

1. Introduction to domestic violence

This section of the toolkit is aimed at providing drug and alcohol workers with a framework for practice when working with domestic violence survivors and perpetrators. The Stella Project does not believe drug or alcohol use causes domestic violence. Substances may be used as a mechanism to allow or excuse violence. This section of the toolkit will look at the legal issues, safety concerns and facts you should consider. Practice guidance and an explanation of the sorts of domestic violence services available is also given.

1.1 Domestic Violence Definition

The Stella Project uses the London Domestic Violence Strategy definition of domestic violence throughout its work:

“Domestic violence is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person, usually a man, over another, usually a woman, within the context of an intimate relationship. It can be manifested in a variety of ways, including but not restricted to, physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and the imposition of social isolation and is most commonly a combination of them all.”

Throughout this document, victims/survivors of domestic violence are referred to as female and perpetrators as male. However, we wish to make it clear that domestic violence also occurs in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender relationships and that heterosexual men are also abused by heterosexual women.

Untitled

*Why did you do it when you promised to care
 You were always so happy at the moments we shared
 You said that you loved me and it would never stop
 Now it will be over with one short drop
 Do you know the pain you cause when you clench up your fist
 Why make the agony when it's more appealing to kiss
 Why make me scream, why make me cry
 Now 'Thank God' I'm saying 'Goodbye'
 I'm sure you're not aware when the alcohol flows
 the hurt that exists from one of your blows
 It doesn't stop me, the bruises will go
 The wounds they will heal, blood ceases to flow
 But look at the family, the scars on their hearts
 It's for them that I do this now that we part
 I'll be free from your torment to live my own life
 Shall it be drugs, a gun, a push or a knife
 You're spaced again, I can see in your eyes
 Today I'm not prepared to settle for lies
 I'm not the one who's going, I've my baby to care for
 So it's you who will scream and fall to the floor*

Anonymous

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh/real45.shtml>

1.2 Facts and statistics about domestic violence

- An analysis of 10 separate domestic violence prevalence studies by the Council of Europe showed consistent findings: **1 in 4 women experience domestic violence during their lifetime** and between 6-10% of women suffer domestic violence in a given year ²⁰
- **Repeat victimisation** is common. The results of the British Crime Survey (2000) found that more than half of victims of domestic violence experience more than one incident. No other type of crime repeat victimisation rate as high ²¹
- **Over 25% of reported violent crime** is domestic violence ²²
- A very conservative estimate of the economic consequences of domestic violence found it costs at least **£278 million** per annum within London ²³
- Research conducted with male respondents to the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 found that men were less likely to have been seriously injured, less likely to have been repeat victims of domestic assault, and less likely to report feeling fearful in their own homes. The survey retraced men who were counted as victims in the Scottish Crime Survey and found that a majority of the men who said that they were victims of domestic violence, were also perpetrators of violence (13 of 22). A significant proportion of the men re-interviewed (13 of 46) later said they had actually never experienced any form of domestic abuse ²⁴

20. Council of Europe (2002). Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of women against violence adopted on 30 April 2002 and Explanatory Memorandum. Council of Europe: Strasbourg, France.

21. British Crime Survey England and Wales (2000). Home Office: London

22. British Crime Survey England and Wales (2000). Home Office: London

23. Stanko, Prof E (2000). The Day to Count: A Snapshot of the Impact of Domestic Violence in the UK. Criminal Justice 1:2.

24. Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (2002). Domestic Abuse Against Men in Scotland. Crime and Criminal Justice Research Findings No. 61.

- A study of 200 women's experiences of domestic violence, found that **60% of the women had left because they feared that they or their children would be killed** by the perpetrator ²⁵
- Women are at greatest risk of being killed when separating from a violent partner ²⁶
- **40% of all homeless women stated that domestic violence contributed to their homelessness.** In a recent study by Shelter. Domestic violence was "the single most quoted reason for becoming homeless" ²⁷
- A review of domestic violence murders in London found 76% occurred after the victim had ended the relationship.²⁸

25. Humphreys, Dr C and Thiara, Dr R. (2002). Routes to Safety: Protection issues facing abused women and children and the role of outreach services. Women's Aid Federation of England: Bristol.

