

LGBT Domestic Abuse and Violence A Guide for Reps

What is domestic abuse?

The government definition of domestic abuse is:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

Emotional	Making the victim feel guilty or responsible for the abuse/situation, or fearful or obligated to the perpetrator.
Physical	e.g. spitting, pinching, punching, slapping, non-consensual restraint causing discomfort, injury or bodily harm.
Psychological	‘Silent treatment’, sleep deprivation, setting up to fail, monitoring your phone, texts and search history, harassing you at work/when you are out, gaslighting i.e. false information presented to the victim causing them to doubt their own memory and perception.
Sexual	Any unwanted or coerced sexual behaviour e.g. rape, coerced into sex, forced into having unsafe sex.
Financial	Withholding money, using your money, coercion to borrow, beg or steal money, shifting financial responsibility to the victim such as loans in your name and running up debts.
Controlling behaviour	A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
Coercive behaviour	An act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is use to harm, punish or frighten their victim.
Identity abuse	Examples are provided below e.g. being ‘outed’ to their family.

Unique Forms of LGBT Domestic Abuse

LGB and /or T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse and violence motivated by homophobia, biphobia and/or transphobia. • Being ‘outed’* or threatened with being ‘outed’. (* i.e. to disclose someone’s sexuality and/or gender identify without their consent). • Reinforcing fears, isolation or lack of self-worth that no one will help them because of their sexual or gender orientation. e.g. “The police are homophobic and won’t care or help you”. • Claiming abuse and violence is normal in LGBT relationships, is part of ‘playing out’ butch/fem, active/passive, etc. roles or is mutual so both are responsible for any abuse. • Isolating victim from LGBT friends, family and support networks. • Telling victim/survivor they are not LGBT because of the way they look, act, speak, or past relationships. • Perpetrator’s own fear of being ‘outed’.
Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploiting internalised transphobia. • Undermining identity – e.g. ridicule or misusing pronouns, criticisms and abuse about not being a ‘real man’ or ‘real woman’ and about appearance, dress, voice quality, grooming, etc. • Taking advantage of the lack of discrimination protection e.g. housing. • Destroying or withholding clothing or medication. • Preventing a trans person from transitioning. • Coercing a trans person to get medical or surgical treatment to change their body back to what the abuser wants it to be. • Sexual or physical touch of a person’s body that does not respect their gender identity. • Forced marriage of transgender people to ‘correct’ or hide the person’s gender non-conformity.
Forced marriage	<p>Because of actual or perceived sexuality and/or gender identity, forced marriage is a way to coerce and pressurise LGBT individual into a marriage and deny their sexuality and/or gender identity.</p>
‘Honour’ based violence (HBV)	<p>Honour based abuse and violence against LGBT individuals are often also used to ‘cure’ the sexuality or gender ‘problems’.</p>

The Crown Prosecution Service and the Association of Chief Police Officers have a common definition of honour based violence:

" 'Honour based violence' is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community."

Such crimes cut across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups and communities. They transcend national and international boundaries. HBV can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members.

Examples include (but are not exhaustive):

- actual or potential abuse or violence
- domestic abuse or violence
- false imprisonment
- corrective rape
- sexual abuse
- kidnapping
- forced marriage
- murder
- unexplained death or suicide
- child abuse
- children taken from the victim/survivor

Facts about LGBT Domestic Abuse and Domestic Violence

1. 60% of LGBT victims or survivors experience four or more types of abuse.
2. 1 in 2 LGBT victims or survivors experienced more than twenty abusive incidents before seeking help.
3. 2 out of 3 said the severity of abuse increased over time.
4. Ex-partners are more likely to be perpetrators, although partners, close and extended family members are also key abusers.
5. Personal physical and mental health declined most whilst waiting for help.
6. Friends are most likely to be turned to for help and were most likely to provide help and support by way of having someone to talk to, advice and somewhere to stay.
7. Almost 7 out of 10 of those individuals abused did not try to find advice, support, accommodation and/or protection through the civil or criminal courts, or some other form of help.

(Based on ROAR summary report, 'Roar: because silence is deadly', September 2013)

Some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who is affected by DV?

Anyone! Trans women, bisexual women, lesbians, trans men, bisexual men, gay men

Does lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic violence exist?

