SUPPORTING MEN WHO EXPERIENCE ABUSE FROM (MALE OR FEMALE) INTIMATE PARTNER'S

A GUIDE FOR GOOD PRACTICE (2008)
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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN FROM A FEMALE OR MALE PARTNER GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION:

This resource is intended to promote good practice and offer skills and insight into the complex nature of domestic violence against men by intimate partners, whether male or female. It is hoped that all men genuinely experiencing domestic violence will feel that they can seek help and that the service they receive is good and safe.

The resource consists of five chapters, a directory of services, a screening tool, an interview template and an evaluation form for you to complete about this resource. It has been developed primarily to help services across Nottinghamshire but although the directory of services is specific to Nottinghamshire the main document is not area specific so can be used in other regions of the UK.

The issue of domestic violence towards men has a history of conflicting and contentious perspectives and working practice. Domestic violence against men does exist and research about men’s experience of domestic violence stretches back to the late 1970’s. This resource goes into some depth in both clarifying and critiquing some of the key aspects about working with men who experience domestic violence. At no point does the resource intend to justify women’s abuse against men, speak from a heterosexual perspective, overdo or deny gay domestic violence or be misleading in any other way.

There is no specific section about BME issues, partly because there has not been any specific research to base a chapter on and partly because the issues being addressed in this document relate to men of all ethnicity, nationality and race. Future research specifically about BME men experiencing domestic violence is therefore recommended.

Anyone who encounters or is likely to encounter cases of domestic violence in their work should attend the following training courses provided by the Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum (NDVF) in partnership with Women’s Aid Groups in Nottinghamshire:

‘Domestic Violence Awareness – supporting women and children’
‘Challenging Domestic Violence – working with male perpetrators’
‘Same Sex Abuse’
‘Women Abusing Male Partners’

To book onto these course call 0115 9623237.

Damian Carnell
TRI Development Worker
Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum
November 2007
The Home Office, together with the Inter-Ministerial Group, in 2005 agreed the following definition of domestic violence:

“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.”

It is proposed that the core definition is supplemented by the following:

“Domestic violence can go beyond actual physical violence. It can also involve emotional abuse, the destruction of a spouse’s or partner’s property, their isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support, control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone and stalking. Violence will often be witnessed by children and there is an overlap between domestic violence and the abuse (physical, emotional and sexual) of children.

The wide adverse effects of living with domestic violence for children must be recognised as a child protection issue. We can link the effects on children and young people to poor educational achievement, social exclusion, juvenile crime, substance misuse, mental health problems and homelessness from running away, and going into refuge or hostel provision with their carers.

It is acknowledged that domestic violence can also manifest itself through the actions of immediate and extended family members through the perpetration of illegal activities such as forced marriages, so called ‘honour’ crimes and female genital mutilation. Extended family members may condone or even share in the pattern of abuse.”

A major detail which is usually left out of definitions of domestic violence is whether the abuse is based on power and control or other. It is crucial to understand the nature of the abuse in order to know how best to respond with service provision. This document will explore this issue of control in some depth.

How does being abused by an intimate partner affect men?

- Men can feel rejected, isolated, humiliated, helpless, powerless, depressed, angry, bitter, revengeful, ashamed, and in some cases fear.
- Men often want legal advice, counselling, parenting support and help to find alternative accommodation, specialist support relating to BME issues, sexuality or disability for example.
- Men worry that they won’t be believed and may have directly experienced this, or worry that they will experience prejudice and discrimination based upon their gender, sexuality, social status, age or race, etc.
- Men may become homeless, suffer mental ill health, drop out of work, lose contact with friends and/or having reduced contact with their children.

Will a man’s experience of domestic violence from a male or female partner be the same?

All the points above highlight the common experiences of men whether they are in a gay and/or heterosexual relationship. The abusive partner will often have similar motives behind their abuse, for example, the desire for power and control, but why the abuser wants this will often come from different beliefs they hold and experiences in life they have had.

As with women’s experience of abuse from either male or female partners, domestic violence against men could involve abuse targeted at their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, health issues and disability (including mental health issues). These specific issues may also be barriers to a male survivor seeking help.
Women’s Violence and Abuse against Male Partners

A relatively small percentage of women perpetrators are systematically oppressive and dominating towards male partners and want power and control. But unlike men’s abuse against women, women’s abuse against men is not a gender specific violence and has never had social supports or legal protection. Because of patriarchal traditions and cultures, whereby men are automatically given power over women, most women who abuse male partners do so as a resistance to the man’s assumed authority (See Chapter 3 for more details).

Violence and Abuse in Gay Relationships

As with men’s violence against women, men’s violence against male partners is most often an issue of power and control. However, in gay relationships gender inequality is not necessarily going to be the primary tool of abuse, though it should not be excluded. Gay, bisexual and heterosexual men have all grown up in society condoning male power and that being male equals power, so it needs to be an issue to explore when working with gay men.

It is important though to explore other institutional inequalities, for example, heterosexism and homophobia, classism, racism, disability, HIV status, economic status and education as a possible platform for this notion of superiority and the justification for abuse (See Chapter 4 for more details).

Men disclosing to you that they are being abused by their partner:

It is usually difficult for anyone to disclose that they are being abused by the person they love. For men this may include the fear of being made fun of or fear of homophobic or racist ideology around masculinity for example. Likewise it can be difficult for us as professionals in knowing how to best respond to men disclosing, especially with the growing evidence about the high rates of men misusing the ‘male victim’ label, raising possible fears of wrongfully judging a genuine victim or colluding with a perpetrator pretending to be a victim. This document aims to assist us on these matters.

Older Men (60+)

A paper in 2002 from a specific piece of research into vulnerable adults experiencing abuse in the UK (Pritchard 2001) focussed on older men’s, aged 60+, experience of abuse. Of the vulnerable adults experiencing abuse 15.6% were older men and 52% were older women. At 67% of vulnerable adults abused, older people therefore can clearly be seen as a high-risk category. Of the older people experiencing abuse 77% were women and 23% were men.