26. Lees, S. (2000). Marital rape and marital murder. In 'Hanmer, J and Itzin, N (ed.s). Home Truths about Domestic Violence: Feminist Influences on Policy and Practice: A Reader. Routledge: London, England

27. Cramer, H and Carter, M (2002). Homelessness: what's gender got to do with it? Shelter: London

28. Findings from the Multi-Agency Domestic Violence Murder Reviews in London. Metropolitan Police Service. 2003

MYTH

Women who use drugs or drink are bad mothers

FACT

Drug and alcohol use do not make you a bad parent. Poor parenting skills or abuse make you a bad parent.

2. Legal Issues

Many of the violent actions perpetrators choose are criminal acts (E.g. Rape, Common Assault, GBH) However, it is estimated that less than one in three incidents are reported to the police. This section outlines the legal issues to consider when working with both perpetrators and survivors of violence.

2.1 Working with perpetrators

Even if your contact with the perpetrator's family is non-existent or minimal you need to consider how your interventions could affect them. While you are not responsible for your clients behaviour, your interventions may have an impact on his partner or family.

The main concern most workers have is how to deal with a disclosure of domestic violence. Before doing any in-depth work with perpetrators your client will have signed a confidentiality agreement. This agreement should stipulate that your organisation can share information with other service providers and the perpetrator's partner if her safety is at risk. This way if your client appears agitated, leaves your service and you believe his partner may be in danger, you are able to contact and warn her. A confidentiality agreement can be found on page 245.

Legally you are obliged to report any disclosures of violence if:

- The victim is a child
- If the victim is unable to report the crime themselves eg. They have a disability which has prevented them from reporting it

If this is the case a referral to Social Services should be made.

Case Study - Liz

Liz has been seeing an alcohol counsellor at your service for the past six months. She has been with her girlfriend for three years and her partner has been violent toward her for the past two years. Liz blames this primarily on her drinking and feels guilty that she 'fights back' when she has been drinking. Liz feels that her partner is justified in being violent, due the stresses of living with a problem drinker.

1. What are the issues or myths you might wish to discuss with Liz?
2. When is it okay for Liz to 'fight back'?
3. What options are available to Liz?

Possible Solutions

Have you considered the minimum standards for working with this client group?

1. What are the issues or myths you might like to discuss with Liz?

Liz's drinking does not cause violence, in fact she may drink as a way of coping with the violence she is experiencing. Although it may be stressful to live with Liz's drinking her partner has no right to be violent. As a worker you should reiterate this to Liz and allow her alternative ways to think about and understand the violence she is experiencing.

2. When is it okay for Liz to 'fight back'?

Women are not generally brought up to believe they should ever be violent. Therefore Liz may feel very guilty about being violent, even if she uses violence as a form of self defence. You should talk to Liz about the dangers of 'fighting back' when she is under the influence of alcohol. Whilst substance affected she may not be able to gauge the level of danger or harm she could be in or may possibly inflict. It is important that you continue encouraging Liz to access your service.

3. What options are available to Liz?

Liz should continue accessing your service in relation to her substance use. You should ask Liz if she would prefer to speak with an organisation that works directly with gay and lesbian domestic violence e.g. Broken Rainbow or Sola. You could speak to Liz about the sorts of domestic violence services available, such as refuges or meeting with an outreach worker. At all times you should ensure that Liz feels safe, secure and that you are non-judgemental. Your job is to provide options and ideas to Liz, however Liz's choice should be respected.

2.2 Legal issues to consider if your client is a domestic violence survivor

There are two ways survivors can access the legal system, either through the police (criminal law) or a solicitor (civil law).

The Criminal Law

If you call the police

Always call **999** in an emergency so the police can provide immediate help. They may arrest a violent perpetrator if has committed a criminal offence. It is their decision whether to arrest him or not and not the responsibility of the victim.

The local police Community Safety Unit will also provide support. Community Safety Units are the investigation teams for domestic violence crimes as well as race and homophobic crime. They can also support victims in finding ways to keep safe. (You can find their number through your local police station or in the phone book.)

If they are called out, the police will take a statement from the victim. The victim will be asked to sign it to say it is true. The police will also gather other evidence that may be available such as medical records, statements from neighbours or take photographs of injuries.

It is not possible to 'withdraw the charges'. It's the decision of the police to press charges and the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service whether to prosecute. The only action the victim can take is to withdraw their statement. If there is still enough evidence of the crime, the abuser may still go to court.

