

**BRIEFING: Access to housing for lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women, who are also at risk from hate crime, violence, abuse or exploitation**

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**1. Context**

**1.1. Hate crime**

The Crown Prosecution Service defines a hate crime as “a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim’s disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity.”<sup>1</sup>

In 2017 Stonewall found in their report “LGBT in Britain, Hate Crime and Discrimination” that one in five LGBT people have experienced a hate crime or hate incident due to their sexual orientation and or gender identity in the past year. Four out of five LGBT people who has experienced a hate crime or incident did not report it to the police. Participants in the research reported experiencing a range of hate crimes. One in four LGBT people experienced unwanted sexual contact; one in five LGBT people were threatened with violence or use of force, and one in ten LGBT people were physically assaulted, with or without a weapon.<sup>2</sup>

**1.2. Barriers to seeking support due to experiences of Hate Crimes**

The frequency and consequently the normalisation of experiences of abuse in the LBT community act as one of the key barriers to reporting. This form of abuse can be seen as something that should be inevitable and expected; the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that the belief that homophobic/biphobic/transphobic abuse was ‘just something you have

<sup>1</sup> Crown Prosecution Service website: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/hate-crime>

<sup>2</sup> Bachmann, C. and Gooch, B., Stonewall, 2017. LGBT in Britain: Hate Crime and Discrimination. [https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/lgbt\\_in\\_britain\\_hate\\_crime.pdf](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/lgbt_in_britain_hate_crime.pdf)

to put up with' was one of the four key barriers to access support or reporting the crime:<sup>3</sup> Linked to this is a lack of certainty that an incident of abuse would be classed as a crime; in a 2016 survey Galop found this was the reason 22% of respondents identified as a reason for not reporting a hate incident/crime.

*When someone shouts something at us, we don't class that as abuse.  
We don't class that as a serious offence"*

Lesbian, 20s<sup>4</sup>

This normalisation and minimisation can also result in the belief that, even where the abuse is identified as a criminal act, reporting would be a waste of police time and resources. This was one of the main barriers identified in the Equality and Human Right's Commission's 2015 research.<sup>5</sup>

This also speaks to a lack of trust in the response of the criminal justice system. This is a common theme cutting across research in to LGBT reporting of Hate Crimes. This can be attributed to a variety of things, including a perception that the reporting process is time-consuming, confusing and unlikely to yield a successful outcome;<sup>6</sup> and a lack of trust in the police response. LGBT people have reported they fear that they would not be taken seriously or be ignored by the police;<sup>7</sup> fears that reporting homophobic, biphobic and transphobic abuse will result in them being 'outed' due to the police mishandling the information<sup>8</sup>, and a fear of a negative reaction from police to their identity.<sup>9</sup> These fears are not unfounded; Galop found that 50% of those who had reported a Hate Crime were dissatisfied with the response.

### 1.3. Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is most often perpetrated by men and experienced by women. While it is important to acknowledge this, only framing domestic abuse within this context can exclude those experiencing domestic abuse outside this model; including the LGBT community.

Research around LBT women's experiences have shown different pictures of the prevalence of domestic abuse. Figures consistently indicate however, that LBT women are at least as likely as their non LBT counterparts to experience domestic abuse. Stonewall found that one in four lesbians and bisexual women have experienced domestic abuse in a relationship, equivalent to the general population. More than four in ten (44%) lesbian and bisexual women who have

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<sup>3</sup> Chakraborti, N. and Hardy, S.J., University of Leicester, 2015. LGB&T Hate Crime Reporting: Identifying Barriers and Solutions. Available from: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-lgbt-hate-crime-reporting-identifying-barriers-and-solutions.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p.14

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p.19

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Antjoule, N., Galop, 2016. The Hate Crime Report 2016: Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the UK. Available from: <https://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Hate-Crime-Report-2016.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Chakraborti, N. and Hardy, S.J., University of Leicester, 2015. LGB&T Hate Crime Reporting: Identifying Barriers and Solutions. Available from: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-lgbt-hate-crime-reporting-identifying-barriers-and-solutions.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Antjoule, N., Galop, 2016. The Hate Crime Report 2016: Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the UK. Available from: <https://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Hate-Crime-Report-2016.pdf>

reported experiencing domestic abuse reported that they had experienced the abuse for more than one year.<sup>10</sup>

LBT women's experiences of abuse will often be similar to those who do not identify as LBT, for example through dynamics of power and control. There will often be unique aspects of this control however, for example abuse is often targeted at LBT women's sexual orientation or gender identity. Stonewall found that for 51% of transgender people who had experienced domestic abuse, their gender identity had been ridiculed by their partner and/or used as a Means of control. They also found partners of 13% of LGBT people who had experienced domestic abuse had threatened to 'out' them.

