

Domestic Violence

A resource for gay & bisexual men



‘He loves me, he loves me not...’

Domestic violence can be difficult to identify, especially for the person experiencing it. People sometimes misunderstand domestic violence and think it is only physical abuse when actually it can be emotional, financial and sexual abuse as well.

Domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviour characterised by the exercise of control by one person over another within the context of an intimate or family relationship.

Gay and bisexual men¹ experience domestic abuse regardless of age, carer responsibility, class, disability, gender origin, immigration status, race or religion. Gay and bisexual men can find it hard to talk about domestic abuse.

Acknowledging that any current or ex-partner or family member is an ‘abuser’ is hard, and this can be made harder by threats of ‘outing’ or because of fear of further isolation, but there are agencies and people who can help and support both you and the ‘abusive’ person.

¹ In this leaflet we refer to gay and bisexual men, although we recognise that men will identify themselves in many ways including (but not limited to) gay, queer and as men who have sex with men.

Abusers often manipulate victims so that they feel they are to blame for the abuse. Sometimes same sex abusers will try to tell their partners that “this is how it is in a gay relationship”.

Abusers often promise to change their behaviour, and the hope for that positive change can keep a victim from identifying the pattern of abuse in the relationship.

Beware if someone is showing you this information to prove to you that you are an abuser. There is no checklist that can determine whether someone is an abuser, one needs to consider the entire relationship and not take individual incidents out of context.

If you are unsure, talk it over with someone objective – or contact a domestic violence helpline or service.

If you are in immediate danger, call 999.

Trans Men

Whilst this leaflet may be useful for trans men who are also part of the gay and bisexual communities, we acknowledge that the trans community may have specific needs and experiences that will not be addressed by this resource.

For more information on trans issues contact the Gender Trust (www.gendertrust.org.uk), a UK organisation that supports anyone affected by gender identity issues.

Alternatively the Survivor Project is an American non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans survivors of domestic violence and abuse:
www.survivorproject.org.

Am I being **abused**?

How can you determine whether you're being abused?

Every relationship is different and many relationships have rough patches with arguments and other turmoil. Though some behaviour may be hurtful, someone is being abusive when their behaviour is intended to have power over you and to control you.

Intimate partner abuse takes many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, identity and financial abuse. The list below outlines some examples of abusive behaviour.

Are you in a relationship with someone who:

- Keeps you from spending time with friends or family members?
- Makes you account for your time when apart from him?
- Is excessively jealous and possessive?
- Makes unreasonable demands for your attention?
- Blames you for all the arguments or problems in the relationship?



- Wants to make all the decisions?
- Invades your privacy – opening your mail, reading your e-mail or going through your personal belongings?
- Gets angry for no apparent reason?
- Seems like two different people – one is charming or loving, the other is mean and hurtful?
- Lies in order to confuse you?
- Criticises, ridicules, humiliates or belittles you?
- Controls your finances or feels entitled to your financial support?
- Damages your property?
- Harasses you at work or school?
- Threatens to out you at work, to your family or to others?
- Criticises your body and appearance?

- Prevents you from practicing safer sex?
- Forces or coerces you to have sex or hurts you during sex?
- Becomes angry if you don't go along with his sexual demands?
- Blames his/her behaviour on alcohol, drugs or his own history of abuse?
- Pressures you to use alcohol or other drugs?
- Threatens you with physical harm or makes you feel afraid?
- Pushes, shoves, grabs, punches, hits or strikes you with hands or fists?
- Threatens or assaults you with weapons, such as household objects or knives?
- Manipulates you with the constant threat of mood changes and impending rage? Has you “walking on eggshells” or living with constant stress, anxiety or fear?



Using someone's sexuality to abuse

Whilst much of the abuse described in the previous section is similar to that experienced by heterosexual men, gay men and bisexual men can also experience unique forms of abuse based on their sexuality.

Many young men experience abuse from family members when they are exploring their sexual identity and coming out as gay or bisexual.

An abuser can use the fact that their victim is gay or bisexual. These can include:

- Threats to 'Out' i.e. to disclose someone's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent for example to their employer or other family members.
- Criticize someone for not being a 'real gay' or 'real bisexual', for example if they have only recently come out or had a previous heterosexual relationship.
- Fears that no-one will help because someone 'deserves' the abuse
- Belief that agencies (like the police) are either homo or biphobic.