If a violent partner is arrested

- **If he's arrested** he'll be taken to the police station. If he's been charged with a crime, he may be released on bail while the police complete their investigation. Usually, there'll be conditions attached to his bail such as ordering him to stay away from the survivor and to not communicate with her either directly (e.g. in person or by phone) or indirectly (e.g. by sending messages via someone else). If he ignores these conditions, he can be arrested and may be kept in custody until the court case.
- **If the perpetrator pleads guilty** the victim doesn't have to go to court. She may however be asked to give a 'victim impact statement' to describe the effect the abuse has had on her. This would be considered when the court decides the sentence.
- **If he pleads 'not guilty'** the victim may have to go to court to give evidence. If this happens it may be useful to contact an organisation like Victim Support who can answer any questions about the court process. The Crown Prosecution Service may also have a meeting with a victim before the court case to find out if there are things they can do to help her to give evidence.
- **If the violent partner is harassing the survivor** (calling your client repeatedly, coming round uninvited, etc.) a survivor can report it to the police and they can issue him with a formal caution under the Protection from Harassment Act. If he doesn't stop after has been cautioned, he can be arrested and could face up to 5 years in prison. This makes it more powerful than an injunction and incurs no financial cost to the survivor.

Other things the police can do

- The police can give information about other support agencies (e.g. Women's Aid, Refuge, etc.)
- If a victim is injured the police can take her to a doctor
- They can take the victim and her children to a safe place such as a friend's house or a refuge

The Civil Law:

In addition to calling the police, there are also other legal avenues your client may want to explore under the civil law.

- **The Protection From Harassment Act** can be used to stop an abuser from behaving in ways that aren't actually criminal offences (e.g. uninvited visits at 2 o'clock in the morning) yet which are still distressing and intimidating. To use this, survivors need to inform the police of his harassing behaviour and they will issue him with a formal caution. If he continues to harass the survivor after this, he can be arrested and could face up to 5 years in prison
- **An injunction** is a civil court order which can be used to help keep a survivor safe. It places legal restrictions on their partner to try to prevent or limit any further violence. Injunctions normally last for 6 months but they can sometimes be extended

Types of injunctions:

- **Occupation order** (sometimes known as ouster injunctions): These injunctions can exclude the abuser from the property.
- **Non molestation order:** This injunction prohibit the abuser from assaulting a survivor or her children. It can also prevent the perpetrator from coming within a certain area and stop the perpetrator from getting someone else to do those things for him
- **Ex-parte injunction:** This is not a different order to the 2 above - ex-parte simply means that the perpetrator isn't notified of the court hearing. They can only be used in an emergency. A problem with enforcing an ex-parte injunction is that it doesn't come into force until a copy of the order has been physically handed to the violent partner. If the partner makes himself scarce and avoids service of the order, there can be a delay between the order being made and it coming into force.

MYTH

"Women who use alcohol or drugs deserve or provoke violence from their partner"

FACT

Women who use alcohol or drugs often say they do so to cope with the violence from their partner

Applying for an injunction:

If a survivor can afford it, or if they're entitled to help with legal costs, then they can use a solicitor for the entire process of applying for an injunction.

There are less expensive options available. For more information contact Rights of Women on **0207 251 6577**.

- To apply for an injunction a survivor will have to go to court. A survivor can also ask for their address to be kept secret
- If they're worried about their partner's presence, they can ask court officers to keep him away from them
- Injunctions can be very useful to show the perpetrator that the survivor is no longer prepared to accept his behaviour. **But** they are only effective if the survivor is prepared to call the police if he disobeys the terms of the injunction
- Police Community Safety Units keep a copy of all injunctions with an attached power of arrest. However it is still a good idea for the survivor to keep a copy for herself

If a violent partner breaks the terms of the injunction:

If the perpetrator breaks the terms of the injunction the judge has the power to send him to prison, although a judge may just give him a warning. If the injunction is violated, the survivor must inform the police or their solicitor as soon as possible.

3. Good practice guidelines

Working with domestic violence survivors requires a great deal of patience and reassurance. Be prepared to spend time with a woman discussing her options and her emotions. This section will outline the best ways to raise the issue of domestic violence and how you can offer support to survivors of domestic violence.

3.1 Important things to remember::

Confidentiality and security are crucial.

