1. If the domestic abuse was that bad, women would leave.

Women stay with their abusive partners for many reasons; enjoying abuse is not one of them. Leaving the relationship does not guarantee that the abuse will cease. Women are likely to continue experiencing abuse after they have left especially if their former partner has contact with their children. Women are most likely to be killed just prior to leaving, as they leave or just after they have left. The external support women have from their family, friends and agencies is likely to have a significant influence on her decision making. On average a woman is likely to approach 11 organisations before she receives the advice and support to allow her to make an informed decision. This rises to 17 agencies if she is a woman from a BME group (Hamner and Saunders 1993).

2. Some women provoke the abuse they experience.

There is no justification for using violence. There are always alternatives and no one deserves to be assaulted and abused. Domestic abuse is not limited to physical injury but also can include a range of behaviours which serve to isolate and humiliate women and their children in various ways. Overwhelmingly domestic abuse is experienced by women and perpetrated by men that they know. It is estimated that 1 in 4 women will experience some form of domestic abuse at some time in her life and that currently between 1 in 8 and 1 in 10 women are living with domestic abuse.

3. Men abuse women and girls because some religions and cultures accept it.

It is important to recognise that asylum seekers and other women affected by immigration control come from a number of different countries. There are cultural differences amongst and between different asylum seeking communities as well as differences regarding Scottish/UK culture. Like many cultures including Scottish, abusive men will employ a range of methods to justify their behaviour this justification process may include interpreting religious writings in such a way that they and the women that they live with are under the impression that these ‘writing’s’ condone abusive behaviour and furthermore that women have no recourse or challenge to violence, threats. Across the world, the value and respect given towards women varies greatly between countries, regions, towns and families. In some cultures, women may be greatly valued as care-givers and mothers but not occupy positions of political power. However, international law recognises that women across the world should have equal rights and ensures that violations of women’s rights are judged in the same way as violations of human rights (UN Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women). In practice however this Convention and other similar legal instruments are difficult to implement and do not provide effective protection to all women. In the UK, women do not have equality that is why legislation exists to ensure that steps are taken to improve women’s status in our society these include Equal Opportunities Legislation including Sex Discrimination Act, Equality Act, Equal Pay Act and lately all public authorities have to satisfy the Gender Equality Duty.
4. Some women lie and say they are living with domestic abuse to get leave to remain indefinitely in the UK.

Under the two year rule, women are obliged to provide objective evidence that they are experiencing domestic abuse e.g. police reports, a restraining order, reports from a women’s refuge. Obtaining this can be very difficult particularly for women whose first language is not English and who may be afraid of authorities due to negative experiences in their own countries. Considering the difficulties of gathering this evidence, the shame and difficulties involved in leaving the abusive situation and the length of time it takes the Home Office to process such applications, it seems unlikely that women would make false allegations of domestic abuse.

Some asylum-seeking women may claim asylum on the basis that they are fleeing domestic abuse in their home country and cannot be protected by their own government. Again, women in this situation will be cross-examined on their story by Home Office officials throughout the asylum process and are unlikely to leave their family, friends, possessions and sometimes children behind when fleeing their country without good reason.

5. Domestic Abuse is a child protection issue

Children often witness abuse in their home in number of different ways. They may see or hear the abusive episode, be used or even involved in the violence (eg the child may be in their mother’s arms when she is hit), will experience the aftermath, and sense the tension in the build-up to the abuse. Even when the parents believe the children were unaware of what was happening, the children can often give detailed accounts of the events. As well as the physical violence, the children will almost certainly be subjected to the frequent emotional abuse of the mother in the form of name-calling, accusations and threats made by the abuser in their presence. As mentioned above, where the woman is being abused, the children are also likely to be abused themselves. This is most true of emotional abuse, where the children’s own self-esteem is battered by being shouted at, told they are stupid or are not trying hard enough, or given mixed messages by being favoured one moment and put-down the next. Quite apart from possible physical involvement or direct abuse, these emotionally damaging actions have a detrimental and often long-lasting effect on the children. Therefore it is very much a child protection issue. Very often the best way to protect children is to support and protect their mother, if you have the skills and knowledge risk assessment and safety planning can be a means to empower women to keep themselves and their children safe. Obviously where harmful violence is concerned there will be no option but to involve Social Work in ensuring that the children are safe from hurt and harm.