So focussing on the men, data was gathered from 66 men. Of these men 33% were living in residential care. There were 22 categories of abuser. It wasn’t clear from the report whether any of these men experienced abuse from more than one abuser category but due to the high number of abuser categories it is likely to be the case for some of these men. The partner (‘wife’ in these cases) was the highest category of abuser at 18% (just under 1 in 5 men), followed by care home resident or other service user at 12%, daughter at 9%, son at 7% and residential home group of staff at 6%.

Other categories included friend, daughter-in-law, neighbour, individual member of residential home staff, grand-daughter, son-in-law, ex-partner’s son, grandson, other relative, visitor, niece and sister, sons x 2, son and daughter-in-law, son and nephew, step-daughter and step-daughter-in-law.

The types of abuse experienced included financial abuse = 53%, physical abuse = 50%, emotional abuse = 29%, neglect = 10%, sexual abuse = 6%.
Definitions of domestic violence rightly include abuse from extended family members as a significant category of abuse. But this category in itself is quite complex. The data from Pritchard’s survey shows that between 50% and 60% of the men could be defined as experiencing domestic violence because of the range of family member types listed. But we cannot say with confidence because the research does not provide detail enough to establish if the abuse was a one-off, a pattern of systematic abuse or actions of self-defence.

Although the data does not inform us what ratio of older men are men who experience domestic violence from a partner, we do find that at the least 1 in 5 of the older men abused are experiencing domestic violence and therefore domestic violence is going to be one of the most common types of abuse older men will experience.

When should we define abuse by another family member other than the intimate partner as domestic violence and when it is defined as some other type of abuse? It is not for this document to answer or to go into any great depth but simply to raise the question, and recommend the need for a specific piece of research about abuse by extended family members.

This chapter end with a definition drawn up by Respect (the National Association of Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Support Services) in 2004 that helps to dig a little deeper into the nature of the abuse.

“Domestic Violence is a pattern of controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or ex-partner that includes but is not limited to physical assaults, sexual assaults, emotional abuse, isolation, economic abuse, threats, stalking and intimidation. Although only some forms of domestic violence are illegal and attract criminal sanctions, other forms of violence can also have very serious and lasting effects on a person’s sense of self, wellbeing and autonomy.

Violent and abusive behaviour is used in an effort to control the partner based on the perpetrator’s sense of entitlement. This behaviour may be directed at others, especially children, with the intention of controlling the intimate partner.

Social and institutional power structures support some groups using abuse and violence in order to control other groups in our society, e.g. institutional racism, heterosexism, parent’s violence to children. The unequal power relations between men and women account for the fact that the vast majority of domestic violence is perpetrated by men against women rather than vice versa.”

Respect (statement of Principles 2004)
The common claims about ‘male victims’ of domestic violence tend to be about men in heterosexual relationships. Many of these myths have been for some a strategic backlash to the growing understanding about men’s violence against women with the aim to make women out to be as bad as men and to present organisations as being biased to women. For others it has simply been limited awareness.

These common claims are referred to here as myths because they are based on no evidential facts. You may find that you might have held some of these thoughts yourself. You may find other workers or men themselves quoting them. Now is your opportunity to help remove these myths, for they are not helpful to us or to the men we want to support.

1. “It’s harder for men to get out of a violent relationship.”

There is no research or other data to support this claim. It is hard men and women to leave violent partners for both emotional and practical reasons. These include love and commitment, work, finances, children, humiliation and fear.

Research data suggests though that there are more opportunities for men to leave, finding that there are fewer stigmas attached to men leaving partners and children; usually greater access to finances for men and in most cases the absence of fear. In fact, Gadd et al in their research “Domestic Abuse Against Men in Scotland” (2002), found that 76% of the men they interviewed had left abusive partners.

The NDVF data from 2004 found that 50% of the men had left their female partner at some point in the relationship and that only 10% of the men were still living with the abusive partner, with 40% of the women, described as the perpetrators, actually leaving. In gay relationships Merrill and Wolfe (2000) found that 90% of men had left the abusive partner.

2. “Women have blocked the development of services for male victims.”

This claim is usually a sweeping statement against women. It is true that some women and some men have been against the development of services for men, and some have for a long time raised concerns about the problems of combining the issues of male and female abuse together. But some women have also been at the forefront of demanding and developing services for male victims of domestic violence. The first help-line for male survivors in the UK (Merton Male) was set up at a women’s refuge. Some Rape Crisis centres (set up by women) provide support for male victims of sexual abuse. Feminist and Pro-Feminist researchers since the 1970’s have carried out studies about women’s violence towards men.

But violence against women, itself for many years ignored, minimised and legalised has understandably taken priority for women and women’s groups to focus on. This should not be misinterpreted as blocking services for men. Women generally have demonstrated much more support for men’s rights issues than men have ever for women’s rights.

3. “Men are less likely than women to be believed.”

The fear of not being believed is a common concern amongst both men and women and is a reality for many women and men. However, no credible data exists that has found that men are less likely to be believed.

Of the fourteen men interviewed by NDVF in 2004 only one man had never spoken to anyone prior to the research. Four men worried that they wouldn’t be believed and four men were not believed by at least one person. But of the thirteen men who had disclosed to someone prior to the research they all had experienced being believed and supported by at least one organisation or friends. Parents had also supported the men who had told their own parents. This would suggest that men generally are believed and do get support if they want it.

4. “Men are less likely to go to the police to report domestic violence”

There is no research or other statistical evidence to support this claim. Research informs us that women will on average experience 35 acts of violence before they seek help, first from family, then friends, religious support and a GP before they will contact the police. Qualitative research is finding this to be the same process for men who are genuine survivors. When women contact police they are very often doing so because of fearing for their own or their children’s lives. The experience of fear might be the time when some men contact the police too.
Gadd's research found that of the four men who had received police call outs all four men said they were pleased with the police response. In one incident when the woman called the police, after she and her partner had been violent to each other, the police only asked the man if he wanted to press charges and he said “it wasn’t worth it”. The man (classed as a retaliator in the research) said that the police “were great” but he said it would have been better had they conducted a follow-up, “cos when they walked out, God knows what can happen...I could’ve gone out that night, come back, smacked her head in.”