- Be alert to the possibility of domestic violence. Women who do not 'fit' the stereotype of an 'abused woman' are just as likely to be in a violent relationship
- The experience of violence within a relationship is often complicated by feelings of love towards the perpetrator and hope that he will change his behaviour. This means that there are very rarely simple solutions
- You will only ever get a 'snap shot' of the relationship not the whole picture. Women may minimise the levels of violence they are experiencing so it may appear to you as if their fear is exaggerated. Underestimating the level of danger present is a common coping mechanism used by women living in violent situations
- The relationship is not static which means that the woman's attitude to herself, the abuse and the abuser will change over time
- Dealing with abuse is a process and most women will try a variety of coping strategies to deal with it. Drug or alcohol use is a coping mechanism some women use

"The safety of the woman and any children has to be the focus. Why? Because we know that each week in the UK two women are killed by a partner. Because we know the tremendous emotional, psychological and physical damage done to children exposed to, or caught up in, such violence and abuse."

Dr Sarah Galvani - University of Birmingham

3.2 If a woman approaches you for help, remember:

- The following issues **must** underpin your work on this issue:

confidentiality

security

giving her choices

non-judgemental attitude

- She is not a problem, she has a problem
- Be open and approachable and trustworthy
- When she tells you, tell her you believe her, take her seriously, stress you do not see it as her fault and that you appreciate how difficult it can be to talk about it
- Don't undermine her by making her feel inadequate for not seeking help earlier. Remember she may have sought help before and not been believed. Seek to build her confidence and empower her - it takes courage and strength to survive violence as she has. Let her dictate the pace and congratulate her on every step she takes
- Listen to what the woman says about what she wants, about the danger as she sees it. Most women only reveal a tiny proportion of the abuse they have suffered - only she knows how much danger she is in

- Remember her problems may be compounded by racist reactions, language and cultural barriers or other reactions to her age, sexuality or disability from people to whom she turns for help
- Do not give her your opinion, make judgements or apportion blame about her relationship. Your focus need to be on her safety
- Explore choices and options with her, including ways of maximising her safety, whether she leaves or not
- Be aware of the particular circumstances of the woman. Some options may be less possible than others
- Do not rush her into solutions or tell her what to do. This is what her abuser will probably have done
- Don't give up on her just because things are taking longer than you think they should. You may feel frustrated seeing your client hurt and abused but it has to be her decision. She must not sense your frustration
- Ask what she would like you and others to do. Be clear about what is possible, where you can be of assistance
- **NEVER** act as a go-between yourself. This includes never helping her partner locate her if she has left - don't pass on letters, messages or facilitate contact in any way. This puts you and her in danger
- Make sure you have a basic understanding of the relevant issues including those outside your area of work e.g. domestic violence, substance use or mental health issues. Be factually correct or say you do not know and suggest some one who will. Don't feel you are letting her down by not knowing all the answers - a joint approach to finding things out may help to build her confidence

Lena's Story

"I married an abusive man who had a severe drinking problem. He would take days off of work and drink terribly. When he would drink he would become particularly abusive. I became pregnant and it didn't stop him. He would still knock me down, shake me, and push me into walls. I put up with it because I loved him. He never remembered the things he would do so I would blame the alcohol instead of him."

<http://www.dvirc.org.au/stories/Lena.htm>

Women experiencing violence may find it easier to excuse or explain their partner's behaviour by blaming drugs or alcohol. Yet, their partner remains responsible for their violence - drunk, high or sober.

OTHER STEPS TO TAKE:

- Ask for training on domestic violence
- Contact your local Refuge or other specialist domestic violence provider to see how you can work together
- Put domestic violence on the agenda for discussion at your team meeting
- Develop a policy for your organisation setting minimum standards expected of staff when dealing with domestic violence, including guidelines on confidentiality and security. Make sure you include clear definitions so that myths and stereotypes are tackled. Be clear how the policy will be monitored and evaluated. Set timescales for changes

- Put up posters and stock leaflets with information about domestic violence and who to contact for help. Make sure that images and languages used reflect the local community and are not stereotypical
- Review your services and consider how responsive you are and how responsive you could be to the needs of women experiencing domestic violence
- Ensure that your services are accessible to women of all races, ages, cultures, abilities and sexualities
- Try to think of the needs of the woman and adapt your services accordingly. For example, if you provide advice sessions, can women talk to you in private? Is there somewhere children can play while women talk to you or will they have to be careful what they say because the children might be listening? Do you run evening sessions for women who work?