Sometimes gay or bisexual men don't feel able to talk to anyone about the abuse they're experiencing because of some of the myths that are around. Such as:

- Abuse between people of the same-sex is 'mutual', so both are equally responsible for any abuse – NOT TRUE
- If abuse occurs, the person experiencing domestic abuse and the perpetrator will 'play-out' heterosexual gender roles (e.g. the abuser is the butch more masculine one) – NOT TRUE
- Abuse is a 'normal' part of relationships between gay and bisexual men. That no one will help a man experiencing domestic violence because they are gay or bisexual – NOT TRUE
- That gay and bisexual men are more able to leave an abusive relationship, perhaps because there are no children, or because they are not the biological parent – NOT TRUE
- That domestic violence does not happen to trans people – NOT TRUE

All these myths are based on misconceptions and are not true. Where someone is experiencing domestic abuse it is because one person (their former or current partner, or a family member) is attempting to exert power and control over them.

It is important to remember that nobody should have to live with violence or the fear of abuse.



Chronic illnesses including HIV/AIDS and domestic violence

Chronic illnesses (eg HIV/AIDS, cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's, etc) can cause tension, stress and a range of other problems within a relationship but they do not cause domestic violence.

Abusive partners (or ex-partners) choose the weapons of abuse and control they use, and their or their partners' health can be used as one of these weapons.

In some abusive relationships the domestic violence began at or around the time that the illness was diagnosed.

In some cases of domestic violence the abusive partner is the one with the illness while in others it is the one without the illness that is abusive.

Within an abusive relationship where either or both of the partners has a chronic illness many of the forms of abuse and control discussed earlier (pages 4-5) may exist.

However there are a number of forms of domestic violence that are specific to relationships where either or both partners have a chronic illness.

If the abusive partner does not have a chronic illness (eg is HIV negative) they may:

- Threaten to, or actually, disclose their partner's health status to friends, family or colleagues.
- Withhold medication, treatments or access to other medical services.
- Threaten to cut off support or to leave.
- Verbally abuse their partner by saying they are 'diseased, sick, unclean' or other inappropriate comments about their illness, or otherwise undermine their partner's confidence.

If the abusive partner does have a chronic illness (eg is HIV positive) they may:

- Use guilt or other psychological abuse to manipulate their partner.
- Refuse to take medication or seek medical services.

- Use their illness to manipulate services, eg saying 'I'm weak and sick, how could I control him?'.
- Where relevant, threaten to, or actually, infect their partner to prevent them leaving.

As sexual assault is a common form of domestic violence, sexually transmissible infections (eg HIV, Hepatitis B) pose a special risk to the uninfected partner.

As well as the domestic violence services listed in this resource, there is a range of support services that someone with a chronic illness can contact.

These include:

National AIDS & Sexual Health Helpline
Free phone 0800 567 123

Hepatitis C Trust Helpline
0870 200 1 200

Terrence Higgins Trust Direct
0845 1221 200

Regard – LGBT Disability Group
020 7688 4111 /
020 7688 0709 (Minicom)

GLAMS – LGBT MS Support Group
07758 146 914

Out With Cancer
www.outwithcancer.com



What to **expect**?

An abuser is reliant upon maintaining his power and control over you. Abusers can be very manipulative in achieving this outcome, but there are some common tactics that they use:

There's no violence so you're not a victim

Most people think of abuse as physical but there are four other types of abuse: emotional, sexual, and financial and identity. Even if he/she's not hitting you, he/she could be abusing you. Verbal or emotional abuse, for example, is almost always used even if physical abuse is not. Abusers can be extremely creative in the types of abuse that they use.

It's normal

Abusers will try to convince their partners that their abusive behaviour is "normal" or "normal for a gay relationship". This tactic is especially effective with people who are inexperienced in gay relationships. Abuse is not normal in any relationship, including gay relationships. Abuse has no part in a healthy relationship.

You're the abuser, i'm the victim

Partners may defend themselves against abuse, such as physical abuse. An abuser may assert that this self-defence is abuse. Or the abuser may claim that the partner is "mutually abusive".

A common characteristic of abusers is the lack of responsibility they take for their own behaviours.

They may accuse their partner of being the “abuser” and they, sometimes, genuinely believe that they are the “abused” party. They may use this claim to manipulate friends, service providers and statutory agencies. An abuser, for example, may seek a civil injunction against his/her partner, claiming the partner is the abuser.

