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Where do you go?

Who do you tell?

Consultation on the needs of gay,
bisexual and transgender men who
experience domestic abuse
in Scotland

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SCOTLAND'S LESBIAN, GAY,
BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER
DOMESTIC ABUSE PROJECT



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Introduction

The LGBT Domestic Abuse Project is funded by the Scottish Government to raise awareness of and improve service responses to LGBT people who experience domestic abuse. The project is managed by LGBT Youth Scotland and focuses on the experiences of people of all ages. The project is supported by a reference group of members from Scottish Women's Aid, The Women's Support Project, NHS Open Road, the Equality Network and the Scottish Transgender Alliance.

The consultation was developed in response to concerns of the project that there was a lack of service provision for gay, bisexual and transgender (GBT) men in Scotland who experience domestic abuse, mainstream or otherwise. There was also very little known about the needs of GBT men who experience domestic abuse. The consultation asked gay, bisexual and transgender men, and service providers, to tell us what kind of service provision we need in Scotland for gay, bisexual and transgender men who experience abuse. This report includes the findings of the consultation and recommendations for ensuring that gay, bisexual and transgender men who experience domestic abuse get the support they need and deserve.

“

I had been living with him for six months, it was my flat. The first time it was just a slap so I left it. The second time he made sure he hit me where no one could see but I was getting changed and a friend saw the marks, it was the same friend on the third occasion that offered to put me up, but it was my flat and I thought he would destroy it or burn it down. I called broken rainbow and with their support I got the police involved. He begged me not to have him arrested. If anyone ever raised their hand to me now it would be relationship over but not everyone is as strong as that. Where do you go, who do you tell?

”

Aims

The LGBT Domestic Abuse Project wanted to find out more about the experiences and needs of gay, bisexual and transgender (GBT) men in Scotland who have experienced domestic abuse¹. The consultation targeted both GBT men and service providers to find out about gaps in service provision, what kinds of services GBT men and services working with them felt would be the most appropriate, and what needed to be done to ensure that Scotland is 'getting it right' for GBT men.

What do we know?

Research has found that 1 in 4 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people will experience domestic abuse in their lifetimes², which is the same rate as heterosexual non-trans women. While the numbers of gay, bisexual and transgender men who experience domestic abuse may be smaller, the rate of abuse is the same. Research that has been done in Scotland on transgender people's experiences of domestic abuse³ found very high levels of abuse, with eighty percent of people reporting having experienced some form of abusive behaviour from a partner or ex-partner. Like heterosexual non-trans women, gay, bisexual and transgender men experiencing domestic abuse can experience emotional, sexual, psychological, as well as physical abuse and it is not about the physical strength of the perpetrator, but the power exerted over them to control their everyday lives⁴.

There are, however, additional tools that can be used by partners of GBT men to control them that are not used by partners or ex-partners of heterosexual non-trans women. The most common type of abuse experienced by transgender people is transphobic abuse: abuse that is directed at a person's transgender identity⁵. In the same way gay and bisexual men can experience abuse that is directed at their sexual orien-

- 1 See appendix 3 for definitions of the terminology used in this report
- 2 Donovan et al. (2006)
- 3 Roch et al. (2010)
- 4 Stark (2009)
- 5 Roch et al. (2010)

tation. Abusive partners of GBT men may threaten to 'out' them to family, friends or their place of work⁶. The domestic abuse they experience is a form of gender based violence and fits within the current gendered analysis of domestic abuse in Scotland. GBT men experience gender based violence because they express their gender in ways that differ from the normalised and dominant assumptions within society, i.e. by being in a same-sex relationship. Gender based violence is a spectrum of abuse and as such the different types of abuse cannot be seen in isolation, but rather as a pattern of abuse that works to reinforce and legitimise inequality. In the case of GBT men, gender based violence is perpetuated, because of societal views of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Research has also shown that the support needs of gay, bisexual and trans men are very similar to those of heterosexual non-trans women and contrast with the support needs of heterosexual non-trans men. The Dyn Project, which was a project set up to support men who were experiencing domestic abuse,⁷ found that a high proportion of the men accessing their services were in same-sex relationships (24%). They found that men in same-sex relationships were twice as likely to be assessed as at high risk and were also far more likely than heterosexual men to be repeat referrals to the service (27% as opposed to 4% of heterosexual men). Men in same-sex relationships were more likely to need long term support and to be offered and accept services such as face-to-face support, telephone contact and referrals to housing services. The Dyn Project concluded that men in same-sex relationships were less likely to recognize or disclose their experiences as abusive, but those who did were more willing to take up services than heterosexual men.