Case Study - Angie

Angie and her partner Shawn are both in their early twenties, black and new to London. Shawn is a crack cocaine and alcohol user and has been coming to your service for two months. Angie attends your service with Shawn, but is continually withdrawn. She has little interaction with staff or other service users and generally just waits for Shawn while he sees his counsellor. You have noticed that Angie often appears with physical health problems such as bruising or limping. Shawn has told his counsellor that he has 'anger management' problems, sometimes losing his temper with Angie. Shawn says he feels people make unfair assumptions about him because he is a young, black man. You are very concerned for Angie's well being.

1. How could you provide support to Angie?
2. Should you address the possibility of domestic violence with Shawn?
3. Are you providing a culturally appropriate service for Shawn and Angie?

3.3 How to raise the subject:

1. **Publicity** - have leaflets and posters on display in waiting rooms or areas in your organisation so women know that this is a subject they can discuss with you. However, some women may not be ready or may not want to talk so make sure that relevant addresses and phone numbers are displayed or made available so that women can get help with or without your support or knowledge.
2. **Awareness** - be alert to the possibility of domestic violence if a woman is visibly injured, depressed, etc. No matter what the circumstances or your own prejudices, don't dismiss the possibility. Look for causes not effects - if a woman is injured or depressed there must be a reason. Give her the space and opportunity to talk about her feelings in a supportive environment.
3. **Approachability** - be approachable and make listening a priority. Ask open ended, non-threatening questions like 'are you having difficulties at home?' so that she has a choice as to whether or not to speak about it.

MYTH

Men who abuse women after using drugs or alcohol are not responsible for their actions

FACT

Men who abuse women are responsible for their violence whether intoxicated or not.

4. **She is not alone** - say this is a problem you have come across before and this is why you are asking. Isolation is a key feature of domestic violence. Many women think they are the only one and are very relieved to discover that they are not alone.
5. **Defensiveness** - don't assume a woman will be offended or hostile about you asking if she is experiencing domestic violence. Be aware when you ask that a woman may not think of her experience as domestic violence and it may be better to ask something neutral such as 'Are you having problems at home?' She may well be relieved to have someone to confide in. If she is angry or hostile it doesn't mean you should not have mentioned it. She may come back later when she is ready to discuss it.
6. **Collusion** - don't collude with the abuser by making remarks like 'what did you say or do to provoke his anger?' or 'what happens in the privacy of your home is none of my business'. We all have a responsibility to take a stand against violence. Introduce options into her life and give her the freedom to make decisions and exercise choice.

Case Study - Angie

Possible Solutions

Have you considered the minimum standards for working with this client group?

1. How could you provide support to Angie?

It is essential that, whatever support you give Angie, her safety is your paramount concern. Try talking to her when Shawn is meeting his counsellor. Do you have a female worker who could offer Angie a cup of tea and a chat? By building a rapport and making Angie feel safe you could ask some basic screening questions about the violence she may be experiencing. Outline the support you can give her and the options she has available to her. Reiterate to Angie that she is not alone and that you will not repeat any of your conversations to Shawn. Are there any other activities she could become involved in while at your service? E.g. Womens groups or complementary therapies. Importantly, make sure Angie feels safe in your service and is able to return. Offer to keep any information she wants about domestic violence services at your project, it may put Angie at risk to take it home.

2. Should you address the possibility of domestic violence with Shawn?

Because Shawn has already expressed the fact he has an 'anger management' problem you are able to talk to him about this. You could explore the relationship his drug and alcohol use has with his violence. You could ask Shawn some basic screening questions to see if he is perpetrating violence against Angie. Try and make these questions quite direct. Sample perpetrator screening questions can be found on page 145. Do not condone any of the violence Shawn may disclose and give him the option of a referral to a perpetrator program. Never indicate any information that Angie has disclosed to your service, as this will put her at an even greater risk. It is important that Shawn feels comfortable with you and will therefore return to the service, hopefully with Angie.