Broken Rainbow's national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic violence helpline took more than 3,000 calls in 2010. They spoke to callers for over 35 hours on LGBT DV, signposting, listening, talking through issues. Surveys show that at least 1 in 4 LGBT people experience domestic violence. LGBT domestic violence exists. It is real.

When two women fight isn't it just a lover's tiff?

There is nothing blasé about violence in a relationship and referring to it this way minimises the impact it has and is one reason why LGBT domestic violence remains a hidden issue.

When two men fight isn't it just sex games like S&M?

S&M is a consensual sexual practice. Domestic violence is abusive and one sided and features no such consent. Sexual role play is not the same as domestic violence.

Isn't LGBT domestic violence the same as heterosexual domestic violence?

In some ways it is, but there are very important differences. One main point is the lack of support services available to LGBT DV sufferers. Another is having to 'out' yourself to report the domestic violence. Add to that, the services needed to support us may create problems by classing domestic violence as common assault, or mistaking/not being able to identify the primary perpetrator. This all means LGBT people have extra problems getting help.

How can it be domestic violence if the smaller person hits the bigger one?

Size and stature is not reflected in ones abusive behaviour. Just because someone is smaller, does not mean they cannot hit you, destroy your possessions, threaten to out you to your friends and family, control your finances or belittle you in front of others.

(Based on Broken Rainbow's FAQs: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk/frequently-asked-questions.php)

Impact of Domestic Abuse and Domestic Violence

In October 2013, the LGBT Domestic Abuse Forum and its partners surveyed LGBT victims and survivors of DA/DV and the main detrimental impacts on them:

1. Physical and mental health worsens
2. Loss of contact with support networks like family, friends, perhaps even colleagues
3. Forced to take part in sexual activity
4. Debt, bankruptcy
5. Lost home, forced to leave home, captive in home or became homeless

6. Left work, study, training
7. 'Outed' to others – sexual orientation and/or gender identity
8. Health, safety and security of dependents worsened
9. Coerced into illegal activity
10. Miscarried / abortion

(Source: 'ROAR: because silence is deadly', LGBT DAF, Summary report, p.9. 2013)

Why don't victims leave the situation and seek help?

There are many barriers to getting help. Some are listed here:

For victims/survivors:

1. Hoping things would get better – this is the biggest obstacle to seeking help.
2. Don't recognise that they are in an abusive relationship or situation.
3. Abuser promises to change.
4. Belief that they are the abuser and the perpetrator is the victim.
5. Feeling they would not be taken seriously.
6. Fear of the consequences such as worsening poverty, health, social isolation, and of increased violence to self or dependents, or loss of dependents.
7. Thinking the abusive or violent incidents are not that serious.
8. Don't believe there is available help, or unsure about where to find help. Fear of being found out they were seeking help.
9. Wanting to sort things out on their own.
10. No money.
11. Nowhere to go.
12. Avoiding bringing trouble to others.
13. Wanting to avoid strangers.
14. Fear of 'outing' themselves or the abuser even.
15. Constant questioning and 'outing' themselves to each and every person or service provider.

Other Barriers:

1. Lack of understanding about LGBT identities, relationships and experiences by employers, service providers, reps, and by the victims or survivors themselves.
2. Double victimisation – 'coming out' in order to access services may cause additional discrimination and hardship.
3. Lack of trust or previous bad experiences with the justice system and support services.
4. Mainstream services are not suitable or appropriate, or non-existent e.g. housing or refuge services for LGBT people.
5. Falling through the gaps between support services and/or the justice sector.

Domestic Abuse and Domestic Violence is a Workplace Issue

Regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any other equality and diversity characteristic, DA and DV is a matter for the employers and reps to sensitively advise and support victims.

Going through the experience of DA or DV, or putting one's life back together after getting out of the abusive relationship is a very personal, difficult, and sensitive time. Additional hardship and victimisation of an LGBT employee by any employer or rep alike, because of a lack of understanding of LGBT issues and experience, is completely unacceptable.

Employers and reps must ensure that they do not 'out' someone or discriminate because of someone's actual or perceived sexuality and/or gender identity. In the case of transgender employees, disclosing their transgender status without their permission is a criminal offence.

Employers have a legal obligation for the health and safety of their employees. Their health and safety is especially at risk when an individual is experiencing DA/DV or is leaving or has left the relationship.