6 For more information on LGBT people's experiences of domestic abuse visit www.lgbtdomesticabuse.org.uk

7 Robinson & James (2006)

8 See appendix 1

9 See appendix 2

10 The content of this report does not necessarily reflect the views of the organisations that took part in the symposium.

11 As defined by the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007.

12 Respondents were able to select more than one sexual orientation.

'Are We Getting it Right?' symposium

In December 2011, the LGBT Domestic Abuse project held a symposium for service providers to look at current service provision for GBT men in Scotland and what needed to be done to improve support for GBT men who experience domestic abuse. Representatives from a range of services attended⁸ and heard presentations from:

- Amy Roch, Domestic Abuse Development Officer, LGBT Youth Scotland (Scotland's LGBT Domestic Abuse Project)
- The Voices Unheard Project (a LGBT young people led domestic abuse project within LGBT Youth Scotland)
- Cat Everett, Domestic Abuse Worker, Galop

After presentations, service representatives were asked to discuss a list of questions⁹ and the findings from these discussions have been used throughout this report¹⁰.

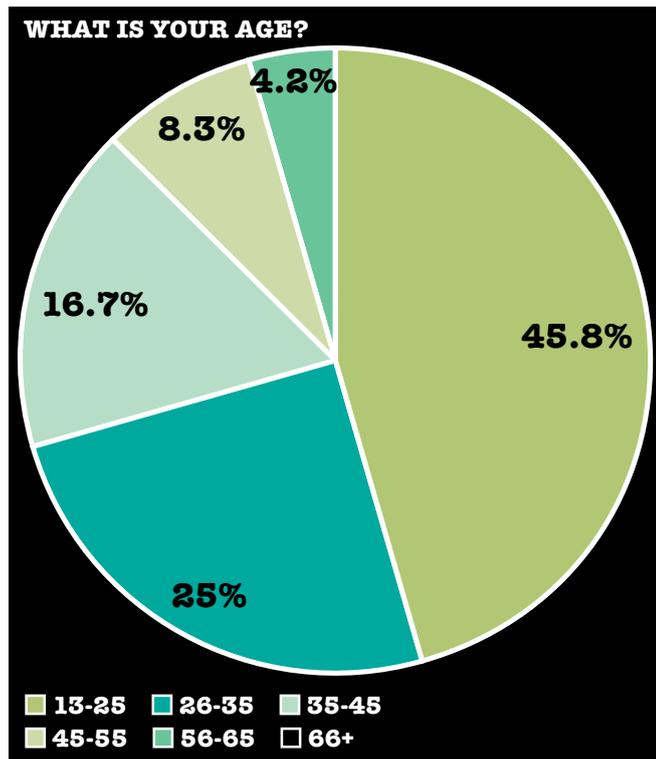
Online consultation

An online survey was created and targeted at anyone who identified as a man and gay, bisexual and/or transgender in Scotland. The survey included questions on respondent demographics, the kinds of services that they currently accessed, what kinds of services they would want to access if experiencing domestic abuse and the barriers to doing this. The survey also allowed people to identify if they felt that they had experienced domestic abuse and gave an opportunity to tell us about their experiences.

The flyer advertising the survey was distributed through the LGBT Domestic Abuse Project e-bulletin, an email to other service providers, and through paper copies displayed in youth groups, bars, clubs and saunas around Scotland. The flyer explained that all responses would remain confidential, unless we believed a child or vulnerable adult¹¹ was at risk. This was again explained again at the start and end of the survey.

Consultation responses

Forty-eight people responded to the online consultation. The ages of respondents varied from thirteen to sixty-five, with just under half of respondents within the thirteen to twenty-five age bracket. This high response rate may be because the survey was in an online format and widely advertised within LGBT Youth Scotland groups.



People took part in the survey from across the country with large numbers from Glasgow (32%), Aberdeen (15%) and Dumfries and Galloway (12.8%).

Nineteen percent of people said that they did, or had at some point, identified as transgender. They used a range of transgender terminology options to describe their transgender identities, including trans man, cross-dressing person and androgyne person. It should be noted that this is a very good response rate from transgender people for a survey of this kind.

Most people who took part in the survey identified as gay (75%), however, there were also a wide range of sexual orientations that people identified with, including bisexual (13%), queer (10%) and pansexual (8%)¹³.

