Domestic Abuse in Same Sex Relationships

Why this matters

Domestic abuse can occur in any intimate relationship, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Abuse within same-sex relationships is often less visible and may be under-recognised by victims, professionals and support services, which can delay identification and intervention.

Further Information

- Galop (UK LGBT+ anti-abuse charity)
- LGBT Foundation Domestic Abuse Services
- SafeLives LGBTQ+ resources
- NSPCC Learning: Safeguarding LGBTQ+ Children and Young People
- Domestic Abuse Alliance
- Talk2Someone (Warwickshire DA support service)



What is domestic abuse?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 applies equally to same-sex and heterosexual relationships. Domestic abuse may include coercive and controlling behaviour, emotional or psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, stalking and harassment and digital and online abuse.
The common factor is the misuse of power and control by one person over another.

Key practice points

- Use inclusive language.
- Avoid assumptions based on gender or sexual orientation.
- Focus on patterns of behaviour, power and control.
- Consider the impact on children and young people in the household. Create safe opportunities for disclosure.
- Ensure referrals to appropriate domestic abuse and safeguarding services.

Unique forms of abuse in same-sex relationships

Perpetrators may use a person's sexual orientation or gender identity as a means of coercion and control. This can include threats to "out" them, exploiting fears of discrimination or rejection, minimising the abuse, and discouraging them from seeking help by suggesting services will not understand or support them.

Professional curiosity

As a professional, ask yourself:

- Would I recognise domestic abuse if it were occurring in a same-sex relationship?
- Am I making assumptions about who is the victim and who is the perpetrator?
- Have I considered the impact on any children in the household?
- Would an LGBTQ+ victim feel safe disclosing abuse to our service?

Safeguarding children and young people

Regardless of gender or sexual orientation, domestic abuse can have a significant impact on children and young people, affecting their emotional wellbeing, safety and development. Practitioners should recognise the effects on emotional wellbeing, safety and development, and ensure the child's voice and lived experience remain central to assessment and support. LGBTQ+ children and young people may also be at increased risk of bullying, exploitation and other forms of abuse, making early identification and supportive professional relationships particularly important.

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