This quote highlights an issue that the Police are becoming more alert to. Nottinghamshire Police in particular are finding that approximately 50% of calls from heterosexual men about domestic violence are reporting the first incident of the partner’s abuse, seemingly to punish her rather than because of fear. It might be that men are more likely than women to contact the police at an earlier stage of the abuse, usually to frighten the woman rather than because he is frightened of what she might do to him. Whatever the motive though, early Police intervention is an essential aspect of good practice.

5. “There are no services for male victims of domestic violence.”

There are services for male victims. This claim highlights that both male victims and professionals who come into contact with male victims may not be making full use of existing services available to them. More work needs to be done to promote these services, and this resource forms part of this work (See Appendix B - Directory Of Services).

6. “There are as many male victims as female victims”

British and international research into female victims of violence from men, feminist or otherwise, consistently find that between 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives. Below is a summary of data about the scale of men’s experience of domestic violence from two pieces of research in Britain this side of the millennium and some police data, which hopefully speak for themselves and dismantle this myth.

The Scottish Police statistics from 2000 revealed the following reported incidents:

- 92.3% men to women
- 7% women to men
- 0.4% gay
- 0.3% lesbian

The ‘Domestic Violence Day Count’ from September 2000 in England revealed the following reports to the police:

- 81% men to women
- 8% women to men
- 7% gay
- 4% lesbian

Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) 2000

The SCS found that 1 in 12 men (8%) experience domestic violence. However Gadd et al (2002) carried out further analysis of the SCS data and interviewed many of the men that the SCS defined as victims of domestic violence. Their data changes the ratio to 1 in 33 men (3%) being victims of domestic violence.

Their research also found that approximately 50% of the men that the SCS labelled ‘victims’ had perpetrated severe abuse and injuries to their partners (who they claimed were abusing them), and described having differing levels of control or superiority over their partner. As with the BCS of 1996, the number of men from the Gadd et al study who felt fear from experiencing abuse by a partner was 5%.
The British Crime Survey (BCS, England & Wales) 2001

The British Crime Survey (BCS, England & Wales) 2001 presented that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men experience domestic violence at some point in their life, 1 in 8 women and 1 in 20 men in the 12 months prior to the BCS. If we consider what specialist support agencies for male victims tell us about false claims made by 50% of men presenting as a ‘victim of domestic violence’ then the statistic about men experiencing domestic violence in a 12-month period changes significantly to roughly 1 in 40 men.

The 2001 BCS found that 66% of women and 34% of men in the past year defined what they experienced as domestic violence. 31% of the women had experienced emotional problems as a result of the abuse and 10% of men reported this. Severe injuries, such as broken bones were reported by 8% of the women and 2% of the men and 21% of women and 5% of men reported severe bruising.

Looking at the data about the reports of 4 or more incidents we begin to see wider gaps between men and women’s experiences. Of the adults who had experienced 4 or more incidents, 89% were women and 11% were men.

1 in 3 of the women and 1 in 10 of the men who reported experiencing domestic violence in the 12 months prior to the BSC 2001 reported experiencing 4 or more incidents.

Bringing all this information together to summarise for a more accurate figure of the number of men (gay or heterosexual) in England and Wales who experienced domestic violence in a 12-month period we can estimate that out of every 400 men 10 might have experienced an incident of domestic violence and 1 from 400 might have experienced 4 or more incidents from a partner.

The data for men experiencing 4 or more incidents of domestic violence ever in a relationship is likely to be 1 in 140. Based on a male population of 100,000 (roughly that of Nottingham) 250 men will experience 4 or more incidents from a partner (male or female) in a 12 month period.

Finally, we also need to consider that the BCS is carried out with adults who are residing in their own home. It does not therefore reflect a core group of adults surviving and escaping domestic violence who will be in temporary accommodation, e.g. Domestic Violence Refuges, Bed & Breakfast, Hostels, staying with family or friends, Asylum Centres etc, and also other residencies that are not peoples own homes for example Care Homes for the elderly, disabled adults etc. Although it is likely that some male survivors will be missed out from the BCS data far more women survivors are excluded.

“When a man comes to us and tells us he is a victim of domestic violence we do find it hard to know whether we believe him or not. Some of us are more willing than others to believe men.”

Asked if this is also the case when a woman comes and says she is experiencing domestic violence this person said the same thing, that some of the team are more willing than others to believe her.
As I have already pointed out on page 4 in Chapter 1, men who are being abused will feel many emotions, for example, rejected, isolated, humiliated, helpless, powerless, depressed, angry, bitter, revengeful, ashamed, and in some cases fear. Some men may become homeless, suffer mental ill health, drop out of work, lose contact with friends and/or having reduced contact with their children.

Men can experience a broad range of physical, emotional and financial abuse and have children used against them. The level, frequency and severity of the abuse will depend partly on the woman's, attitudes, mental health (if an issue) and her motives and partly on the man's own attitudes and behaviour. This should not be interpreted as therefore women's abuse can be justified or minimised. Abuse as we know should not be justified or minimised.

However, as will be explained later in this Chapter, we need to understand that as well as there being similarities to men's violence against women there are also many different issues to consider. Some women will be intentionally trying to control and dominate their partner and he may or may not be resisting or retaliating. Some women may be being abusive to defend themselves from being controlled.

Women's power and control of men has no social, cultural or traditional learning, sanctioning or support. But men's power and control over women has all of these. Therefore many women could be resisting, retaliating or defending themselves from this. Women could be responding (or reacting) directly to her partner's attempts to control her and his belief in superiority for being male. Women could also be experiencing this gendered power and control against her (oppression and exploitation) from extended family members or other systems and structures in society whether and taking this out on her partner.