You're to blame

Another ploy is to blame the partner for “making” the abuser abuse. The abuser will claim that he would not abuse if only the partner did X or if the partner didn't do Y. Again, the abuser is trying to shift the responsibility from him to his partner.

Unfortunately, this tactic is all too successful. Partners often assume responsibility not only for the abuser's behaviour but also for the relationship as a whole. The reality is that you are not to blame, his violence is a choice he makes not you.

It's the stress, the drugs...

Abusers sometimes claim that some circumstance forces them to abuse and if only the circumstance were to change, they would stop.

They blame their abusive behaviour on such circumstances as stress, lack of a job or the use of drugs or alcohol.

Violence is a choice he makes. There is a common misconception that drugs and alcohol cause domestic violence because he loses control. This is not true. While it can act to exacerbate the incident, research shows us that even if he is drunk or high he is still in control and making a choice whether or not to be abusive.

For example, he chooses to abuse you rather than the barman or his boss. This demonstrates that his abuse of you is considered and choice based. There always will be some circumstance that in their minds justifies their abusive behaviour.

Promises, promises

Abusers commonly promise to change – to stop abusing, to stop using drugs, to stop whatever. These promises often follow an abusive incident. The goal of these promises is to win back the partner and to hold him in the relationship.

The abusers may believe their own promises, but the goal of the promises is not to reform their behaviour but to keep their partner.

Once the partner indicates that he is staying in the relationship, the promise is forgotten. If an abuser is genuinely remorseful he will engage meaningfully with a specialist perpetrator programme.

No legal protection

Abusers may attempt to convince their partners that no one will help them and that they are not entitled to legal protection from abuse. This is not true; the UK Government defines domestic abuse as:

‘Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality’.

There is help available and there are specific services such as Broken Rainbow to support gay men who are in abusive relationships.

It is possible to obtain same sex injunctions and there are civil legal options as well, so there is legal help out there. If you are not a British citizen, your abuser may also threaten that you will be deported if you leave him. If you have insecure immigration status you should seek advice from a solicitor because it might affect your access to public funds.



Ending the **abuse**

Experience has shown that once abuse begins it is very likely to continue and become more frequent and more severe over time. Research suggests that abusers are also very unlikely to end the relationship.

Partners can and do have compelling reasons to stay in an abusive relationship.

It is very difficult to admit that the person you love is abusing you and leaving them can mean leaving your home, community and changing your life.

Separation can also be a very dangerous time, as the abuser wants to keep hold of the relationship and their control.

Abusers rarely end the relationship because in most cases they psychologically need the partner more than the partner needs them.

They can be quite successful at hiding their dependency on the partner and their fear of losing him, and they often work to convince the partner that he would be lost without the abuser.



Abusers may also threaten to harm themselves if a partner says they want to end the relationship. This can mean that out of concern, partners remain in the relationship.

Whether a partner stays or leaves, it is wise to have a safety or crisis plan to maximize his safety.

If you are experiencing any form of domestic violence you might consider making a crisis plan. A crisis plan can set out what you could do under certain circumstances to help reduce the risk of emotional or physical injury to yourself (and your children).

Your crisis plan can include strategies for reducing risk to yourself while living with your partner or it may outline how you could get away. You can make a crisis plan on your own or speak with a trusted friend, a counsellor or a Domestic Violence worker.

If you require assistance in constructing a safety plan, please contact Barking and Dagenham Domestic Violence Advocacy Agency on: 07812 999 798 or 07971 114 232.

What to do

As a gay or bisexual man you are entitled to the same provisions afforded to heterosexual men. Reach out for help! There is help available.

If your partner (or ex-partner) has assaulted you or you are afraid for your own or for others' safety you can call the police. The Metropolitan Police are committed to holding domestic violence offenders accountable and they will arrest given reasonable grounds.

Where the evidence exists, the police are also able to pursue offenders without having to rely upon a victim statement. The police have the power to provide you with immediate protection at any time of the day or night. **Call 999.**

The police have guidelines that instruct them to respond to domestic violence in a particular way. They should:

- Respond promptly;
- Ensure your safety;
- Stop the violence;
- Thoroughly investigate what has happened;
- Speak to you and your partner separately;

- Get a statement from you and any witnesses;
- Collect evidence; take photos of any injuries and the scene;
- Arrest the violent person if they have committed a criminal offence. Gay men often do not reach out for help because they don't think there is any help out there for them; and,
- Carry out a risk assessment.