Workplace problems such as lack of concentration, punctuality issues (leaving earlier/staying later than necessary), poor attendance, worsening performance, deteriorating relationships at work, or poorer health or appearance could indicate DA or DV as an underlying factor.

With the threat of or actual disciplinary action and threats to job security and pay affecting the individual even harder, employers and reps must be aware of the signs and should work together to provide support.

Identify it and Respond! – Ten Points to Developing a Workplace Policy

Clearly, reps will need to negotiate and review DA/DV workplace policies as well as to jointly develop and implement an awareness-raising action plan. Some essential points have been made in the ***Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance*** which suggests ten actions for employers. Union reps should be aware of these too:

Recognise the problem

1. Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record.
2. Look for changes in the way an employee dresses i.e. excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn.

Respond

3. Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse – do not ask for proof.
4. Reassure the employee that the organisation has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered.

Provide support

5. Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls.
6. Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex/partner telephones or visits the workplace. Alert security and/or reception staff.
7. Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home.
8. Keep a record of any incidents of abuse on the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.
9. Put up domestic abuse helpline posters on the back of toilet doors.

Refer to the appropriate help

10. Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer employees to appropriate organisations that deal with domestic abuse.

What to do? A Safety Plan for those being Abused

Members should know that if they are being abused:

- They are not alone
- It's not their fault – they are not responsible for the abuser's behaviour
- Abuse is against the law – they have a right not to be abused, and have various legal rights and protections: <http://bit.ly/OdeJXb>
- There are things they can do to protect themselves.

Broken Rainbow's Safety Plan

"If you are experiencing domestic violence or abuse, devising a safety plan will allow you to think about how you can improve your safety if and when further violence or abuse occurs. It won't guarantee your safety, but could help improve it. Your personal safety plan may include some of the following:

1. If you or your family are in immediate danger, call the police on 999.
2. Tell someone you can trust what is happening, and think about setting up a password with either a friend, neighbour or family member that you can use to explain there is an emergency and you need help quickly.
3. Prepare a bag of clothes, medication and other essentials for yourself and children, e.g. copies of driving licence, birth certificates, passports, benefit books or letters, important numbers, etc. Hide the bag somewhere safe.
4. If you have a car, make an extra set of keys and hide them where you can get to them if you need to.
5. Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency and what they would need to say (for example, their full name, address and telephone number).
6. Try to keep a small amount of money and your credit/debit cards on you at all times - including change for the phone and for bus fares.
7. If you think your partner is about to attack you, try to get to a safer place, such as rooms that have a way out and access to a telephone. Try to avoid rooms that have potential weapons in them, such as the kitchen or garage, and rooms like the bathroom where it is easier for them to trap you.
8. Keep any abusive letters, emails and text messages as evidence of abuse.
9. If your partner injures you go to a doctor or hospital for treatment so there is a record of the abuse.
10. If you are planning to leave your partner, think about how you can do this as safely as possible. Sometimes this can be the most dangerous time for you. If your partner knows you are planning to leave, they may become more violent and abusive.
11. Plan to leave at a time you know your partner will not be around, and if you have legal custody of children, take them with you as there may be further complications if you don't."

Getting Help and Advice

- Contact any of the organisations listed under 'Resources, Information and Useful Organisations'. They can provide safe spaces, confidential listening support, provide help with a safety plan and explore options e.g. housing, legal support, discuss reporting to the police, etc.

(Source: www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/help/safety-plan)

Dealing with Members who are Perpetrators

If a perpetrator is also an employee, they may be subject to disciplinary action. In any case, reps should ensure the employer is taking steps to prevent the abuser from using official facilities such as email, phones, fax and even company vehicles, to get to the victim/survivor. The abuser must learn that their behaviour is unacceptable and possibly also criminal.

Any such member who is subject to disciplinary action relating to violence or abuse towards a parent, former partner or family member in the same employment, is entitled to seek union representation. If there is any doubt or concern, seek advice from the regional union office.

Abusers may want to seek help by contacting Respect
0845 122 8609 www.respect.uk.net/

References and Sources

The website information, advice, guidance and resources of many of the organisations listed on pages 10 and 11 were borrowed and adapted extensively. Broken Rainbow's and the LGBT Domestic Abuse Forum's websites in particular have been invaluable in developing this guidance, as has been the ROAR Survey conducted by the LGBT DAF partnership. Similarly, Barking and Dagenham's 'Domestic violence: a resource for trans people' has been an excellent source of information and inspiration.