But this document is focussing on men's needs of support. Women's support, whether they are a survivor or a perpetrator, is not covered in this document. Locating the right kind of support is obviously crucial to ensuring that these men (as well as any children with them) feel safe and supported.

Men often want legal advice, counselling, parenting support and help to find alternative accommodation, specialist support relating to BME issues, sexuality or disability for example. The Directory of Services (Appendix B) will assist you to locate the relevant service.

Men worry that they won't be believed and may have directly experienced this, or worry that they will get laughed at. Both these worries are the results of a patriarchal structure to society still in full swing. Women are still considered inferior to men and therefore either not able to dominate men or if they do then it is the failure of the man to put his control on her. Is this what some of these men who experience abuse believe? Yes, at least 50%.

Research about ‘male victims’ where the methodology is qualitative rather than quantitative (using detailed interviews rather than a ‘tick box’ questionnaire), Police data and phone line services for men where some form of screening is used are all uncovering that less than 50% of heterosexual men seeking help are genuine survivors.

Of the calls to the Dyn phoneline for support 24% were from gay men, 30% were from heterosexual men with no known history of abuse as either the victim or the perpetrator, 33% were heterosexual men with a known history of being abusive to women and 13% were currently registered with the police as high risk offenders of violence against women. This rate of fake disclosures can easily create an environment of suspicion towards all men who disclose being a victim of domestic violence. Because of this high rate of fake disclosures all calls from male victims require a screening process (See Chapter 5 and Appendix C).
This does not translate into ‘we don’t trust men’ and we must be careful not to judge men from the start. We should always start from the point of believing men. The screening simply helps us to confidently provide a good service by providing the right referral points and support to genuine survivors and where possible challenging those who are not. If we know that currently 50% of men who disclose being a victim are not then we should be alert to this. After all, in 1 out of 2 cases the partner (who is not calling for help) is going to be someone in need of support.

Who are the women that abuse men?

This chapter details the categories to describe the different characteristics of ‘male survivors’ developed by Gadd et al in 2002 and categories, which I have developed in 2007 to describe the characteristics of the women partners. Women labelled as the abuser will fit in one of the following categories:

**Intentional Controller:** This describes a woman who thinks she is more important than the male partner and expects him to do what she wants, and who believes that violence and abuse is a justifiable and an acceptable way to behave.

**Retaliatory Controller:** This describes a woman who is living with a man who has been the predominant abuser but where the power dynamic shifts for example due to his physical or mental disability and the woman takes the power in the relationship and gives him a taste of what he gave her. This kind of case has been very much linked to older men’s experiences of being abused by partners.

**Self Protection Controller:** This describes, for example, a woman who has recently left an abusive partner and entered a new relationship and is determined she will not be abused by the new partner. She uses violent, aggressive and dominant behaviour to take charge and protect herself from abuse whether the man intends to abuse her or not.

**Survivor Resisting:** This describes a woman who retaliates or feels able and safe enough to stick up for herself from a partner (and/or extended family members) who assumes he has the position of authority because he is male. He may be trying to dictate what she can or cant do but she defends her human rights. This description can describe many women who are experiencing domestic violence from a male partner and often the case where a woman’s will is broken by the persistent emotional, physiological and physical abuse by the man.

Women who have used one isolated incident of abuse as well as women who have used many incidents fit into this category because neither woman is using abuse for the purpose of power or control.

**Other Factors:**

Men’s own accounts and information provided by organisations who come into contact with women who abuse male partners inform us that many of these women have either drink or drug dependency, ongoing trauma from having been abused either as a child or adult or some form of mental ill-health. We should not see these issues as an excuse or the primary cause but must consider these issues as part of any risk assessment in the same way we do with male perpetrators.

It is becoming clear however that most women who abuse men are living with men who expect to have authority over women and that these women are battling with this patriarchal dynamic in their relationship.

His behaviour could be causing her drink or drug dependency or be similar to abuse she has previously experienced. Likewise, her abuse towards him could lead to his dependency of substances or having mental ill-health. We should not rule out the effect these issues may be having on the abusive way a woman might respond to a man who assumes a domineering role in the relationship.

There has not been any specific research to date covering this issue in any depth. We welcome a combination of qualitative and quantitative research to explore this.
Who are the men that disclose they experience domestic violence from a female partner?
(Findings from ‘Domestic Abuse Against men in Scotland’ by Gadd, Farrall, Dallimore & Lombard)

Interestingly, Gadd et al, in 2002, developed four categories for grouping men who present themselves as domestic violence victims:

**Non-retaliatory Victims:** This describes a man who does not instigate abuse and never retaliates with abuse but may use force to restrain a partner who was physically attacking him.

**Retaliators:** This describes a man who will use abuse in response to his partners prolonged abuse and controlling behaviour.

**Equal Combatants:** This describes a man who will instigate abuse or retaliate with abuse, and be as abusive as he his partner is.

**Primary Instigators:** This describes a man who instigates most of the abuse but whose partner will occasionally be violent to him too.

Gadd’s research team used qualitative in-depth interviews with 21 heterosexual men and 1 gay man that the Scottish Crime Survey of 2000 (a quantitative method of research) had stated were male victims of domestic violence. As a result of the interviews one of the men defined himself as the primary instigator and four men defined themselves as equal combatants.

Of these four men three had used more severe physical abuse and caused more severe injuries to their partners, the fourth case involved no physical violence, but in all four cases based on their attitudes and beliefs about women and the relationship these men would in my opinion all be more accurately defined as the primary instigators.

There were eight men who defined themselves as retaliators. Two of these men used more severe violence and caused more severe injuries to their partners. Based on their attitudes and beliefs about women and the relationship these men would be more accurately defined as the primary instigators.

Another of the retaliators claimed that all the abuse was emotional but it was his partner who fled with the children once before she finally ended the relationship. He was able to remember what his partner had done to him but was vague about his abuse towards her although he admitted retaliating. His patriarchal attitudes though raise the question about what his partner might have been trying to resist.