3. Are you providing a culturally appropriate service for Shawn and Angie?

Ideally you should be able to give Shawn and Angie the option of a variety of workers. For instance Shawn may wish to have a black man as a counsellor and Angie may feel more comfortable talking to a woman. Never attribute Shawn or Angie's actions to either their age or their ethnicity. Be willing to learn from Shawn and Angie what being black and young means to them. This means taking into account any past experiences they have had of using services both positive and negative.

4. Domestic violence service provision

The range of services available to women varies depending on the London borough they live in. Also, they may wish to leave their home area, or even escape London altogether, in order to escape the violence. When you are considering referring women to a domestic violence service you should contact either your local domestic violence co-ordinator or a refuge. The national 24 hour domestic helpline can also offer support or refer to a refuge anywhere in the country 0808 2000 247. The section below will cover the main forms of domestic violence service provision: refuges, advocacy, outreach services and counselling services.

4.1 Refuges

It is important to note that if your client has medium to high support needs resulting from their substance use that they are likely to be excluded from most mainstream refuge provision. In these cases other forms of accommodation and support will need to be sought.

What is a refuge?

A refuge is a safe house where women who are experiencing domestic violence (including sexual, mental, emotional, financial, and verbal abuse as well as physical violence) can live free from violence. A woman does not have to be living with the abuser to be offered help.

Women residents of refuges must keep their location confidential. This means that they will not be able to tell friends or family where they are staying.

N.B. Refuge addresses and phone numbers are confidential due to the concerns that violent partners will track down residents. Women are at greatest risk of being murdered when they plan to leave or have left a partner. It is therefore critical that you never, under any circumstances, give the address or location of a refuge to anyone, even when you think they are safe.

Children

Children can also stay in refuges with their mothers, though some refuges limit the number of children a woman can bring because children have to share a room with their mother. This is because funding is not available for children in refuges independently from their mothers. Some refuges are only able to take male children up to a certain age; this can be as young as eleven or twelve but each refuge varies. There are usually activities and specific workers for children.

How do refuges work?

Refuges are shared houses which vary in size: some only have room for a few women and children, others are much larger. Workers are often on site or available by telephone during the day. Workers are also available via telephone for out of hours for emergencies. Residents usually run the refuge on a day-to-day basis often using group meetings to facilitate this.

There are some refuges that have self-contained family units but most refuges will usually give women their own room to share with their children. Other spaces such as the living room, TV room, kitchen, playroom and possibly the bathroom will be shared with other refuge residents. Residents are expected to cook for themselves and their children. It is up to refuge residents whether or not they share cooking or eat together at mealtimes. Refuge residents can be as self-contained or as sociable as they want to be.

Refuges have their own codes of conduct, or house rules, regarding the day-to-day running of the house. These will usually cover things like curfew times, bedtimes for children, incoming telephone calls, post, bullying, damage to the property, use of alcohol and cleaning rotas. These rules usually relate to the refuge licence and if a woman breaks them she may be evicted.

Support varies from refuge to refuge; however each resident will develop a support plan with her support worker including at least some basic support.

Women are usually given a refuge place outside their own borough for their own safety.

How long can women stay?

Women can usually stay as long as they need to in refuges. This varies greatly depending on the individual woman. Some women may stay for a few days, others for several months. Many women stay in refuges for a break from the violence and time to think away from danger. Some women decide to return to their partners to try again.

Re-housing can take a long time; refuge stays may therefore be

fairly lengthy. An application for re-housing has to be submitted within one month of a woman entering a refuge due to Supporting People and Registered Social Landlord regulations. New accommodation is usually found via the Council, a Housing Association or through private means.

MYTH

Domestic violence is a private matter between a couple

FACT

Domestic violence is not a private issue. It affects one in four women in their lifetime. Domestic violence a violent crime that is often unreported and repeated.

What services do refuges offer?

Refuges vary in their level of facilities, comfort and crowdedness. However, they all offer a safe place to stay, information, advice and support. The help offered includes the mutual support of others in similar circumstances.

Emotional and practical support is provided. Refuges will also provide advocacy support, advising women on benefit claims, re-housing, legal issues, signposting and referrals. Women are helped to regain their self-esteem and confidence. Some refuges offer counselling, training or support in getting into education.

Specialist services

There are also some specialised refuges working with women from black and minority ethnic communities. In London, they exist for South Asian, Turkish, Iranian, African Caribbean, Latin American, Irish and Jewish women. They offer the chance to stay with other women who share their culture, language and background. A growing number of refuges also have disability access and workers who can assist women and children who have special needs. Other communities may have support centres and advocacy which provide specialised support and information in community languages. To find out about services for specific communities contact Women's Aid or Refuge on page 284.