Carl Banks
GMB Shout!
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Resources, Information and Useful Organisations

National

Broken Rainbow – support for LGBT people experiencing DA / DV.
08452 60 44 60 www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/

Branches may wish to support Broken Rainbow through fundraising, donations, shopping, volunteering, social media/networks. See the website for details.

National 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline (freephone)

0808 2000 247 www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/

Respect - for abusers who want to stop

0845 122 8609 www.respect.uk.net/

LGBT

Galop – hate crime organisation www.galop.org.uk/domestic-abuse-2/

LGBT Domestic Abuse Forum www.lgbtdaf.org

LGBT Domestic Abuse Partnership <http://lgbtdap.org.uk/>

- both lists a number of partner and other external support services

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard www.llgs.org.uk/

- free advice and service 0300 330 0630 (daily 10 a.m. – 11 p.m.)

PACE – LGBT mental health and well-being www.pacehealth.org.uk/

Reducing the Risk – lists numerous cross-equality services and helplines

www.reducingtherisk.org.uk/cms/content/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-community-0

Stonewall Housing www.stonewallhousing.org/

UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group www.uklgig.org.uk/

- information and advice for LGBT people with immigration issues: 020 7922 7811

Transgender

Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) www.gires.org.uk

- information and training

Gendered Intelligence www.genderedintelligence.co.uk/

- experienced in teaching in schools, colleges, etc. and with young people.

Gender Trust www.gendertrust.org.uk/

national helpline: 0845 231 0505

- regional support details on their website

Mermaids www.mermaids.freeuk.com

Helpline is open between 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. Monday-Saturday: 07020 935066

– support group for parents of trans children

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities

Forced Marriage Unit: www.gov.uk/forced-marriage

Tel: 020 7008 0151

Imaan www.imaan.org.uk/

– social/support group for LGBT Muslims

Imkaan www.imkaan.org.uk

- Black feminist organisation dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls, specialising in DV especially Asian Women’s Refuges.

Disabled LGBT people

Regard 020 7688 4111 / 020 7688 0709 (minicom)

Older LGBT people

Age Concern www.ageconcern.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 00 99 66

Young LGBT people

Albert Kennedy Trust www.akt.org.uk/

Tel: 020 7831 6562 (London)

– helping young LGBT people made homeless or living in a hostile environment

Childline www.childline.org.uk/

Free, confidential helpline: 0800 11 11

LGBT Youth Scotland www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/domestic-abuse

Women

Women’s Aid www.womensaid.org.uk/

Free phone 24 hour: 0808 2000 247

- Info about UK criminal law related to DV:

www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic_violence_topic.asp?section=0001000100220007&itemTitle=Criminal+Law

Training and Workshops

LGBT Domestic Abuse Partnership <http://lgbtdap.org.uk/training-and-workshops/>

GMB

GMB Shout! – LGBT network

Email: gmbshout@hotmail.co.uk

Web: www.gmbunion.org/equality/shout1.htm

Facebook: GMB Shout! LGBT



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Please fill out your details below using BLOCK CAPITALS.

Title (e.g. Ms, Miss, Mr, Dr.)	
First and Last Names	
Date of birth	
Phone	
E-mail address	
Address	
Postcode	
Employer	
GMB Mem. No. / Region	
Are you a union rep?	Yes No

Information below is for statistical and equality purposes only. Please tick/circle.

a. Employment type: Full-time Part-time (under 25 hours??)
Casual Fixed term contract Other

b. Which of the following categories describes you? Please tick/circle.

Asian: Bangladeshi	Chinese	Mixed ethnicity
Asian: Indian	Black: African	White: British
Asian: Pakistani	Black: Caribbean	White: Other
Asian: Other	Black: Other	

c. Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person? Yes No

d. Do you consider yourself to be:
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Straight/Heterosexual Other

e. Do you identify yourself as a transgender person? Yes No

*Please return your completed form to:
GMB London Shout!, c/o Carl Banks, 160 Falcon Road, London SW11 2LN*

If you would like to join GMB, join online at www.gmb.org.uk/join