



What Reese wants YOU to know about DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Last June, R'n'B star Chris Brown went on trial for his assault on Rihanna. His sentence? Just six months' community service. Since then, domestic violence has dropped out of the headlines, but it hasn't gone away – as **GLAMOUR** found out when we flew to Washington to meet **Reese Witherspoon**, face of the Avon/Refuge Four Ways To Speak Out campaign

“**D**omestic violence is an issue that touches everyone, regardless of whether they have money, what age they are, what race they are.

That woman could be your sister or your best friend, and you might not know. When I was younger, I had a friend who seemed to be having difficulties in her relationship. She tried

to keep what was happening a secret, but it became apparent to me from the signs of physical abuse on her body, that her boyfriend was beating her. He made her feel that if she left, he would chase her, he would hurt her. He threatened her life many times. He even tried to kill her one time. People say, 'Why don't you just leave? Why would a smart, educated ►

◀ person stay in a relationship like that?' But there is a psychological oppression, a tearing down of your self-esteem. And that's exactly what happened to my friend. [When she eventually left him] she needed emotional support, and help moving house and changing her telephone number. Having someone to talk to, and help you find what you need, whether it be legal help or getting the police involved, is so important. I've never experienced it myself, but if a partner was ever violent towards me, I think the aspect of shame would be very difficult [to cope with]. There's the worry that you're going to be judged. And it's not that simple to escape. Maybe you're now homeless, don't have an income, and are taking care of children by yourself. There are so many complicated elements to leaving an abusive relationship."

With that in mind, GLAMOUR decided to dig a little deeper – and we were shocked. Incidents of domestic violence in the UK have increased in the past year and experts say one in four women will encounter it at some point in their lives. As Reese says, we owe it to ourselves and each other to take a stand.

5 THINGS THAT NEED TO CHANGE NOW

We spoke to key domestic violence experts to form GLAMOUR's wish list of changes. Read, digest, then join the campaign below.

1 We're calling for... tougher sentencing

Two women are killed by a current or former partner every week in the UK. According to independent domestic violence advocate Julia Dwyer, who works with the police to protect and rehouse women at high risk, lenient sentences are a big problem. "Lack of prison space means that the courts are reluctant to hand out prison sentences," she says. "We generally only deal with very severe cases, and only about a third of even those get prison sentences; the rest get community orders (sometimes with a suspended sentence, meaning he isn't imprisoned unless he re-offends within a certain period of time). And that's only the ones that are charged; the vast majority of perpetrators don't even end up with



When GLAMOUR met Michelle and Hillary

In March, GLAMOUR was the only British magazine invited to the Washington DC State Department to hear First Lady, Michelle Obama, and Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, talk about women's rights. This is what they had to say...

Hillary Clinton: "Avon is our partner... in focusing on and trying to end the global epidemic of violence against women. It happens in the homes, it happens in the streets, it happens all over the world. We have to call it what it is – a crime – and we have to mobilise to combat it." Michelle Obama: "It's hard to believe that it's been 15 years since Secretary Clinton spoke those words that inspired women across the globe to think differently about themselves and about their place in the world, and to demand that others think differently as well. 'Women's rights are human rights' is what she said; the five simple words that weren't just a statement of fact, but a call to action."

a charge. I recently helped a woman who had been stabbed by her boyfriend. He was only given a two-year sentence, meaning he'll be out in a year. Because court cases take between six and nine months, by the time the man is sentenced he's often already served his term, and is released the day after the court case. We need longer sentences to make sure a woman is protected and re-housed before his release." It's the moment a woman leaves her abusive partner that she's at the highest risk. It's at this point that 75% of domestic violence homicides take place. "The abuser has lost control of his victim and the violence escalates dramatically, often leading to murder," adds Dwyer.

2 We're calling for... more access to 'escape funding'

Early last year, the government warned that they expected domestic violence incidents to increase in the aftermath of the recession. And they were right. Since the recession began, thousands of women have been made redundant. For anyone in an abusive relationship, losing their job and ▶

◀ their salary further undermines their independence and their means of escape. Indeed, 89% of women being domestically abused report that economic control is a part of that. "We have seen a rise in financial problems pinning women to their abusive partner since the recession," reveals Dwyer. "When a woman doesn't have the financial means to leave, she is forced to stay and endure the violence." Refuge's indispensable guide, *You Can Afford To Leave*,

explains how to disentangle yourself from a violent partner, regardless of whether you have money or not. It shows women how to create an escape fund without him noticing, and gives details of how to get financial assistance from the government (for instance, with a 'crisis loan' and 'travel warrant'). "However, it is very difficult to obtain these funds; it needs to be made quicker and easier for women to obtain this financial aid from the government. Sometimes, even though the woman gets a crisis loan, it's so small that she can barely eat on it."

3 We're calling for... an end to the postcode lottery

At the moment, only one in three local authorities has a domestic violence support service, whereby specialists assess the risk of the woman's situation, counsel her, create a safety plan for her, place her in a refuge or arrange a housing transfer, then keep her up to date with the court case. They even arrange home security and a panic alarm in high-risk situations. If you happen to live in the wrong area and your partner attacks you, it's entirely up to you to find emergency accommodation and support while the police try to catch him. "Thankfully, national agencies like Refuge are supportive no matter where you live," says Detective Inspector Peter Hopkinson, in charge of a Community Safety Unit in Lewisham, London. "But in boroughs where there is no local support network, the police officers become overloaded with the huge pressure of arranging emergency accommodation and protection for women, detracting from the prosecution itself."



Rihanna's assault, at the hands of her boyfriend, made the headlines

4 We're calling for... a change in the law

Refuge would like to see the law changed to recognise liability for suicide – ten women a week commit suicide in the UK to escape a violent partner. "We would like to see perpetrators held to account for driving women to kill themselves," says a Refuge spokesperson. "Any legislation that supports victims of domestic violence further is always an excellent thing," says DI Hopkinson. "And I personally agree that this would be a great move. However, it would be difficult to implement if the victim has not reported the domestic violence in the past."

5 We're calling for... a global discussion

Secrecy and shame still go hand in hand with being emotionally or physically abused – and that has to change. "[We must] start talking about these issues," says Witherspoon. "I talk to my daughter about it and she's only ten. I tell her it's not just physical violence, it's emotional abuse too. I also talk to my son, teaching him to treat women with respect." Speaking to the police is daunting, but you will be listened to. "We recognise that even though it may be the first time a woman has reported it, the likelihood is that it's happened to her ten, 15, 20 times before," says DI Hopkinson. "So we take it extremely seriously." Chief executive of Refuge, Sandra Horley, adds: "Domestic violence needs to become as socially unacceptable as drink driving."

“Two women are killed by a current or former partner every week in the UK”

If you, or someone you know, is a victim of domestic violence, go to Refuge.org.uk or call 0808 200 0247

What can you do?

- Together we can make ourselves heard. Log on to Fourwaystospeakout.com for more information on the Avon/Refuge campaign. This is how you can help:
1. **Speak to the government** by signing Avon and Refuge's petition. On November 25, they will give this petition to the government, urging them to end the postcode lottery.
 2. **Speak out to save lives** by buying and wearing Avon's empowerment necklace from the above website.
 3. **Speak to your local community** by displaying Refuge's poster in your window.
 4. **Speak to your friends and family** and ask them to join the campaign too. @