

Report to Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group

Provision for Male Victims of Domestic Violence

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Male and Female Victims in context

When talking about male victims it is important to put in the context of victims who are female:

- 89% of those subject to 4 or more incidents are women (*Home Office Research Study 276*)
- Women experience a greater amount and more severe abuse from male partners
- 50% of male victims experienced partner abuse for less than a month, compared to 32% of female victims (*Povey et al, 2008*)
- Approx 50% of heterosexual men referred to the Men DV Project have a history of perpetrating domestic abuse (*Robinson and Rowlands, 2006*)
- A greater number of incidents attributed to men, as either sole or dual perpetrators
- Violence used by men was much more severe (*Hester, 2009*)

Male Victims

It is acknowledged that men can also be victims of DV in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. The main group of men which has been referred to the MARAC are those who are being abused by adult children/grandchildren. Men often require a different type of support that is tailored to them and is reflected in some of the statistics above. Even though the DV 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.

Services for Male Victims

There are services which male victims can access within Bucks. The Men's Advice Line is a national helpline which is run by RESPECT and funded by the Home Office specifically for male victims. Calls to Men's Advice Line in 2009 were:

Bucks – 15
Oxfordshire – 31
Berkshire - 23

The other national helpline is for LGBT victims, called Broken Rainbow. Within the county all the services which currently support those who are experiencing DV, within their generic role, that is Health, Social Care, Police all support men in the same way they would support a women. Referrals can also be made to the MARAC and IDVA for those that are high risk. Voluntary agencies where male victims can access support from Victim Support and RELATE.

There are a number of barriers that may exist for male victims:

- Gender stereotypes of 'victims' (for victim/survivors and professionals) can be a barrier
- Often reluctant to access services
- Less likely to disclose their experience
- trivialise milder forms of abuse and violence
- Injury as a marker of 'the victim'
- Services are usually targeted towards women
- Applicability of risk indicators checklists and multiagency arrangements
- Legal implications
- The nature of support sought

When looking at services for men it is important to take a number of things into consideration. It is essential to develop appropriate services for men and these services need a clear definition of DV. There needs to be a clear screening protocol this is essential in order to identify, and respond appropriately, to counter allegations, as male perpetrators often present to services as victims (some men's support services have identified up to 50% of those presenting as victims are perpetrators). Following on from this any service must have the capacity to risk assess and as risk is a dynamic process and no one agency has the true picture it is important that work with men who have experienced DV must take place within a multi-agency setting.