



Domestic Abuse in Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Partnerships

www.norfolklgbtproject.org.uk

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Foreword

This resource highlights the importance of continuing to research domestic abuse in LGB+ communities and the need for local, informed, compassionate service provision to best support LGB+ victims of domestic abuse.

We want to highlight the importance of LGB+ individuals' inclusion in domestic abuse services and draw attention to the issue as one that affects all types of partnerships, families and people.

While we have specified Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual as victims of sexuality-related abuse it's important to note that domestic abuse can also be experienced by any non-heterosexual orientation, including those who identify as pansexual, polysexual, asexual and other sexualities. We hope individuals who may not identify as LGB+, but do have a non-heterosexual sexuality, feel able to use and see themselves reflected within this resource. There may not be a term you are comfortable with; you might be questioning your sexuality and that might be something you are still coming to terms with – this resource is still for you.

If you find this resource resonates with you, know that you are not alone and there are inclusive and supportive services here for you.

We think we know what domestic abuse is as it's often portrayed in the media as being physical in nature. But there are many other forms abuse can take – and importantly, physical abuse is unlikely to be the first form of abuse displayed by an abuser. Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over, who are or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

What is dome

Some identifiable categories of domestic abuse can include the following, please note this list is not exhaustive:

Physical

This means any situation where you are made to feel physically unsafe and in danger. Physical violence committed against you by a partner or family member, physical restraint against your will, as well as putting you in physical danger from others.

Sexual

Rape and sexual abuse, whether or not you are in a marriage, civil partnership or relationship is abuse and you are not to blame. This includes unwanted sexual contact which can also include an element of emotional abuse through claims that sex is inherent to your value as a person.

Verbal/Emotional

This is when someone uses words to slowly break down your sense of self, undermining your confidence, abilities or appearance. You may feel constantly on edge and judged rather than appreciated and respected.



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Psychological

Psychological abuse, which can include emotional abuse, happens when someone slowly causes your sense of reality or mental health to *gaslight you into thinking that your judgement is impaired. The abuser might encourage this line of thinking – that you are ‘crazy’ and unable to make sound decisions without them.

Financial/Economic

Controlling the household budget, creating situations where you have a poor credit rating and cannot be financially independent. Not allowing you to work or earn your own money, not allowing access to bank accounts and withholding financial assistance or independent finances, all creating a situation where you are financially unable to leave the relationship with independent means.

Cultural/Identity

This happens when someone uses a part of your identity against you as part of the abuse, such as not letting someone observe the dietary or dress customs of a particular religion or cultural background, using someone’s LGBTQ+ identity threatening to ‘out’ them against their will, the use of racial slurs or weaponizing aspects that are crucial to the victims sense of self and identity.

*Gaslighting is a form of abuse that causes someone to doubt their sanity or perceptions.

LGB+ domestic abuse is a pattern of incidents or behaviour that can be characterised as controlling, coercive, threatening, humiliating, upsetting committed against someone who is LGB+, or any sexuality that is not heterosexual, by someone they share their home with.

What is LGB+ domestic abuse

As well as experiencing the same domestic abuse that heterosexual people do, LGB+ identity can also become a part of the pattern of domestic abuse, which is one of the reasons it's important to have separate information on it. Having your identity used against you can also explain why LGB+ domestic abuse might be under-reported, as the threats can be very substantially impactful to the stability of victim's lives, especially if they are not 'out' or suffer from stigma attached to aspects of their identity.

Sexuality related abuse can include:

- Threats to disclose your sexual orientation to family, friends, workplaces, etc.
- Telling someone your sexuality, or HIV status, without your consent
- Making you feel guilty about being gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual or asexual or any other non-heterosexual orientation and using that shame against you – encouraging the idea there is something 'wrong' with you.
- Attempting to 'correct' your sexuality by using; corrective rape, conversion therapy, and other forms of attempts to force your sexuality to become contrary to what it is.
- Limiting or controlling the amount of time or your ability to meet other LGB+ people, access LGB+ spaces or resources.



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- Use humiliating language, name-calling or hate-speech linked to your sexuality
- Refusals to engage in safe sex on grounds that it's not for same-sex couples
- Threatening to take children away if you do not have adoptive status
- Engaging in sexual behaviour you are not comfortable with, or that puts you at risk, such as engaging in unprotected Chemsex and falsely attributing it as the 'norm'.

Sometimes the abuse is also characterised by its excuses, which can include:

- That it's not really domestic violence because you are LGB+
- That the abuse is 'corrective' in some form and solving a 'problem'
- That the abuse is mutual, or two-way abuse with both parties 'as bad as the other'
- Justifying the abuse because you are 'pretending' to be LGB+

These are all things to look out for when helping someone who might require support for domestic abuse, as well as considerations to think about in your own family life and relationships.

It is a myth that domestic abuse does not happen to people within the LGBT+ community. LGBT+ people can be manipulated into believing there is no support for them. These are barriers we need to break through as we know domestic abuse does happen in LGBT+ relationships and there is dedicated, specialist support for people within this community too.

Why LGB+ domestic abuse needs to be talked about?

Research shows that individuals are disproportionately underrepresented among those accessing specialist domestic abuse services even though Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Harassment, Stalking and Jealous and Controlling Behaviour were reported as having occurred more frequently to these individuals in comparison with non-LGBT clients (data compiled from Safe Lives, 2015).