How to access refuges

If your client needs a refuge space they can contact the new 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, on 0808 2000 247.

You can also contact refuges through the Samaritans, the police, Social Services or the Citizens Advice Bureau. The London Hostels Directory (ris@ris.org.uk) or the Women's Aid "Gold Book" (www.womensaid.org.uk) are both useful referral resources.

Places can be arranged quickly and often women can go into a refuge on the day that they contact the Helpline. However due to the pressure on refuge spaces this may not always be possible. Due to this pressure refuge spaces cannot be booked in advance and there may not be space in the location of choice.

You can contact the Helpline on your client's behalf and you will be given the public numbers and bedspace information in order that you can contact the refuges direct. If you find a space, refuge staff will need to speak to the client directly in order to ensure that refuge accommodation is appropriate and useful and also to explain the conditions of stay.

If it is preferable, your client can contact the Helpline herself and the Helpline staff will assist her with finding appropriate bedspace.

Once a refuge space has been secured either you or your client will be given the details of a meeting point. You will not be given the address of the refuge because of the need to keep locations confidential. Your client will have to make her own way to the meeting point.

If a woman is in an extremely dangerous situation i.e. she and/or her children are expecting an immediate attack or have been threatened with murder, her and her children's safety should be paramount. If you cannot find a refuge space the following options may be helpful:

- Contact your local Homeless Persons Unit. Your client is eligible due to the risks posed by her experience, i.e. she is homeless due to violence/threats of violence. If she has children this will strengthen her case for eligibility, as she will be in "priority need"
- Citizen's Advice Bureaux also provide assistance to those who are eligible for housing
- Contact Shelter who offer a 24 hour phone line that can assist you finding hostel or supported accommodation. They can sometimes assist in advocating for individuals housing rights with local housing authorities. Shelterline: 0808 800 4444
- Out of office hours, contact emergency Social Services to see what support they can offer. They may be particularly useful if children are involved in finding a safe place for the family to stay; they will NOT immediately assume that because the mother uses substances, she cannot care for her children, but will take into account her ability to parent, and the situation as a whole. During normal office hours, the duty social worker will fulfil the same role
- If all else fails, or if a safe place is needed urgently, go to the local police station and ask for protection while appropriate accommodation can be found. In many cases, when a woman and/or her children are in immediate danger, police officers will transport a woman and her children to a refuge or hostel

Male drug or alcohol workers

If you are a male worker contacting refugees on behalf of a client it is good practice to verify who you are: provide office details, address and phone number and suggest that a refuge worker may want to call the main office number and speak to another member of staff to verify your details.

If you choose to accompany your client to a refuge meeting point, you will need to leave your client before she is collected. This is so that the refuge workers are absolutely certain that a woman has not been found by her violent partner, and that it is safe for them to collect her. However, if your client wants you to remain with her during the initial meeting with refuge staff you could instead arrange to meet at the local police station so that refuge workers know they are safe.

Will your client have to pay rent in the refuge?

Once your client has left home she counts as a single person and can claim social security benefit for herself and any children. However, these funds are not available if a woman has no recourse to public funds. If this is the case with your client contact the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (020 7251 8708), Asylum Aid's Refugee Women's Resource Project (020 7377 5123) or Southall Black Sisters (020 8571 9595).

Refuge workers will usually help residents with social security claims. The accommodation and support costs will largely be covered by payments from Housing Benefit and Supporting People. However, she will still have to cover the cost of service charges such as electricity. This charge varies from refuge to refuge, and may be slightly higher if she has children.

If a woman continues in full or part time employment while she is in the refuge her rights to benefit may be affected and she may well have to cover the costs of her accommodation (though not the additional support provided by refuges). This rent will vary from as little as £75 per week to a far higher fee. If your client is working it is wise to check the rent costs with the refuge before accepting a place in case they are beyond the means of your client, although some refuges will charge on a sliding scale.

4.2 Advocacy, outreach and counselling services

Outreach services:

Some refuges and other agencies also run advocacy or outreach services which support women experiencing domestic violence in the community or living in other forms of temporary accommodation.