Experiences of domestic abuse

Thirty-five percent of the respondents to the survey said that they had experienced domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner. Although people did not have to have experienced domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner to take part in the survey, there was space for people to tell us about their experiences. These have been used throughout this report to reflect the words of people who have both direct experience of domestic abuse and of services.

“

I was in a pretty abusive relationship I could not have friends, was made to wear what he wanted me to wear have the things he wanted me to have, I wanted to come out as trans for such a long time... I had been ill with bipolar quite a long time, he used this to control me, telling me I would never survive without him, over time I believed him. He never raised a hand to me, but was always on and on at my eldest son whom he once hit so hard he left a hand print on him, then a couple of years after I left him and he went to visit his dad, his father picked him up and smacked him so hard he wet himself... The eldest son has never forgotten this. Even then it took me 2 years I was petrified my kids would be taken away and he threatened to kill himself in front of the kids, emotionally blackmailing me not to leave. I did leave eventually... but he was minutes away from my house so it was hard to shake him off.

”

‘Who do you tell’?

Throughout the consultation there was uncertainty from people about the service provision available in Scotland for gay, bisexual and trans men. When asked about what services they would go to if they were experiencing domestic abuse, over half of the respondents were either unsure or would not know where to go to get support. The lack of appropriate support services was also highlighted by the service providers who were present at the ‘Are We Getting it Right?’ symposium. The services that people felt they would signpost a gay, bisexual or trans man to were not specialist domestic abuse services or they were online services. Many of the services that were highlighted were also for young people and there was an acknowledgement that it would be more difficult to find services for men over twenty six.

When GBT men were asked who they would tell if they were experiencing domestic abuse, most people said they would tell a friend (77%). Other high responses were an LGBT organisation (41%) or the Police (32%). This is a very high figure for people who said that they would report to the police. Previous domestic abuse research in Scotland with young LGBT people¹³ and more specifically with transgender people¹⁴ found that people were reluctant to go to the police and it is therefore encouraging that the consultation found that many people felt able to report.

The responses showed an uncertainty over support available. There were many people who were unsure if services would support them. Many questioned whether services such as the domestic abuse helpline or rape crisis centres would support men or if there were any services available in their area. This lack of clarity amongst gay, bisexual and transgender men is a huge barrier to getting help. It is therefore vital that at both a local and national level there is information available so that people can access appropriate and inclusive services.

13 Best et al. (2011)
14 Roch et al. (2010)

What are the barriers to getting help?

Respondents cited a variety of barriers to accessing support services as GBT men. Many of these were very similar to those often mentioned by heterosexual non-trans women, such as feeling at fault for the abuse. There were also issues that were more specific to GBT men, such as the issues of gender stereotyping and masculinity highlighted by many people.

“
I was too frightened to tell anyone and I felt stupid too as I knew what was happening was wrong but I was just too frightened to do anything.
”

Fears that they would be deemed weak or embarrassment that they couldn’t look after themselves were cited as barriers to seeking support the narrow societal definitions of acceptable manliness and masculinity were felt by some to prevent men from being able to talk about their feelings or imply that they should be able to look after themselves. When asked, one person said:

“
The attitude that men should be men and can handle the abuse.
”

Service providers also highlighted the construction of masculinities as a barrier for GBT men feeling able to get support when experiencing domestic abuse, as well as the invisibility of GBT men’s experiences of domestic abuse in the media and domestic abuse campaigns.

Other issues that were raised included concerns that support services wouldn’t understand the specific issues for GBT men experiencing domestic abuse or that they would not understand or accept the individual’s gender identity or sexual orientation. This fear of a negative response, coupled with lack of information and awareness about what services are available, presents further hurdles for people who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Other people discussed the loss of their community that may result if people find out about the abuse. Many of the respondents lived in small towns or rural areas where they feared people would find out about the abuse if they were to report it or go to a support service. There were fears that this would add to the prejudice and discrimination that they already faced or that it would validate people's homophobic views about same-sex relationships or 'lifestyles'.

“

The fear that no one would believe you regarding why you left. The gay scene in Aberdeen tends to be rather small, and everyone knows everyone - things can spread like wildfire.

”

Where would you like to go?

When asked about services generally, fifty-five percent of people who took part in the consultation said that they preferred to use LGBT specific services. There were a range of reasons given for this; some people didn't want to have to explain their sexual orientation or gender identity to service providers and didn't want to worry about getting a negative response.

