask for anything they said to be removed from the research data should they wish (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Mason, 2002; Oakley, 1981). Additionally, the researcher prepared a leaflet to provide to participants where appropriate, signposting tenants to a variety of support services accessible nationally or in their local area.

5. Findings: women's experiences of ASB intervention

When using an intersectional approach to vulnerability, how social divisions intersect and interact with other divisions and vulnerabilities can help to better understand the experiences of individuals (Cole, 2016; Kuran et al., 2020). Therefore, how gender intersects with other vulnerabilities such as poverty, disability and/or domestic abuse can offer a useful insight into women's experiences of ASB intervention. The women who were alleged to be engaged in ASB in this study were accused of noise nuisance (reported to be related to children noise, family parties, visitor noise, arguments and violence), fly tipping, untidy homes, neighbour dispute, owning CCTV, behaviour related to alcohol consumption, drug dealing and financial abuse of neighbours highlighting the vast array of behaviours that can fall under the remit of ASB (Burney, 2005; Carr & Cowan, 2006; Edwards, 2015). It is worth noting here that a number of the allegations were disputed by the women interviewed, some were misrepresented (for example, multiple carer visits were misrepresented as drug dealing, discussed further below) and some were related to behaviour arguably outside of the women's control, for example, domestic abuse was represented as arguments and violence for which the women were held responsible and financial abuse of neighbours was conducted by visitors to the tenant's home who were also financially and physically abusive towards the tenant themselves. As well as this misunderstanding or misinterpretation of behaviours, women in this study reported increased levels of perceived judgement and intimidation from housing officers (the front-line staff employed by their social housing providers who were responsible for managing their tenancies and ASB cases) and were more likely to report poverty and debt in comparison to their male counterparts. Additionally, four of the women in the sample experienced domestic abuse, eight reported a physical or mental health disabilities and/or mental health crises suggesting high levels of vulnerability amongst the group.

5.1. Gender: judgement/intimidation from housing officers

The women in this study often felt a high level of judgement from their housing officers (an issue that remained unmentioned by any male participants across the wider study), the social landlord's representatives who investigated complaints of ASB, or by their housing providers as a whole. Whilst telephone interviews and home visits were purportedly conducted as information gathering

exercises and to allow alleged perpetrators of ASB to present their side of the story, women reported feeling judged about their homes, their lifestyles and their behaviour before they were able to defend themselves. Two women talked about being judged for being single parents:

They see me as a single mum who don't have any family, they know no family come to my property (Caroline, Wave A)

I think that's what it [the judgement] is, being a single parent and plus, being a single parent and having another baby (Rosie, Wave A)

However, the majority (8 out of 10) women in the study felt pre-judged by their housing officers, regardless of their relationship/parenthood status.

I feel like I haven't got the opportunity to clear my name ... I felt like it was judge, jury and execution, if you know what I mean, with no come back on my side (Pauline, Wave A)

The feeling of being unable to 'clear her name' meant that Pauline, and others, felt disempowered and, in some cases, fearful of their housing officers as they felt they may lose their home because their housing officer (mis)judged them. The feeling of being judged by their housing officers had a negative impact on the tenants, resulting in negative feelings about themselves.

I felt as though she was being very judgemental ... it made me feel so rubbish, and I even voiced my concerns. I said I wasn't happy with how she came into my property and she just absolutely just looked down her nose at me. (Caroline, Wave B)

Caroline's experience, who reported her housing officer visiting her home and asking why she had not managed to decorate yet, suggested that her poverty was an additional factor when the housing officer was deciding how to respond to the complaint about Caroline.

I was absolutely disgusted when they came to my property to do a house inspection because I'd obviously moved into this property with the clothes myself and [Daughter] had from a refuge ... so, we didn't have any furniture or anything. Everything that I've got in the property over the time, I struggled to get. (Caroline, Wave B)

The intersection of gender, domestic abuse and poverty (a common issue for the women in this study) was not acknowledged as vulnerabilities or support needs by her housing officer but appears, instead to have been used to suggest Caroline was not meeting her tenancy obligations to keep her home in good condition (or in this case, to improve the condition of the property after she had moved in).