LGB+ victims reported much higher rates of complex needs compared to their heterosexual peers. LGB+ victims and survivors are:

- Almost twice as likely to have attempted suicide (28% vs 15%)
- More than twice as likely to have self-harmed (32% vs 14%)
- More likely to experience mental health problems (51% vs 38%)

Safe Lives Report

We want to help change these figures.



Why is LGB+ domestic abuse not reported?

About 4% of reported domestic abuse cases in Norfolk occurred in same-sex relationships.²

Some of the most common reasons for not reporting domestic abuse are:³

- That the incidents are thought to be too trivial to be worth reporting (downplaying)
- That it's felt to be a private matter, embarrassment or shame
- A feeling that help isn't available or the feeling the police cannot assist
- A fear of further domestic abuse
- A lack of desire for the perpetrator to be punished,
- The abuser threatens self-harm or suicide as a deterrent to report
- Anxiety about not being believed or being sympathised with
- A dislike or fear of police involvement.

And then there are those additional factors that non-heterosexual people face:

- A fear of being outed during reporting the incident/s
- A concern that they might lose contact with children they are parenting but not biologically related to.

² DANA Norfolk 2016, p.30.

³ DANA Norfolk, 2016. According to CSEW Source: ONS 2016a, p.20.

What to do?

If you or someone you know has been affected by domestic abuse, you should make safety your first priority. Following an incident, you should:

- If you feel you, (or someone else) may be in immediate danger, you should call 999. The silent solution can be used on a landline or mobile if it is not safe for you to speak. When dialling 999, press 55 when connected to let the call handler know you cannot speak.
- Keep a diary where you log incidences of abuse – this can be used as evidence if you ever need it to. Apps can be useful, if it is safe to download these: Bright Sky or Hollie Guard can be used to keep a journal safely, as well as many other safety features.
- Reach out to a trusted family member, friend, or neighbour to be able to go there if things escalate at home or in an emergency.
- It is important to keep yourself digitally safe too. We know so many people who experience domestic abuse, have their digital devices monitored and other use of technology is used to keep you under surveillance. Please refer to the NIDAS website and ‘keeping safe’ page for advice how to keep your technology safe Keeping Safe – NIDAS (nidasnorfolk.co.uk)

- Emotional and psychological abuse are typically used before any other form of abuse. This means you are probably not sure if you are experiencing domestic abuse or not? To be able to speak with someone you trust, including a professional, can really help you to process this.
- In Norfolk, we are here to help. Norfolk LGBT+ and NIDAS are here to listen to you and provide you with all the options available to you.
- The options are yours, this is your journey, we will be with you every step of the way.

If you are considering leaving the person(s) causing you harm, please do talk with a NIDAS specialist. Leaving is the most dangerous time and the specialist will be able guide into leaving safely. (Please see Leaving Safely – NIDAS (nidasnorfolk.co.uk) for further details.

Remember you are not to blame for the abuse, and it is in no way your fault. We all deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Services you can access

We believe service provision should be inclusive, and that by accessing support you should not feel you are unable to express yourself fully, neither should you meet discomfort when already dealing with abuse. We want you to be able to access your local services to support your next steps.



Norfolk LGBT+ Project is a registered charity, providing support, information and advice to all age groups that is relevant to the health and wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Norfolk and Waveney since 2007.

Email: info@norfolklgbtproject.org.uk

Phone: 01603 219299

Website: www.norfolklgbtproject.org.uk



NIDAS (Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service) is a domestic abuse support service for those assessed to be at high or medium risk of harm. NIDAS also offers dedicated support for Children and Young People, recovery programmes, coordinated multi-agency support, court support.

Email: referrals@nidasnorfolk.co.uk

Phone: 0300 561 0555

Text: 07860 063464

Website: nidasnorfolk.co.uk



Norfolk and Suffolk Victim Care provide a free, confidential support service specifically designed to help victims and witnesses of crime.

Email: nsvictimcare@victimsupport.org.uk

Phone: 0300 303 3706

Website: www.nsvictimcare.org



NIDAS is the largest, county wide domestic abuse service and is delighted to work in partnership with Norfolk LGBT+ Project.

NIDAS understands the barriers access support and In response to this, NIDAS is providing Norfolk's first dedicated LGBT+ IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate), who is able to be by your side and help you every step of the way. The LGBT+ IDVA is reflective of the people they are offering support to. The service is free of charge and is confidential **

What support can NIDAS offer?

- 1:1 Support from your dedicated LGBT+ IDVA. They will support you emotionally, practically and coordinate other areas of support which you may need (ie, housing, financial advice, legal advice).
- Support for your children if they have been affected by what has happened to you? Your children (5-18) will have their own Family Worker.
- Recovery from abuse is essential and NIDAS will offer a choice of recovery programmes, to support you into long term positive outcomes.

NIDAS will support you, your needs, your journey – your freedom.

To access support from NIDAS LGBT+ IDVA, please contact either NIDAS

www.nidasnorfolk.co.uk

0300 561 0555

07860 063464 (text number)

or Norfolk LGBT+ Project who will contact NIDAS IDVA on your behalf.

***All of the above services are completely confidential – however, if there are immediate safety concerns, information will be passed on to relevant services as duty of care.*



No victim of domestic abuse should be without support, when they need it, no matter who they are or where they live in Norfolk.

NIDAS: The domestic abuse service here for you every step of the way. No matter where you are in Norfolk, we are here to help you.

Our aim is to listen to you,
to guide and be by your side.

You only have to tell us your story once.

Our service will support you, your needs,
your journey – your freedom.

NORFOLK
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SUPPORT INFORMATION ADVICE



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