Domestic violence incident recorded every 75 seconds

Richard Kerbaj

POLICE record an incident of domestic violence on average every 75 seconds, according to new figures revealing the alarming scale of the problem.

One in 12 women are victims of domestic violence but suffer an average of 50 attacks before alerting the authorities, research by the anti-domestic abuse charity SafeLives shows.

The statistics come as a prelude to a television documentary featuring three women abused by their partners. Film makers followed the women for 12 months from the time they went to the police to the moment their attackers faced justice in court.

One of them, Jemma, a 33-year-old mother of two, spent six days in hospital after being beaten by her ex-boyfriend, Dewayne Mason, who tricked his way into her home by lying that he had cancer. Within minutes he had headbutted her with such force that she collapsed.

"From that point it was just a shower of blows really, punching me, dragging me, holding my head, throwing me down on the bed, strangling me," Jemma tells Behind Closed Doors, to be shown on BBC1 on March 14. "It was like he was waiting

for me to lose consciousness and when I came round [he] would carry on."

Mason, from Oxford, was later convicted of grievous bodily harm and sentenced to seven years in prison.

In the six months to September 2015, police in England and Wales recorded 207,514 incidents of domestic violence — the equivalent of one every 75 seconds — according to figures from the Office for National Statistics. While the majority of victims are women, many are men.

About 1.4m women — 8.5% of the population aged 16–59 — suffer some form of domestic abuse every year, according to SafeLives. Its chief executive Diana Barran said: "Domestic abuse is shockingly prevalent, underreported and misunderstood. There is still lots to do to reduce the stigma and fear of coming forward . . . We hope victims feel encouraged to seek help, knowing it is never their fault and not something that should be kept behind closed doors."

@richardkerbaj

Jemma: 'He was punching me, dragging me, strangling me'