However, all statutory agencies have a duty to respond to all members of the public, regardless of sexuality. The few exceptions would be voluntary sector led women-only services such as refuges. In addition, services specifically for gay men do exist, but they are limited.

There are gay-friendly services of all types such as mental and physical health care providers, counsellors, social service agencies, housing support and support groups.

In February, the Equality Act (2006) was passed by Parliament. The Act gives the government powers to introduce regulations outlawing discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in regards to access to goods, facilities and services.

This means that service providers from hotels to GPs, shops to local authorities cannot refuse to serve LGB people or offer them a service of lesser quality than that provided to heterosexuals.

For more information go to:
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/> or
<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

The contact details for a range of organisations are included at the end of this leaflet.

Computer safety **warning**

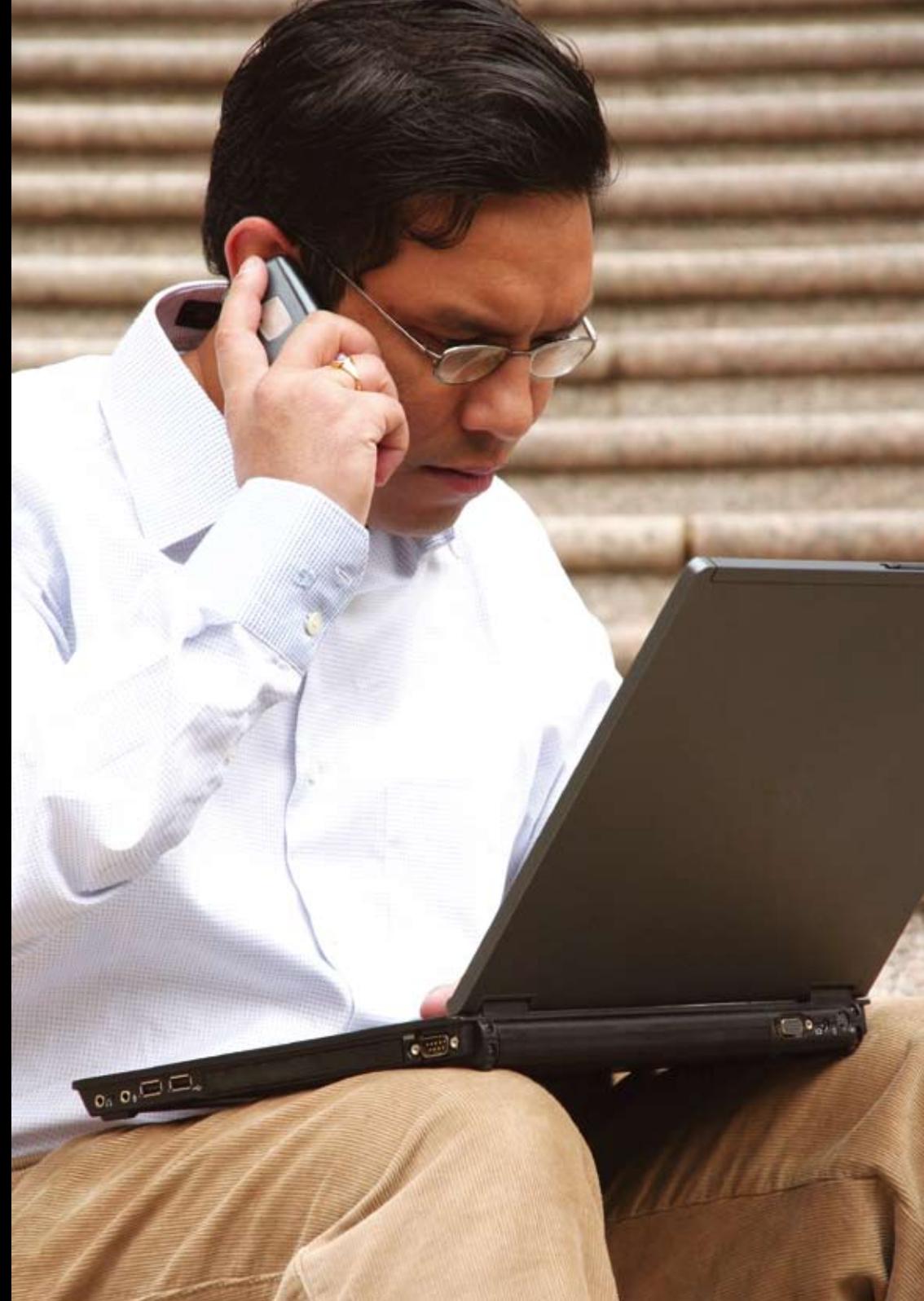
For your own safety – when you search for information or communicate about partner abuse - do not use any computer to which your abuser has access.