There is however underreporting of abuse; Stonewall found that four in five lesbian and bisexual women who had experienced domestic abuse have never reported incidents to the police.

#### **1.4. Barriers to seeking support due to experiences of domestic abuse**

As discussed above the LGBTQ community frequently experience abuse in the form of Hate crimes from wider society. The intersection of different forms of abuse can increase risk and vulnerability factors to further abuse, and result in barriers to seeking support.

The range of experiences of interpersonal and institutional abuse based on sexual orientation and gender identity can deter LBT women from accessing mainstream support services. For example, if an individual had reported Hate Crime, and they encountered a homophobic response from the police that included a lack of belief or minimisation of the crime, this would impact a person's likelihood to later report domestic abuse within their relationship. This results in specific challenges when attempting to access support services such as housing services where police evidence is often requested despite government guidance.

While the fear of not being believed by services and those around you is a barrier to many fleeing domestic abuse, this can be particularly powerful for the LGBT community. Stigma's such as not being able to experience abuse as an LBT woman still continue. Stonewall found that 62% of the LBT population who reported domestic abuse to the police were unsatisfied with the outcome.<sup>11</sup>

Barriers to reporting Hate Crimes discussed above also relate to LBT women reporting experiences of domestic abuse and include concerns around homophobia, biphobia and transphobia within institutions; an incident being seen as too minor to seek support and having to disclose your sexual orientation or gender identity in order to report the crime or access certain services.<sup>12</sup>

Research conducted on LBT experiences of domestic abuse in the UK raised that while LBT women can access mainstream services there is little visibility and representation of the issues and challenges LBT women face in these services:

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<sup>10</sup> Guasp, A. and Taylor, J., Stonewall, 2012. Domestic Abuse: Stonewall health briefing. Available from: [https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/Domestic\\_Abuse\\_Stonewall\\_Health\\_Briefing\\_2012\\_.pdf#](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/Domestic_Abuse_Stonewall_Health_Briefing_2012_.pdf#)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Galop. Barriers Faced by LGBT people in Accessing Non-LGBT Domestic Violence Services. Available from: <http://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/For-Service-Providers-Barriers.pdf>

*LGBT people are reluctant to go to mainstream services. There's no mentioning of us anywhere. If I've had my share of homophobic abuse I need to see that staff is aware of my needs. But if they don't even acknowledge that in their publicising...?*

Helpline worker, LGBT organisation<sup>13</sup>

This research highlighted a lack of awareness of domestic violence within the LBT community among mainstream services. Professionals across different organisations including mainstream services highlighted a need for LGBT sensitive training that provided “specific information on how sexualities, culture and gender might impact on people’s ability to overcome personal and structural barriers in accessing domestic abuse services”<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. Making the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal more accessible

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal is currently accessible for anyone fleeing violence in their borough. However as highlighted in the research, in order to make services more inclusive and therefore accessible partnerships need to be developed with LGBT organisations. It is also important to emphasise that a service is inclusive of LBT women.

Barriers also include a lack of identification of e.g. domestic violence among professionals in mainstream organisations such as Housing or police.

Rather than adapting the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal pathway we believe that focus needs to be placed on building and maintaining relationships with organisations supporting the LGBT community, both around violence and other issues. LBT women are more likely to approach these organisations/communities rather than statutory services and it is important they are aware of all pathways available to them.

As coordinators of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal we also have the opportunity to speak to our Housing partners about different issues those experiencing violence may face. Through providing guidance and training to housing professionals about LBT women’s experiences of violence and the barriers they may face in accessing support we can improve the sectors response to this group of women.

## 3. Mapping of specialist services in London

### ELOP

Elop is a holistic lesbian and gay centre that offers a range of social, emotional and support services to LGBT communities. Their core services include counselling and young people’s service based in East London. ELOP delivers a range of services including counselling, advice and information, support and advocacy, and community safety and victim care services.

<http://elop.org/#about>

<sup>13</sup> Viggiani, G. (ed.), 2016. Domestic and Dating Violence Against LBT Women in the EU. Available from: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/research-book-eng.pdf> pp.151-152

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.152

## **Galop**

Galop is an LGBTQ+ anti-violence charity. They give advice and support to people who have experienced biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexual violence or domestic abuse. They also support lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer people who have had problems with the police or have questions about the criminal justice system. They have specific programmes to support people experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence and Hate Crime, alongside a specialist trans-advocacy project and young person's project.