Only two of the eight men expressed living in fear. One of these men was in a gay relationship and described experiences similar to those women survivors experience, e.g. sexual abuse and psychological abuse. This man and three other retaliators did seem to fit the category in which they defined themselves.

Of the nine ‘non-retaliatory victims’ only four men seemed to clearly fit this category. Three of the other five men described retaliatory behaviour, two of whom appeared to instigate abuse over which their partners would retaliate.

I say again that I am not trying to justify women’s abuse but rather to clarify whether it is purposeful with a controlling motive or whether it is a response of resistance or reaction to a partner wanting to control her because he is male and assumes the position of power.
The chart below shows the different scoring of these same 22 men by the Scottish Crime Survey, by the men themselves and by TRI. Interestingly we see that the TRI grading reflects the 50% ratio of genuine to non-genuine calls that specialist phone line services for male survivors receive.

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<th>22 men claiming to have been abused by intimate partners</th>
<th>Victim/Non Retaliator</th>
<th>Retaliator</th>
<th>Equal Combatant</th>
<th>Primary Instigator</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>How the Scottish Crime Survey (SCS), 2000, identified the men</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>How the same men, interviewed by Gadd et al, identified themselves</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
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If support was offered based on the SCS interpretations many men would be receiving the wrong service and many genuine survivors would become further isolated. It is important therefore to find ways of offering partners support and ways to challenge those men who are actually the perpetrators.

**Findings from ‘Women’s Abuse Towards Male Partners’ (NDVF 2004)**

Fourteen men took part in this piece of qualitative research. Men were asked questions about what they had been experiencing, how they experienced it and what support they would like to be available. All of the men said they would benefit from someone to talk to and found the research interview a source of help, in terms of having a listening ear.

For some men though they also found the interview quite challenging of their own perception of what they had experienced. All the men believed they were domestic violence victims but based on the information they provided it became clear that this was not actually the case.

Using the Gadd et al categories with the information taken from the interviews I found that 6 of the men could have been primary instigators, 2 equally abusive, 2 retaliators and 4 non-retaliators. Some of the men were very open about their patriarchal beliefs and it was clear that several women were resisting or retaliating with abuse to stop the man’s abuse and control. These men as with all predominant male perpetrators do not question their assumed right to power and control and see the woman’s resistance as wrong.

On the issue of fleeing domestic violence, 50% (7) of the men had left or ended the relationship, two of the men doing so by telling their partners to leave. Two of these men fled to hostel accommodation and three moved in with family or friends. 50% (7) of the women had also left or ended the relationship four of whom moved in with family or friends, one woman going into refuge with the children, one woman telling the man to leave and one woman moving in to a new home with a new partner.

Three men stalked partners who had left them by making unwelcome visits to her new accommodation, unwelcome phone calls and spying on her. Only one man was stalked by his partner after he made her leave. This stalking took the form of her making unwelcome phone calls and he had to change his phone number. In some of these calls she was verbally abusive to him. Her abuse did not start until he ended the relationship when he said she began to go mad.
In fact 50% (7) of the men insensitively described their partners as being mad or having mental health problems and one other man expressed concern about his ex-partner’s mental ill health and had tried to be supportive. 50% (7) of the men believed their partners were abusive for the purpose of power and control and 8 of the men believed their partners have anger management problems. None of the men thought their own behaviour was the cause of the abuse though one man was negative and critical of himself.

**Criminal Justice System Involvement:**

The police had been involved in 50% of the cases. The police had arrested three women and one had been convicted with no cases pending. Five men were arrested by the police, no men convicted but three cases were still pending. Two partners of these men had moved back in with their parents and one woman made the man leave. All three men were the men who had used stalking behaviour and had also admitted to physically abusing their partner. The three men whose partners were arrested by the police spoke positively about the seriousness with which to police dealt with the case but the 5 other men with police involvement were very critical.

**What types of abuse did men experience?**

- Emotional Abuse (name calling/put downs)  85% (12)
- Physical Violence (hitting/kicking/punching/hair pulling)  72% (10)
- Throwing things at him (bottle/vase/bags/knife etc)  72% (10)
- Using the Children (controlling contact/turning them against him etc)  36% (5)
- Threats and Intimidation (to kill/lose contact with children/to leave etc)  29% (4)
- Financial Abuse (withholding or taking or making him ask for money)  0% (0)
- Sexual Violence (forced sex/groping/sexually degraded etc)  0% (0)

**How does the experience of being abused impact on men?**

No men reported experiencing any broken bones but 22% (3) of the men had received cuts and 72% (10) had been bruised. Of these 10 men 6 had also been physically or sexually abusive to the women.

The men who were genuinely experiencing domestic violence had experienced great cost to their emotional well-being and loss of quality fatherhood with their children. The interview data found that 72% (10) of the men were quite open about their patriarchal beliefs. In fact I would argue that 43% (6) of the women were not ‘users’ of domestic violence at all. If this data were part of an information sharing system then there would be greater accuracy in assessments.
The table below outlines the level of effects we usually anticipate stemming from domestic violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>% (No.)</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of her abuse</td>
<td>7 % (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Blame</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>93% (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Loss of Child Contact</td>
<td>7% (1)</td>
<td>This is because he has chosen not to maintain contact, not because the woman stopped this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not living with children due to the domestic violence</td>
<td>44% (6)</td>
<td>4 men were going through court/mediation for residency or improved access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of job</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of home</td>
<td>44% (6)</td>
<td>1 man was in a hostel, 1 man staying with his parents and 1 man renting a new home. 3 men moved back into their home after a short period of moving out and had their partner removed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effecting new</td>
<td>22% (3)</td>
<td>1 man described being abusive to his new partner because of the relationship abuse he got from his previous partner. 1 man described not wanting a long-term relationship now, and 1 man had entered into a new relationship with another abusive woman and both women were making it hard for him to see his children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research I carried out for NDVF in 2004 not only took note of what abuse men experienced but also explored men's attitudes and expectations of their partner, their expectations of the relationship and also their own behaviour.