Rachel suggested the way that housing staff treated tenants was unfair as she felt she would not be able to respond to her housing officer in the same manner, stating:

If we was to ring them up and be disrespectful, they'd have a complaint to say about it. But they shouldn't be allowed to be disrespectful to their tenants. (Rachel, Wave B)

The women in the study additionally felt intimidated by their housing officers, especially those they had felt negatively judged by. Two tenants spoke of 'living in fear' of their landlords. One key informant suggested fear of the landlord was, to some extent, a positive tool to change behaviours, saying:

People are aware now you are at risk from your landlords, more so [than in the past]. I have no evidence about that, no evidence to back that up [laughs] I suppose because I've been so involved in that area, I would feel aggrieved if all that [intervention into ASB] didn't make any difference, but it will have. (ASB Manager, Large Housing Association)

Whilst the ASB Manager here was referring to landlords making use of ASB interventions to change behaviour, the phrasing of people feeling 'at risk from' their social landlords is perhaps telling of the punitive focus of ASB interventions, with little suggestion of support for vulnerable perpetrators and instead, the intention to change behaviour through inducing fear. There appeared to be little recognition of tenant's circumstances before deciding how to use ASB interventions. For example,

Rosie, described attending an eviction appeal meeting on her own where she had to make her case to six men she had never met. Whilst her solicitor was supposed to be present, her social landlord refused to change the date of the meeting when told Rosie's solicitor was unavailable. This made the meeting especially intimidating for her. Additionally, as the meeting was at a building not on a public transport route, Rosie had to pay almost £50 out of her weekly income of £100 for taxis to and from the meeting. It seemed how Rosie's gender (and the gender of the staff in the appeal meeting) could impact her experience of this ASB intervention, and the financial hardship she experienced in attending the meeting were given little consideration.

5.2. Domestic abuse

Four women disclosed being victim to domestic abuse, either at the time of, or just before, the research period. The term 'victims' rather than 'survivors' of abuse is used in this analysis as this is how the women spoke about themselves. Three of the four women believed their social landlord was aware of the abuse, either because they had told them themselves or because a third party had informed them. Despite this, all the women experiencing abuse were treated as ASB perpetrators, their status as victims of abuse side-lined or ignored. One tenant, Rachel, did not disclose abuse to her housing officer; however, she described the very visible injuries she had at the time of her housing officer visiting her.

I had two black eyes ... my eyes were bleeding, they were bloodshot, they were swollen (Rachel, Wave B)

In addition to these visible injuries, Rachel disclosed to her housing officer that she had just returned home from the hospital after having to be taken in an ambulance the night before. The visit Rachel is discussing took place before her first interview for this study. By the time of the second interview, six months later, her partner had been violent to her newly born child, resulting in the baby's admission to hospital and the removal of both Rachel's children into care. Rachel separated from this partner but was struggling to receive support and to have her children returned to her care. Previous research has highlighted how women may be held responsible for their violent partner's behaviour in relation to ASB (Hunter & Nixon, 2001; Nixon & Hunter, 2009) and/or for violence witnessed or experienced by their children from this partner, despite it being arguably unrealistic and unfair to expect women to be able to control violent partner's behaviour due to the risk of further violence (Friedman, 2013). Rachel's intersecting vulnerabilities, including poverty, debt and abuse towards herself and her children did not appear to be acknowledged by her social landlord and did not prevent her from receiving a warning letter for ASB which threatened eviction. Whilst a support referral from her landlord might not have prevented further violence towards Rachel and her children, that the signs of abuse were either missed or ignored by Rachel's housing officer is concerning.

Jenny also received a warning letter for abuse she received. After moving to her home from a women's refuge, her violent ex-partner moved around the corner from her, causing her significant distress and resulting in her asking if her housing provider could help her to move (which they stated they couldn't). When Jenny's ex-partner smashed a window to Jenny's property, Jenny received a warning letter for ASB, despite explaining to her housing officer what had happened and providing a crime reference number. At the time of the second interview, Jenny had not received was still being harassed by her ex-partner whilst on the school run or at her local shop. When she approached the police for help, she was told there was nothing they could do as he lived so close and there was a lack of amenities in the area.