Your Internet, e-mail and document use activities leave traces on your computer that can be found by your abuser.

Ideally, use a computer to which he/she does not have access, such as at work, in a library, or a friend's or family member's computer.

If you do use your own computer, there are some basic steps that can provide some measure of protection and to remove most traces of your computer activities. Guidance on how to clear your computer of information can regularly change.

Although primarily written for women there is really helpful information and advice on how to clear your computer of cookies, temporary website files, browser and search engine history go to the Women's Aid website at: www.womensaid.org.uk and click on the 'cover your tracks online' tab in the top right-hand corner.



About **abusers**

The most frequently reported reason why partners stay in abusive relationships is “hope for change”. Partners believe the abuser’s promises to get help or to change.

Experience shows that once a person begins to abuse, the problem is likely to get worse. Review the Types of Abuse, the examples of abusive tactics to get a perspective on your own experience (p3).

Abusers may feel guilty and apologetic after an abusive incident and promise themselves and their partner that they will change. Unfortunately, even with the best intentions, most abusers do not stop being abusive without support.

Respect is the UK association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services. Respect runs the Respect Phonenumber, a helpline for anyone concerned about their violence and abuse towards their partner.

The Respect Phonenumber provides information about specialist behaviour-change programmes across the country, some of which work with gay men.

Respect Phonenumber

0845 122 8609

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday

10am - 1pm & 2pm - 5pm

The **Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP)** is an independent voluntary sector project based across several sites in London which works to increase the safety of children and adults from domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Intervention Project

020 8555 8979

Useful contacts

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES

Broken Rainbow

08452 60 44 60 or <http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk/>
Support for LGBT people experiencing domestic violence.

The National 24 Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247
24 hour freephone national domestic violence helpline operated in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge.

Bede House

020 7232 1107/020 7237 9162 or www.bedehouse.org
Provides practical and emotional support and advocacy for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Trans people who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse. Working with people who live, work, study or socialise in Southwark.

Galop

0207 704 2030 (Shoutline) or www.galop.org.uk
Provides information, advice and practical support to LGBT Londoners who have experienced homophobic or transphobic abuse, sexual abuse, problems with the police, or domestic violence.

Galop can help people report homophobic or transphobic crime to the police through our anonymous 3rd party reporting scheme.

The Havens

<http://www.thehavens.co.uk/>
Anyone in London who has been raped or sexually assaulted can come to a Haven. Women, men and children can all attend.

Respect

0845 122 8609 or <http://www.respect.uk.net/>
For people who are abusive to their partners and want to stop.

Survivors UK

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 7pm – 10pm on:
0845 122 1201
A national organisation providing information, support and counselling for men who have been raped or sexually abused.

INTERNATIONAL WEBSITES FOR GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project

www.gmdvp.org

Another Closet

www.ssdv.acon.org.au

Right Here, Right Now

www.rightrightnow.acon.org.au/domestic_violence

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Antidote

Turning Point Hungerford Drug Project
32a Wardour Street, Soho

020 7437 3523 or <http://www.thehungerford.org/antidote.asp>

Offers information and support exclusively to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) people around drugs and alcohol. Whether you want to cut down, stop using or drinking, or want information about keeping safe Antidote can help.

Lesbian and Gay Youth Service – Drug & Alcohol Services London

020 7702 0002 or wreckedagain@dasl.org.uk or www.dasl.org.uk

Offers one to one support via email and telephone. Also run the Gay Man's Peer education project and info and advice for professionals.

HOUSING

Albert Kennedy Trust

020 7831 6562 (London) or <http://www.akt.org.uk>

Provide housing support and advice to young LGBT people up to the age of 25 years old

Rainer Housing

020 8693 3311 or <http://www.raineronline.org>

Provides supporting housing to LGBT young people, aged 16-21 years old in South London

Shelter

0808 800 4444 or <http://www.shelter.org.uk/>

A free, national telephone advice line staffed by trained housing advisers. We have helped thousands of people, from finding them a place to sleep to suggesting how to handle mortgage arrears.