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

## **Camden LGBT Forum**

Camden LGBT Forum is run by LGBT people for LGBT people and holds a meeting every month open to all LGBT people in the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington and those with concerns about LGBT issues.

<http://camdenlgbtforum.org.uk/the-forum/>

## **East London Women's Project**

East London Women's Project (ELWP) is shared supported accommodation for single female survivors of domestic violence or other forms of gender-based violence, who have multiple support needs such as mental health issues, health problems, street homelessness, offending history, sex working or substance use. ELWP welcomes referrals for self-defining lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women.

<http://newsite.elhp.org.uk/homelessness/east-london-womens-project/>

## **London Friend**

London Friend is a charity working to improve the health and well-being of LGBT people. It is the oldest LGBT charity in the UK, providing services, including specialist LGBT counselling, since 1972. As a partner in the DAP London Friend provides one-to-one counselling and workshops for LGBT people affected by domestic abuse. In addition to the work in domestic abuse London Friend also provides services including coming out groups, trans groups, social and other support groups, HIV prevention, and Antidote, the LGBT drug and alcohol service

[www.londonfriend.org.uk](http://www.londonfriend.org.uk)

## **London LGBT Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP)**

The London LGBT Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP) is a partnership between Galop, Stonewall Housing, Switchboard the LGBT+ helpline, and London Friend, who each provide different services for LGBT victims/survivors of domestic abuse. The partnership provides a way for LGBT victims/survivors of domestic abuse to get the maximum amount of help with a minimum amount of hassle. The DAP is open to any LGBT person experiencing domestic violence who is living or working in London.

[www.lgbtdap.org.uk](http://www.lgbtdap.org.uk)

## **Metro**

Metro provide health, community and youth services across London and the South East for the LGBT+ community. Metro can support people experiencing Hate Crime through reporting incidents anonymously to the police on service user's behalf and supporting service users help you make a report themselves. They can advocate on behalf of people to ensure they get the right

support from local councils, housing services or police. They can also help people get counselling and social support.

<https://metrocharity.org.uk/community/lgbt-hate-crime>

### **National LGBT Hate Crime Partnership**

The National LGBT Hate Crime Partnership brings together 35 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) organisations from across England, Wales and Scotland. Delivered for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the partnership led by the LGBT Consortium aims to increase the reporting of Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Hate Crimes and incidents and improve the support available to those targeted.

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

### **Switchboard**

Switchboard aims to promote the health, wellbeing and happiness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people in the UK by providing them with high quality peer-led support and information services. When callers ring us with domestic abuse issues we offer support using active listening skills providing emotional support and then referring them on to partner agencies in the DAP for more ongoing help and support.

<http://switchboard.lgbt>

### **Stonewall Housing**

Stonewall Housing is London's specialist LGBT housing advice and support provider. Stonewall Housing has a specialist domestic abuse case worker who can give advice and help to LGBT survivors of DV who need assistance with housing. Services include:

- Exploring options around accommodation
- Making you safer at home
- Options and help on finding safe accommodation
- Advocating on your behalf with housing providers

[www.stonewallhousing.org](http://www.stonewallhousing.org)

### **Albert Kennedy Trust**

Albert Kennedy Trust supports lgbtq+ young people in the UK experiencing homelessness or living in hostile environments to find safe homes, employment, education or training and to celebrate their identities in order to improve their life outcomes. They offer support to:

- Stay safe in a crisis
- Find emergency accommodation
- Access specialist support
- Develop skills, identify and achieve life goals

<https://www.akt.org.uk/>

### **The Outside Project**

The Outside Project launched the first UK's first LGBTIQ+ Crisis/Homeless Shelter & Community Centre in response to those within the LGBTIQ+ community who feel endangered, who are homeless, 'hidden' homeless & feel that they are on the outside of services due to historical & present prejudice in society & in their homes.

<http://lgbtiqoutside.org/>

## 4. References

Antjoule, N., Galop, 2016. The Hate Crime Report 2016: Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the UK. Available from: <https://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Hate-Crime-Report-2016.pdf>

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*Briefing written by the Domestic Abuse, Housing and Policy Team at Safer London as part of the project 'Preventing homelessness for women and girls in social housing facing VAWG and multiple disadvantage'*

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