“

Non LGBT services make me feel awkward and uneasy as they usually (not always) appear to be uncomfortable speaking about same sex relationships.

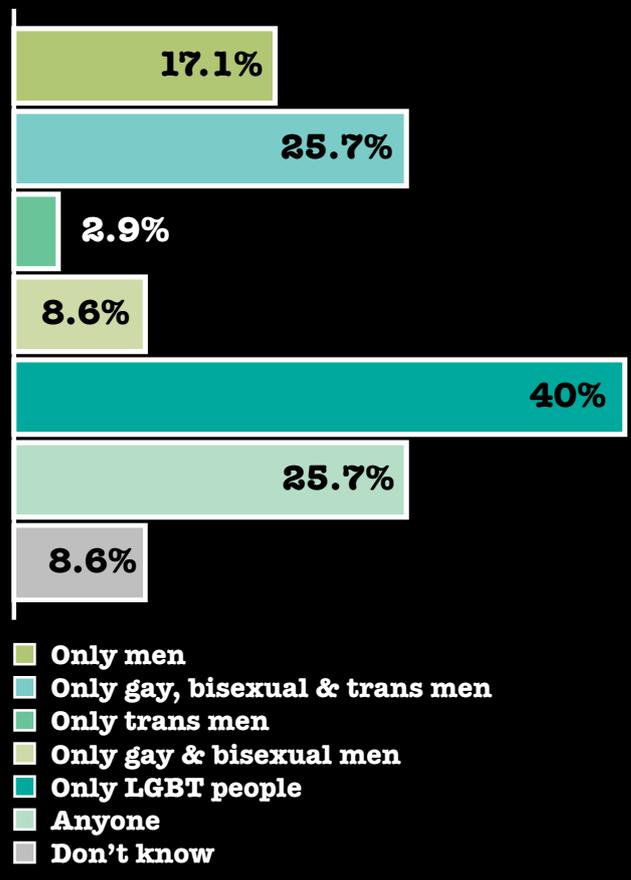
”

Seventeen percent of people said they did not prefer LGBT services. For some, this was because their sexual orientation or gender identity wasn't relevant to the service that they were accessing or because they felt confident and able to challenge if they were to receive a negative response.

When the respondents were asked the same questions about domestic abuse services, far more people

said they would like to go to an LGBT-specific service. Seventy four percent of respondents said that they would prefer some kind of LGBT specific service if they were experiencing domestic abuse.

WOULD YOU PREFER TO ACCESS A DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE THAT WAS FOR... (Participants could choose more than one option)



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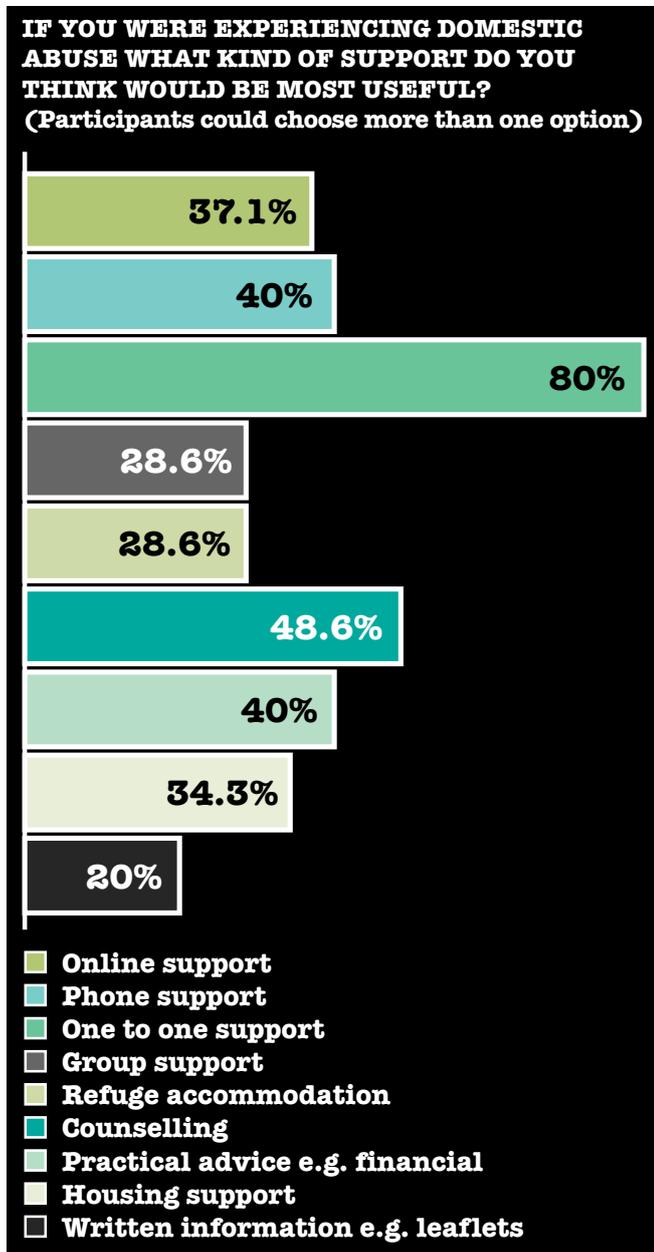
I'd want reassurance I wouldn't need to educate the person supposed to be supporting me.