Because he lives so close to us, there's not like, any kind of order I can get because like, the perimeter wouldn't be big enough, d'you know? Because the shop is very near his house, but it's very near my house as well. So, they couldn't exactly say like, you can't go in the shop, because that's the only shop here. (Jenny, Wave B)

Not only does this example highlight a failure of services which left a victim of abuse housed very close to her abuser and refusing to provide support for sustained harassment, it also shows a clear example of a woman being punished for the behaviour of an ex-partner that was outside of her control. The experiences of all four women who were victims of abuse demonstrated how their vulnerability was side-lined, support was not offered and instead, ASB interventions punished women for the behaviour of violent partners (or, in one case, violent sons, discussed in the section below).

5.3. Gender and disability

The majority of women in the study reported a physical or mental health condition or mental health crisis (8 out of 10) that affected their day to day lives. One woman, Pauline, had multiple visits a day from her brother, her carer. These visits were misinterpreted as related to drug dealing. Despite explaining her care needs to her housing officer and asking to introduce her housing officer to her brother, Pauline received an ASB warning letter, accusing her of drug dealing and requesting she stop with immediate effect (effectively banning her carer from visiting her house as often as required). This led to her brother no longer visiting the property or providing care.

So, of course, he [brother/carer] won't come round now which puts pressure on my parents because they knew how upset I was, and how upset I am, and they're worried I'm going to take a back step again. It got to the point when I couldn't even get myself out of bed in the morning, you know, at my worst. (Pauline, Wave A)

Not only did Pauline not get the daily care she required, but her mental health also deteriorated and her vulnerability was exacerbated. Despite outlining her care needs to her housing officer, no alternate support was offered and care provision was (mis)interpreted as nuisance behaviour.

Rangers also reported that her disability was not taken into account when she received a notice of seeking possession of her property (the first step towards eviction proceedings). Rangers has multiple physical and mental health disabilities and health impairments. She was also a victim of abuse from her adult sons who visited the property, reporting she was once held out of the second floor window by one of her sons. These sons invited a number of other adults to the property who used it as a base to financially abuse Rangers and her neighbours. Despite Rangers' evident victimhood (reiterated by her mental health support worker who informed her housing provider about her circumstances), Rangers was not offered support from her landlord who, instead, held her responsible for the abuse both she and her neighbours were receiving, acknowledging that her neighbours were 'vulnerable' but not recognizing Rangers' own vulnerability. When asked what impact the notice had on her, she said:

A very big impact. I tried to commit suicide, everything through it. (Rangers, Wave A)

Ranger's example clearly demonstrates how vulnerability is often overlooked by those implementing ASB interventions, with favour heavily placed on the vulnerability of neighbours over alleged perpetrators. It also shows the significantly negative impact of ASB interventions that do not take into account the vulnerability of alleged perpetrators, with Rangers attempting suicide following ASB intervention. Two other tenants spoke of having suicidal thoughts following ASB intervention, and all ten women spoke of how interventions had negatively impacted their mental health, including increased anxiety, depression and fear of leaving the house.

It's impacted me massively. My mental health is absolutely deteriorated Kirsty. It's gone absolutely downhill. I feel so trapped. Every day I wake up and I don't even, I don't even want to wake up and it's awful. (Caroline, Wave B)

I suffer with mental health at the minute with everything that's been going on, but yeah, they can make you really upset to the point when you don't want to leave your house. (Mel, Wave A)

The significantly negative impact on women and their mental health demonstrated the exacerbation of vulnerability through ASB interventions and highlighted a lack of support. That all women, including those who did not have a previous mental health condition experienced mental ill health which they said was a result of ASB interventions is a new and important finding, highlighting the value of approaching the experiences of alleged perpetrators through an intersectional lens to better understand the multi-layered vulnerabilities and how they are acknowledged and supported (or, as this research suggests, remain unacknowledged and unsupported) through ASB intervention processes.