I found that if the man was genuinely experiencing abuse and did not hold beliefs that he should be the authority in the relationship then it was very likely that his partner was an intentional controller or a self-protection controller. If he did hold beliefs that he should be the authority because he is male then his partner was likely to be resisting this.

If the man was genuinely being abused, did not hold beliefs that he should be the authority in the relationship, but was retaliating, then it was likely that his partner was either the intentional controller or a self-protection controller. If he did hold beliefs of superiority and authority because he is male then his partner was likely to be a retaliatory controller or a survivor resisting his domineering behaviour.

When you are getting reports that both partners are being abusive it can be easy to think them as being as bad as each other and label it ‘mutual abuse’, or equal combatants. Although this can be the case for some situations I did not believe any of the 14 men interviewed were in this situation, as there always appeared to be one partner having more authority and power. Some of the men were the primary instigators of the abuse, whether of his own or his partners. These men had deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs and the woman clearly seemed to be defending herself from his determination to fulfil his expectations. His partner was therefore likely to be a survivor resisting his abuse, and needing support.
Establishing whether or not the man has patriarchal beliefs therefore will help us get a better idea of the dynamics in the relationship. To end this chapter I have produced a chart that combines the categories for abusive women (Carnell, 2004) and the categories for men (Gadd et al, 2002) to show how they fit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Man disclosing</th>
<th>The Man's Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Instigator</td>
<td>Self-Protection Controller Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Combatant</td>
<td>Intentional Controller Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliator</td>
<td>Intentional Controller Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Retaliator</td>
<td>Intentional Controller Woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The light yellow band suggests the category the woman is least likely to be in.

The stronger yellow band suggests a more possible category for the woman.

The orange band suggests the category the woman is most likely to be in.

It is unfortunate, but it is necessary, why this document provides so much information about men who claim to be victims but who are not. The fact that around and above 50% of men claim to be victims but who are not means that we cannot ignore it and therefore need to work it out so that we are clear about who we should be providing support to, and what that support should be.
References:

Carnell D. (2004) TRI Research
‘Women’s Abuse Towards Male Partners’

‘Domestic Abuse Against Men In Scotland’

‘The Dyn Project – Supporting Men Experiencing Domestic Abuse’.

“At first I thought it was just mood swings but it didn’t stop and it got worse. I didn’t think I could tell anyone about it, so I just put up with it, hoping she would eventually stop behaving this way.... Eventually I moved out and our son came to live with me. But now she’s turned him against me and he’s moved back with her.”

Man talking from the NDVF research, 2004.
Merrill and Wolfe (2000) found the following from their study with gay survivors of domestic violence from intimate partners:

**Physical Abuse**
- 79% had suffered physical injury
- 60% reported having bruises from physical abuse
- 23% received head injuries and/or concussion from abuse
- 12% had broken bones as a result of abuse
- 10% had been burnt as part of physical abuse

**Sexual Abuse**
- 73% of men had been sexually abused by their partner
- 56% of the male abusers demanded ‘make up sex’ immediately after a ‘fight’ while the survivor was still afraid of him
- 39% were forced to have sex against their will
- 13% of the male abusers tried to forced sex with the intention to inflict HIV on the survivor

These findings about gay men’s experience of domestic violence are similar to women’s experience of physical and sexual abuse from male partners. Gay male survivors also disclosed experiencing physical and sexual abuse from other known men and by men not known to them, again similar to women’s experiences, women targeted because they are women and gay men targeted because they are gay. Men’s experience of abuse from female partners does not have this level of physical and sexual abuse or the fear of it.

**Types of abuse specific to gay domestic violence:**

- ‘Outing’ or threatening to ‘Out’ his sexuality or gender identity.
- Reinforcing the partner’s fear that no one will help him because he is gay. Undermining or negating his gay identity.
- Controlling his access to the gay network and to gay specific services.
- Use of gay pornography and/or forcing specific gay sex acts.
- Targeting his race, ethnicity or mental health issue in relation to his sexuality.

In some abusive gay relationships both men will want to the power. This is not surprising considering how the portrayal of men as the boss in married or co-habiting couples is deeply embedded in society through education from traditions, religion, school, TV, advertising and consumer products etc. Gay men can easily interpret these same constructs into their relationships with gay partners.

But we should not assume this would always be the case, or a common case, for gay relationships. However, Merrill and Wolfe’s study in 2000, found that almost 3 in 4 abusing partners were using sexual abuse as a way to determine their position as the boss, a similar ratio to heterosexual male perpetrators.

Even if there were an initial battle for authority or no clear authority to their relationship conflict, any sexual abuse would be a significant indicator of power and control and would single out the predominant abuser.
In a study by Michael Cruz (2000), one man said: “Men are conditioned to be the ones who are in charge of a relationship and the ones who make all the calls. And so when you get two men in a relationship together, they both expect that power, and I think a lot of men don’t know any other way to get that power except to hit whoever they’re with and be the more powerful one.” (25 year-old gay man presenting as domestic violence survivor)

Another man said in the same study: “In my relationships I’ve always been with very dominant people and I am very dominant. I think when you put two dominants together you end up with that kind of problem. Neither one wants to be told what to do or how to do it.” (26 year-old gay man who, during one incident, had his arm broken by his partner, whilst he broke his partner’s leg)

Both these quotes refer to power battles from a gender perspective – ‘who’s going to be the man (or boss) here?’ Naturally however, not all gay relationships where there is domestic violence are going to involve retaliatory or situations where both partners are equally abusive to each other, and not all the men will want to be a dominator or believe in violent or abusive behaviour as a way to deal with issues.

Merrill (1998) found that 58% of gay men reported ‘fighting back’ against the predominant abuser, more in line with men’s experience of retaliating to abuse from female partners. Because of this retaliation gay male domestic violence survivors may risk being wrongfully labelled the perpetrator as has been found often with women being wrongfully labelled the perpetrator when they fight back in heterosexual relationships. If we take Merrill’s research as a guideline there are 42% of gay men experiencing domestic violence who do not fight back. They will not because they either feel too fearful, are not able to or do not want to.