”

While people may have felt that they could challenge homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in generic services, someone's ability to do this when experiencing domestic abuse is diminished. As has been demonstrated, there are many barriers to getting support when experiencing domestic abuse and the additional worry about a negative service reaction was felt by some to be too great a concern. It is also important to note that the majority of men who took part in this research would prefer to access LGBT services than single-sex male only services.

When asked what kinds of support services they

thought would be most useful, GBT men gave a wide range of responses. The most common response was one-to-one support and when asked to give other examples, they talked about the need for services that were specific to, and knowledgeable about the needs of, GBT men.



Refuge accommodation

People taking part in the consultation were asked where they would go if they were in an abusive relationship and decided to leave. Most people said that they would go to friends (67%) or family (64%), with only three people saying that they would go to either a refuge or homelessness accommodation. The reasons for this were quite clear with one person asking:

“
Is there domestic abuse refuge for men
in Glasgow?
”

and another saying;

“
Hostels are horrible and scary.
”

Accessing homelessness accommodation can be extremely difficult for people in any circumstance, yet this can be the only option for GBT men escaping abuse. When facing controlling and emotionally abusive behaviour, many people experiencing domestic abuse in general feel worthless, with diminished confidence and freedom. For men in this situation, the fears of discrimination and violence within homelessness accommodation on top of this may be too much to contemplate.

For many, the remaining alternatives are to stay within the abusive situation or to sleep rough. When describing the clients that she worked with, Cat Everett, a domestic abuse worker at galop¹⁵ explained that many of the young gay men that she worked with were involved in prostitution, for food, clothing or shelter. She explained that most of the men that she supports who have experienced domestic abuse have also experienced, or are currently experiencing, homelessness or are ‘sofa surfing’. In Scotland, little is known about the realities for young GBT men who have to leave an abusive relationship. However, research in Brighton¹⁶ on the experiences and needs of homeless LGBT young people found that 21% of the young people were, or had been, in an abusive relationship and some of these young people identified having to flee domestic abuse as the cause of their homelessness.

15 Galop gives advice and support to people who have experienced biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexual violence or domestic abuse in London. For more information, visit www.galop.org.uk.

16 Cull et al. (2006)

The research recommended that specialist supported accommodation be available for young LGBT people and also highlighted the need for improved safety within current service provision.

Where are we now?

None of those who responded to the consultation felt that there are currently enough services in Scotland for gay, bisexual and trans men experiencing domestic abuse.

“

I was in an abusive relationship when I was much younger and it's sad to see that there are still no services on offer for gay/bi/trans men. I had to go to the police and then obtain emergency accommodation through the council, this in itself back then wasn't easy, I do now know that the police in my experience have changed their attitudes and the way they deal with this is dramatically changed for the better, as I said above I struggled to find ANY services to assist and now 16 years on this has not really changed, I know how vulnerable and isolated I felt at this time, and can imagine it is still the same.

”

There was acknowledgement from people who took part in the consultation and service providers that there have been improvements in understanding and practice. The improvements in police responses and the increase in awareness of LGBT people's experiences of domestic abuse were highlighted as examples.

What do service providers think we need?

Fourteen service providers took part in the consultation event. They were asked a range of questions to find out what would help them to better support gay, bisexual and trans men who experience domestic abuse. Some of the main themes included:

- **Increased service provision**

Service providers felt that there was a need for increased service provision at a local and national level to meet the needs of GBT men. This included the need for funding to ensure that there is safe housing available for GBT men escaping abuse. It was also felt to be important that these services had expert knowledge of the specific issues for GBT men, in order to provide an appropriate and inclusive service.