6. Discussion

Crenshaw (1991) identified how, by only considering one element of inequality or discrimination in society, for example, gender, there is a risk of excluding or misunderstanding those who experience multiple intersecting experiences of discrimination and inequality. Similarly, this article argues that by using a normative understanding of vulnerability as an issue to resolve rather than a more nuanced understanding of intersectional vulnerability, we risk misunderstanding or side-lining the experiences of vulnerable people, in particular, women who are accused of ASB. The experiences of women alleged to be engaged in ASB highlighted multiple intersecting issues of judgement (which women felt was largely in relation to gender, experiences of abuse or parenthood status), poverty, domestic abuse (which women were held responsible for halting) and disability which contributed to their experiences of intervention and their ability to change behaviours which had been seen as problematic by their housing providers, as well as the reasonableness of asking women to change these behaviours.

Whilst previous research has highlighted that alleged perpetrators of ASB could largely be classed as vulnerable (Crossley, 2017; Jones et al., 2006) and that issues of gender and domestic abuse can contribute to the additional punishment of women through ASB interventions (Hunter & Nixon, 2001; Nixon & Hunter, 2009), the findings of this research shows how these issues intersect, contributing to the arguably unfair and unreasonable treatment of women whose vulnerabilities appear to be largely ignored in favour of punitive responses. Women experiencing combinations of disability, abuse and poverty appear to be especially punished, not only by their circumstances but by asking them to change these circumstances that are demonstrably out of their control. This leads to feelings of being judged (impacting women's feelings of self-worth) and serious, negative impacts on mental health. Additionally, the results highlighted the missed opportunities to support women either directly or through referrals to appropriate services that could prevent further abuse and hardship and which could potentially prevent further complaints of ASB, for example, if a woman is supported to remove a violent partner from the property or to receive her welfare benefit entitlements and/or access hardship funds that could help her to improve the condition of her home.

7. Conclusion

Women's experiences of ASB intervention have previously been demonstrated as different to those of men, with previous research highlighting how women are frequently held responsible for the behaviour of (often male) others (Hunter & Nixon, 2001; Nixon & Hunter, 2009). Whilst vulnerability is a term often used in ASB policy and practice, the understanding of vulnerability is often fairly normative, with ASB perpetrators often not recognized as vulnerable or, if they are, still held responsible for their actions (K. Brown, 2014; K. J. Brown, 2013). This paper has, instead, suggested an intersectional framing of vulnerability, recognizing the social divisions, identities, inequalities, institutional forces and individual capabilities that can structure lived experiences of vulnerability (Kuran et al., 2020). Applying this conceptual framing to the stories of women alleged to be engaged in ASB highlighted how multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities, including gender, poverty, domestic abuse and disability structured women's experiences. Not only do

women have to manage these multiple vulnerabilities, but vulnerability also appears to be misinterpreted as antisocial behaviour, leading to the punishment of women for issues often outside of their control. The analysis highlighted punishment for poverty, warning letters for not preventing their own domestic abuse, potential eviction from their property for being held responsible for the behaviour of violent sons and visitors and warning letters for receiving care which subsequently prevented care from being carried out. These responses further heightened and exacerbated women's vulnerability, leading to all the women involved in this study reporting negative impacts on their mental health and three women reporting suicidal thoughts. A more nuanced approach to vulnerability in ASB policy and practice could help to identify support needs for women and could, potentially, lead to a reduction in the punishment of women for issues that are demonstrably outside of their control. By recognizing the intersecting constraints experienced by women with disabilities and/or experiencing abuse within a context of poverty that make it increasingly difficult, impossible or in some cases demonstrably unreasonable to meet the obligations placed on them by ASB interventions within social housing, practitioners could move away from punishment as a first response to allegations of ASB and, instead, could consider the support needs required for female 'perpetrators'. Overall, this research has demonstrated the need for more built-in support systems for alleged perpetrators of ASB experiencing intersecting vulnerabilities that would not only give women the support they require, but could also, ultimately, prevent further complaints of ASB where they are related to experiences of domestic abuse, care needs and/or poverty.

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