Stonewall Housing

020 7359 5767 or <http://www.stonewallhousing.org/>

Provides supported housing, advice and advocacy for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in London.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Care in East London and Essex

CARESS, PO Box 551, Dagenham, RM83BZ

020 8220 0112 or 020 8220 0112 (Fax) or caress@poboxes.com

Offers help and support to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

PACE

0808 1807 223 (helpline) or <http://www.pacehealth.org.uk/>

London's leading charity promoting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Lighthouse West London (Terrence Higgins Trust Lighthouse)

Address: 111 - 117 Lancaster Road, London, W11 1QT

020 7792 1200 (office) or

0845 122 1200 (for service information)

Email: information@lighthouse-west.org.uk

Website: www.tht.org.uk

London Lighthouse West London is a support centre for people living with HIV.

GLAMS

0208 438 0959 or http://www.mssociety.org.uk/support_and_services/support_groups/gay_and_lesbian.html

GLAMS is a national self-help support group for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people affected by MS.

Regard – LGBT (Disability Group)

020 7688 4111 / 020 7688 0709 (Minicom)

For the contact details of other generic and LGBT organisations consult 'Stonewall' below or <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/information%5Fbank/disability/>

BLACK, ASIAN & MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Naz Project London

020 8741 1879 or <http://www.naz.org.uk/>

Provides sexual health and HIV prevention and support services to targeted Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in London.

Somalian Gay Community

Email: info@somaligaycommunity.org

Website: www.somaligaycommunity.org

An online space and medium for Somalian gay and lesbians to access information, share experiences and develop support networks.

OLDER PEOPLE

Age Concern

0800 00 99 66 (helpline) or http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/lesbian_gay_links.asp#Older

The UK's largest charity working with and for older people.

Polari

<http://www.casweb.org/polari/>

An independent lesbian and gay organisation that works for better services for older lesbians, gay men bisexuals and transgender people.

TRANS PEOPLE

FTM London

www.ftmlondon.org.uk

Peer support network for Female to Male transgender individuals living and working in London.

Gender Trust National Helpline

0845 231 0505 (national helpline) or

<http://www.gendertrust.org.uk>

A charity working to help adults throughout the United Kingdom who are Transsexual, Gender Dysphoric, Transgender (i.e. those who seek to adjust their lives to live as women or men, or come to terms with their situation despite their genetic background), or those whose lives are affected by gender identity issues.

OTHER LGBT ORGANISATIONS

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

020 7837 7324 or <http://www.llgs.org.uk/>

London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard (LLGS) provides an information, support and referral service for lesbians, gay men, bisexual people and anyone who needs to consider issues around their sexuality.

Stonewall

08000 50 20 20 (Info Line) or http://www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/

Stonewall works to achieve equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. Stonewall's Information Service provides details about a number of different topics and local support groups, activities and services for lesbian gay and bisexual people.

FOR PRACTITIONERS

Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA)

www.caada.org.uk

A charity established to encourage the use of independent advocacy as a way to increase the safety of survivors. CAADA has an extensive library of resources, including information relating to LGBT people, available at:

http://www.caada.org.uk/library_resources.html#11

For guidance relating to LGBT and MARACs (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) go to:

<http://www.caada.org.uk/toolkits.html>

Greater London Domestic Violence Project (GLDVP)

www.gldvp.org.uk

GLDVP is a second tier service for the London domestic violence sector, which was set up in 1997. It works to strengthen the sector by identifying common goals, promoting joint planning and minimum standards between agencies, ensuring that good practice in domestic violence work is transferred across London.

LGBT Domestic Abuse Forum

<http://www.gldvp.org.uk/>

The LGBT Domestic Abuse Forum is a network of practitioners, activists and researchers working around the issue of LGBT domestic abuse. It exists to provide a forum in which to meet, network and exchange good practice.

For more information contact the Co-Chairs on:

lgbtforum@gldvp.org.uk

Acknowledgements

In 2007 Barking and Dagenham PCT was asked to be a demonstration site for NHS London to look at ways the NHS could better engage with issues relating to domestic violence. This resource is part of a range of resources being developed as part of the demonstration year.

There is more information available at www.bdpct.nhs.uk

