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National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse
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LGBT+ priorities for the Domestic Abuse Bill

The Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill must recognise domestic violence is a problem for the LGBT+ community and include measures:

- 1. To improve the responses of all services to LGBT+ survivors,**
- 2. To support the creation, and sustainability of specialist programs and services 'led by and for' the communities they aim to serve.**

Galop, the LGBT+ anti-violence charity, welcomes the government's commitment to strengthen existing responses to domestic violence and abuse. We see this as an opportunity to improve responses of criminal justice and other statutory agencies to develop effective measures aimed to build trust and confidence of LGBT+ victims to report and come forward.

Background and current status:

Prevalence and experiences of abuse: National estimates suggest that more than one in four gay men and lesbian women and more than one in three bisexual people report at least one form of domestic abuse since the age of 16¹. While lesbian women report similar rates of domestic abuse to that of heterosexual women, gay and bisexual men might be twice as likely to experience domestic abuse compared to heterosexual men. Evidence also suggests prevalence rates of domestic abuse may be higher for transgender people than any other section of the population.

Barriers in access to services: LGBT+ survivors face additional barriers in access to support and justice due to their sexual orientation and gender identity.² Services fail to appropriately address LGBT+ issues in service provision and delivery, which is the main reason why LGBT+ people fear that they will be misunderstood or dismissed, or that they might receive a discriminatory response. Studies confirm these fears are often confirmed, and far too many LGBT+ survivors are unhappy with the response they get from criminal justice agencies or non-LGBT+ services³.

Underreporting: Approximately 60% to 80% of LGBT+ survivors never reported domestic abuse incidents to the police or try to find advice, support, or protection from organisations and services⁴.

¹ Prevalence of intimate violence among adults aged 16 to 59, by category and sexual identity of the victim, year ending March 2015 Crime Survey for England and Wales:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/adhocs/005900prevalenceofintimateviolenceamongadultsaged16to59bycategoryandsexualidentityofthevictimyearendingmarch2015crimesurveyforenglandandwales>

² Harvey S. et al. (2014). Barriers Faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People in Accessing Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment, and Sexual Violence Services. NatCen Social Research.

³ See Harvey et al (2014) and Roch et al (2010)

⁴ See Fish J. & Hunt R (2008)



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Furthermore, SafeLives estimates nationally, 4% of MARAC cases and 1% of IDVA-supported victims identify as LGBT+⁵.

Service provision: By the end of 2020 there were six voluntary sector providers delivering LGBT+ specialist support based in Birmingham, Brighton, London, Manchester and Sheffield. LGBT+ specialist services often work outside of their geographical remit and beyond their capacity. There are currently no LGBT+-specific refuge services in England and less than 1% of refuges nationally, provide specialist support to LGBT+ survivors⁶. There are currently also no specific NOMS-accredited or other programmes for people who perpetrate domestic abuse in LGBT+ relationships⁷ and only three services in England (based in Birmingham, London and Manchester) currently provide LGBT+ specialist IDVA support.

Key considerations

This briefing sets out key considerations for the Domestic Abuse Bill as outlined by Galop, to support non-legislative measures. Key priorities are developed on the basis of a Joint Submission to Government Consultation on the proposed Domestic Abuse Bill (May 2018, unpublished)⁸:

We recommend that the Bill and its measures address change across three main areas:

Access to services

All services are responsible to ensure that all victims and survivors of domestic abuse can access safe and quality support. However, many LGBT+ survivors have difficulty finding culturally competent and non-traumatizing support due barriers that exist on the level of service delivery and provision.

Recommendations:

- The national VAWG Strategy and Statement of Expectations⁹ should include specific policy statements on the issue of LGBT+ people and domestic abuse. These policies should explicitly outline the measures local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to domestic violence recognises and addresses the barriers facing LGBT+ communities.
- The role of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner should include monitoring and evaluation measures to ensure all statutory agencies are providing appropriate responses and services to LGBT+ victims and perpetrators.

⁵ SafeLives. (2015). Getting it Right First Time.

⁶ Smith, K., & Miles, C. (2017). Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the first year of the No Woman Turned Away project. Bristol: Women's Aid Federation of England.

⁷ NOMS. (2016). NOMS Guidance for Working with Domestic Abuse. London, UK: National Offender Management Service.

⁸ 5. The submission was coordinated by Galop and submitted to the Home Office on 31 May 2018. It outlined key LGBT+ priorities for the Domestic Abuse Bill as shared by 8 community services and 2 individual experts: Galop, Stonewall Housing, RISE, Birmingham LGBT, LGBT Foundation, Independent Choices Greater Manchester, Rainbow Bridge (Cardiff), Safer Wales Dyn Project (Cardiff), Prof Catherine Donovan and James Rowlands.

⁹ Strategy to end violence against women and girls: 2016 to 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>



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Emergency housing, refuge accommodation and support

LGBT+ domestic abuse survivors face unacceptable challenges in accessing emergency housing or specialist refuge places. Housing providers do not always recognise that they have a duty towards LGBT+ survivors. In addition, very few services are specifically designed for lesbian and bisexual women and even fewer for transgender women/men¹⁰. Practice also suggests women focused services might refuse support based on gender identity or perceived gender identity¹¹. For example, trans women fleeing from domestic abuse are routinely refused refuge places or are being asked if they are “pre or post op” before being offered a place. There is also a significant gap in terms of refuge provision for gay and bisexual men fleeing violence and abuse as most refuge spaces are for women and children.

Recommendations:

The role of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner should:

- Introduce measures to meet the level of need nationally and ensure that there is safe and accessible refuge and support accommodation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who are escaping abuse, including LGBT+ people with no recourse to public funds.
- Provide clear guidance for refuge and housing providers to ensure LGBT+ people who are fleeing domestic abuse are able to access appropriate, safe accommodation.

Commissioning and funding of specialist LGBT+ domestic abuse services and programs

Specialist LGBT+ domestic abuse services are most able to respond to the needs of LGBT+ people who are experiencing abuse and are more likely to have the trust and confidence of LGBT+ victims/survivors. The specialist LGBT+ sector has developed innovative solutions and has played an essential part in addressing LGBT+ domestic abuse. LGBT+ specialist organisations also play a critical role in providing knowledge and understanding about transforming services, yet LGBT+ specialist provision across England and Wales is inconsistent and often lacks sustainability.

Recommendations:

The role of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner should:

- Ensure services delivering specialist support to LGBT+ survivors are appropriately resourced and supported by long-term funding which enables and includes evaluation of program impact and outcomes.
- Include specific actions aimed at assessing the needs of high risk LGBT+ survivors to support the increase in numbers of LGBT+ IDVAs.

¹⁰ Stonewall Housing. (2008). Housing options for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people experiencing domestic abuse.

¹¹ Women and Equalities Committee. (2016). Transgender Equality: First Report of Session 2015–16. London: House of Commons.



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- Develop effective commissioning approach of specialist services including measures on how to commission LGBT+ specialist services and/or to ensure that services effectively meet the needs of LGBT+ survivors.
- Develop effective commissioning approach of CJS accredited programs as well as voluntary community based programs offering support to LGBT+ domestic violence perpetrators.

For more information, please contact:

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