- **Clear signposting to relevant and inclusive services**

There should be efforts made to ensure that services are aware of appropriate and inclusive services at a local level for GBT men, including domestic abuse and LGBT services. It was noted that just having a list of services was not enough and that there needed to be signposting that ensured that these services understood the specific dynamics of domestic abuse for GBT men.

- **Increased understanding amongst existing services**

Training and support should be provided to services working with gay, bisexual and trans men to ensure that they are able to provide tailored and appropriate support.

- **Awareness raising**

There needs to be work done to raise awareness amongst services, the general public and GBT men that people in same sex relationships and transgender people do experience domestic abuse.

Recommendations

The consultation provided an insight into the experiences, barriers and needs of gay, bisexual and transgender men in Scotland and has shown that there is a need to develop services and responses to ensure that GBT men are getting an appropriate and informed response from service providers. The consultation also showed the additional barriers that many GBT men face to see the abuse experienced as wrong and feeling confident and able to get support. It is therefore vital that steps are taken to ensure that tailored support is available to GBT men that enables them to feel comfortable accessing services. In addition to supporting current services to improve their understanding and awareness of GBT men's experiences of domestic abuse, increased service provision is also needed to provide the specialist service provision that would remove some of the barriers that have been identified by GBT men. We have therefore made the following recommendations:

- Clear signposting at both a local and national level of inclusive and appropriate support services for gay, bisexual and transgender men.
- Training provided across Scotland for services that work with gay, bisexual and transgender men and services that work with men who experience abuse to ensure that all GBT men will receive an appropriate and inclusive response wherever they access services.
- Ensure that specialist service provision is available to gay, bisexual and trans men who experience domestic abuse including support and information services.
- Ensure that there is safe and accessible refuge and support accommodation for gay, bisexual and transgender men who are escaping abuse.

References

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- Robinson, Amanda & James Rowland 2006 *The Dyn Project: Supporting Men Experiencing Domestic Abuse*. Cardiff University and the Dyn Project.
- Roch, Amy, James Morton & Graham Ritchie 2010 *Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Transgender People's Experiences of Domestic Abuse*. LGBT Youth Scotland and the Scottish Transgender Alliance.
- Stark, Evan 2009 *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women In Personal Life*. Oxford University Press.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS

Organisations who attended the 'Are We Getting it Right?' symposium:

- Abused Men in Scotland
- Addaction
- Dundee University
- Galop
- Gay Men's Health
- Glasgow Council
- Glasgow Life
- LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- NHS Open Road
- Scottish Commission for children and Young People
- Scottish Women's Aid
- Strathclyde Police
- Voluntary Action Fund

APPENDIX 2: SYMPOSIUM QUESTIONS

- What do you think are the main issues for gay, bisexual and transgender (GBT) men experiencing domestic abuse?
- What do you think are the barriers to Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Men accessing support if they are experiencing domestic abuse
- What do you think are the support needs of GBT men experiencing domestic abuse?
- What are your experiences of working with GBT men who have experienced domestic abuse?
- What services would you signpost a GBT man who has experienced domestic abuse on to?
- What would help you to support GBT men who have experienced domestic abuse?

APPENDIX 3: TERMINOLOGY

SEX biological and anatomical characteristics, which can be defined as female, male or intersex.

GENDER the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for one's sex.

GENDER IDENTITY a person's internal sense of where they exist in relation to being boys/men or girls/women.

GENDER EXPRESSION a person's external gender-related clothing and behaviour (including interests and mannerisms).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION used to describe a person based on who they are emotionally and physically attracted to. For example, transsexual women can be described as straight if they are attracted to men, lesbian if they are attracted to women or bisexual if they are attracted to both men and women.

TRANSGENDER (TRANS) an umbrella term used to describe a whole range of gender identity and expression, including transsexual, intersex and cross-dresser.

LGBT the initialism used to talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

GBT the initialism used within this report to refer to men who identify as gay, bisexual and/or transgender.

TRANSPHOBIA describes an irrational feeling of fear or hatred towards transgender people and could also describe discriminatory behaviour..

DOMESTIC ABUSE Domestic abuse can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate and are perpetrated against the person's will, including rape), and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, homophobic/biphobic/transphobic abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as 'outing', the threat of 'outing' or enforced isolation from family and friends).

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