This obviously needs careful attention. What is the abuse about, why is it happening and how can you tell when the reported abuse is the predominant abuse, retaliatory or self-defence. What types of abuse are solely used by predominant abusers (e.g. forced sex)?

Getting it wrong could risk the survivor being wrongly charged, labelled, victimised and isolated further. Screening enables us to explore the detail, drawing out the context of the abuse, the expectations and attitudes of the couple and the controlling or intentional nature of any abuse.

One man said about his controlling behaviour from Cruz’s study: “When people talk in general about men, their idea is that men run a home. Well, in my relationships, we’ve both wanted to run the home, you know? And I always have had the financial means to do it, and so I felt like I should run the home.”

His statement indicates that this man has the traditional male assumed dominance in a relationship, using the fact that he is a man as the first claim to the throne and financial power as his back up. These are indicators, that although he may experience abuse from his partner, he is likely to be the predominant abuser due to the status he gives himself over his partner. In challenging him we would need to address the way he treats his partner as being less equal to him and how his attitudes influence how he interacts with his partner.
Why gay men may stay with or return to their male partner?

Research finds that men (whether gay or heterosexual) are more likely to leave their abusive partner than women are to leave their male partner. Yet for women and gay men, finance appears a key reason that keeps them with the abuser.

Cruz, in a study from 2003, where he interviewed 25 self-identified gay or bisexual men experiencing domestic violence found the following as being the main reasons men gave to why they stayed:

- **Love or Commitment** 21%
- **Financial Dependence** 18.6% (average length of relationship was 3.75 years)
- **Naiveté/Inexperience** 16.3% (spoke of no role models to learn from)
- **Hope of Change** 9.3%
- **Loneliness** 7%
- **Emotional Dependence** 7%
- **Guilt or Trapped** 4.6%

Fear of what he might do - 4.3% (This does not include fear as a result of abuse)

Merrill and Wolfe (2000) found that 90% of survivors had left their abusive male partner, and 60% of the gay men in their study had made 3 or more ‘significant attempts to leave.

Merrill and Wolfe found that 58% of survivors claimed that the abuser continued to ‘moderately or severely’ harass them after they had left him. This is less than women’s experience of continued harassment from male partners but higher than men’s experience of continued harassment from female partners.

In approximately 50% of cases where heterosexual men present experiencing domestic violence it is the women who end the relationship and leave and don’t pursue the man for ongoing control.

The point of disclosing or making a referral for help:

The first point to highlight here is that when we get a call or face-to-face disclosure from a man about experiencing domestic violence we should not assume heterosexual relationship. We must also be aware that when a gay man begins to disclose he may be anxious about how we are going to react to his sexuality, and it might be the first time he is ‘ outing’ himself outside his close circle of friends.

Interestingly, the Dyn project (Support Service for male victims in Wales) found that gay men were more willing than heterosexual men to accept offers of face to face support, further telephone contact, information packs, police monitoring, housing services and other support packages. It is not clear why gay men are more willing to take up support but the fact that there was a bigger ratio of high-risk gay survivors calling for help than heterosexual men may be one reason. Another might be due to the fact that a high percentage of heterosexual men who called the service did not genuinely need support.

The Dyn project found that at the point of contact with the Dyn phoneline for male survivors 1 in 3 gay men calling were found to be high or very high risk cases. 27% of the gay male referrals were repeat referrals compared to 4% of heterosexual male referrals.
Specific concerns of gay men disclosing domestic violence:

- Fearing homophobia from service providers
- Fearing a service provider’s lack of knowledge or understanding of gay relationships and of domestic violence in gay relationships
- Fearing if contacting a gay service provider that they might reject him because he is exposing a negative aspect of gay relationships, therefore adding to his fear of the lack of appropriate or specialist services available

With heterosexism and homophobia embedded in society it is not surprising that gay men might fear discrimination when disclosing. This fear is very likely intensified if the man is of Black or Minority Ethnicity or has mental health issues due to additional risk of discrimination.

The same categories can be used for assessing abuse within gay relationship as is used for women’s abuse against men. For example, if the man is genuinely experiencing abuse and does not hold beliefs that he should be the authority in the relationship then it is very likely that his partner is an intentional controller or a self-protection controller. If he does hold beliefs that he should be the authority then his partner is likely to be a retaliatory controller.

If the man is genuinely being abused but is retaliating and does not hold beliefs that he should be the authority in the relationship then it is likely that his partner is either the intentional controller or the self-protection controller.

If he does hold beliefs that he should be the authority then his partner is likely to be a retaliatory controller or a survivor resisting him trying to be the controller.

If the man is involved in mutual abuse then there is a battle for control and a resistance to control. Both he and his partner could be in any of the four categories.

If it turns out that the man is the primary instigator, (in other words the predominant perpetrator), then his partner is more likely to be the survivor resisting his abuse and dominance. The man considered the ‘survivor resisting’ is likely to be a man in urgent need of support.

References:


Survivor story from website - gmdvp.org
What does ‘screening’ mean?

Screening is a way of assessing whether or not you are dealing with a genuine male survivor of domestic violence and to help you deliver the best service or offer the most appropriate referral point. Screening has become an important aspect of good practice for taking disclosures from men and offering support to men experiencing domestic violence. It is recommended that the screening process involves a checklist and an information sharing protocol.

Why screen?

As the work with male survivors develops and increases, so too does our knowledge about men who use the ‘victim’ tag for other reasons. The screening tool helps us to provide an efficient service to genuine survivors whether they are the male or female partners in these cases. The screening tool also helps us to avoid offering support services to perpetrators acting the victim. If a disclosure or an assessment is not handled appropriately it could lead to:

→ Collusion with a perpetrator, equipping him with further information and power
→ A perpetrator being referred to a service he does not need
→ A male survivor not being able to access the limited support available
→ Partners and children being further isolated, controlled and abused.

Why might the perpetrator disclose to you that he is a victim?

Male perpetrators of domestic violence commonly approach intervention services acting as the victim of their partners supposed ‘difficult’ or abusive behaviour. A perpetrator may pretend to be the victim to try and manipulate legal proceedings as a way to get the children into his care, to disrupt legal proceedings and avoid consequences for his abuse, and also as part of a threat towards his partner that he said he would carry out to keep her/him quiet.

What have services for men and research found to support screening?

→ Of the 130 heterosexual men who referred to the Dyn Project (support for men experiencing domestic abuse in Wales) 60% had a known history of being violent to current or former partners and 28% of these men were known high-risk offenders. Robinson A & Rowlands J (2006). The information sharing system used as part of the screening tool by the Dyn Project enabled them to uncover these facts.
→ TRI Project at NDVF (2004) and Gadd et al (2002) also found that, even without an information sharing protocol, over 50% of the men who either self claimed as a victim or were labelled victim by professionals were in fact the predominant abuser or equally abusive yet more controlling.
→ MALE, the Men’s Advice Line (national phoneline for male survivors, funded by the Home Office), also acknowledges that a high percentage of calls they get are from the predominant abusers acting the victim.

Some men are very skilled in how they present themselves and on how to manipulate systems and services, similar to their manipulation of their partner, so screening may not be 100% effective but will certainly assist good practice. The table below shows different characteristics that can help you assess whether the man is a genuine survivor of abuse, equally abusive or the predominant abuser.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genuine Survivor of abuse</th>
<th>Predominant Abuser/ Equally abusive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fearful of his partner</td>
<td>Does not express or demonstrate fear of his partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful of the abuse</td>
<td>Does not express or demonstrate fear of the abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused about what is happening</td>
<td>Presents himself confidently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has tried to leave (unsuccessfully) or tried to repair the relationship</td>
<td>His partner has recently left him or is in the process of leaving him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels empathy for his partner's current problems or childhood experiences</td>
<td>Little or no empathy with his partner and focussing solely on himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimises the severity of the abuse, but is able to provide details in a chronological order, given time</td>
<td>Is good at focussing on one incident but is vague about incidents or events when you enquire further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels ashamed of the abuse, and of being a victim</td>
<td>Assertively claims the victim status and does not find fault in himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels remorse or guilt for having retaliated</td>
<td>Feels aggrieved and in the right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuses the actions or expectations of his partner and carries the responsibility for the problems in the relationship</td>
<td>Blames his partner for the abuse, presenting his partner for example as an unreasonable or unstable character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worries about how it is effecting the children</td>
<td>Does not consider the children's experiences or feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels a sense of obligation to protect the abusive partner</td>
<td>Negative or unreasonable attitudes and statements about his partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The man is likely to be the survivor if the points in the left hand column apply. He is likely to be the perpetrator if the right hand column applies and if it's a bit of both then this may suggest that there is a level of dual abuse. Use of specific types of abuse, such as sexual abuse, may also indicate who is the predominant abuser.

Violence as a self-defence is of course different to violence as an act of domination. There is also a difference between defending oneself from the predominant abuser and the predominant abuser claiming self-defence when the survivor is fighting back. It is essential to try and draw out the controlling nature within the relationship. Often you can do this by exploring his attitudes and expectations.

**Taking disclosures from men who may be experiencing domestic violence:**

It may be appropriate that when he begins to disclose you can straight away provide him with the MALE referral point. However, if you are to take a full disclosure from a man, the following information will help you.

Some men, when they disclose, will start by telling you about their experience of seeking help from another agency and getting poor treatment. Some men start from a point of anger at their partner and some men from a point of not knowing how to begin.

It is always easier and more beneficial for men and for us as workers to have an order and structure of questions to help with the disclosure (See Appendix C for some suggestions on the type of questions you could ask, depending on your roles and responsibilities).
Helpful responses to common assumptions:

No matter how much or little our involvement with a man is who discloses experiencing domestic violence we can all respond to dispel any myths he has, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He say’s….</th>
<th>You say….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“he isn’t believed because he is a man.”</td>
<td>Women are often not believed too, so it is not necessarily because of gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If I was a woman everything would go in my favour.”</td>
<td>This is not true and that the majority of women experience procedures as going against them or not protecting them or the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“all the support services are for women and there are no services for men.”</td>
<td>There are services for men and give him details of the kind of service he requires. You can also let him know that there is a shortage of services for women and children too.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenging him does not mean we are confrontational. We are simply helping him to understand that for a male or female survivor, the experience of getting help and going through any procedures, whether criminal or civil, are difficult, potentially traumatic and unpredictable.
**Leaflets/Posters:** This is not a complete list as several regions of the UK have their own leaflets and posters aimed at men experiencing domestic violence but this is a list relevant to Nottinghamshire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALE (posters and leaflets about their services)</th>
<th>0808 801 0327</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broken Rainbow (poster and leaflets about their services)</td>
<td>0845 260 4460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDVF (LGBT domestic violence leaflet)</td>
<td>0115 962 3237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research:** There is a wealth of research on the issue of men’s experience of domestic violence available on the website and in published format. Below are a few examples.


**Websites:** There are many support and information websites. The three below are recommended.

- [www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk) (National Phoneline for male survivors in Britain)
- [www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk) (LGBT Domestic Violence National Phoneline)
- [www.gmdvp.org](http://www.gmdvp.org) (very informative website from USA)

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- David Gadd
  Keele University
- James Rowland
  Dyn Project
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  Independent Consultant
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  Nottinghamshire Police Domestic Violence Policy Officer
- Ian Firth
  Victim Support

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I thank Mark Coulter for introducing me to the concept of ‘Predominant Abuser’ and for greater insight into the issue arising from calls to the National Phoneline.

I finally thank Jane Lewis for the time she gave to sourcing information, her help in analysing data and concepts, her encouragement and patience throughout this project.
Supporting Men Who Experience Abuse from (Male or Female) Intimate Partner’s