These services usually provide support and advice and information on benefits, housing, legal options, support for children, safety and crisis planning and any other issue which women identify. These services will, where possible, accompany women when they visit other agencies such as the police, Homeless Persons Unit or lawyers in order to ensure that they have the support and information they need to gain access to their entitlements.

Advocacy services:

Advocate services generally provide crisis intervention assistance to survivors of domestic violence with priority given to the safety of victims and their children. Often women will be assigned a dedicated worker who will support them through the criminal justice process.

Support that an advocacy worker may provide includes:

- Informing survivors of their rights
- Providing information about the legal process
- Assisting survivors in developing a safety plan
- Attending court hearings with the victim
- Referring victims to other agencies, for example, Social

Counselling services

There are a small number of specialist counselling services which provide emotional support to women experiencing domestic violence. Some of these services are provided on a sliding scale of costs depending on the income of the women who wish to use their services. One London-based example is Woman's Trust which can be found online at:

<http://www.womanstrust.org.uk/index.htm>

Alternatively, your client could speak to their GP and ask for a referral to a counsellor or therapist on the NHS. Unfortunately, waiting lists are often lengthy. If your client can afford it she could pay to see a counsellor or therapist privately. She should always check that her counsellor or therapist is registered / accredited with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. A list of registered therapists can be found online at:

http://www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_counsellor/seeking_counsellor_frameset2.htm

5. Working with domestic violence perpetrators who use drugs and alcohol

Working with perpetrators around their use of violence is a specialist field and should only be attempted by trained professionals. The links between domestic violence and substance misuse are controversial, complex and a much under-developed area of debate. The section below outlines messages you can provide your clients and the minimum standards we recommend you adopt. The section also recommends effective ways of working with perpetrators within a drug and alcohol service.

5.1 Facts and Statistics

- Current research suggests that up to 30% of abusive men physically assault their partners when under the influence of alcohol ²⁹
- No evidence exists to support a “loss of control caused by intoxication” explanation to violence. If anything, research and case examples show that men exert a huge amount of power and control, even when inebriated
- “Drug and other services already work with clients to reduce other offending behaviour so arguably domestic violence perpetrating could also be addressed with appropriate support and practice development” (Taylor, 2003, p.22)

29. Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy For England. Cabinet Office. (2004)

5.2 Key Messages

- Substance misuse does not excuse or explain domestic violence
- Perpetrators must be held accountable for their violence, even if they are substance affected
- Perpetrators have control and choice about their abuse
- Perpetrators may help to create a dependency on, or even enforce the use of, drugs and alcohol by the victim as a tool of control
- Most perpetrators also claim to be the victim
- Substance using men are usually excluded from perpetrator programs if they fail to address both issues simultaneously
- Workers can miss the dynamics of control in a violent relationship where there is also substance misuse because of the additional layers of complexity
- Work with perpetrators which addresses their violence must have women’s services attached

“It’s not about anger, it’s about power and control”

**Survivors Consultation,
Women’s National Commission**

5.3 Minimum standards for perpetrator work

RESPECT is the National Association for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Support Services.

In any work with perpetrators of domestic violence, even if it is addressing their drug or alcohol use rather than directly addressing their violent behaviour it is important to follow RESPECT'S minimum standards in order to ensure best practice and a focus on the safety of women and children.

Aims of work with men

The primary aim in working with perpetrators of domestic violence is to increase the safety of women and children. Every intervention and decision made in this work must be chosen with this in mind.

Secondary aims are to:

- Hold men accountable for their violence towards women
- Promote respectful, egalitarian relationships
- Work with others to improve the community's response to domestic violence

MYTH

Women who use alcohol or drugs deserve or provoke violence from their partner

FACT

No one deserves to be abused. Women who use alcohol or drugs often say they do so to cope with the violence from their partner

5.4 In a drug or alcohol agency

Within substance misuse services it is essential that drug or alcohol abuse is not seen as an excuse for domestic violence. If someone wishes to feel more powerful and they expect that substance use will facilitate this transformation, more often than not, the substance complies. It is important to highlight the relationship between substances and domestic violence, which should be explored in greater depth with individuals. Links between the two include:

- Substance use often has disinhibiting effects. Perpetrators may use this as an excuse for their violence and abuse. e.g. 'I'm not usually like that, but I was off my head'
- Substance use by one or both partners can be a cause of conflict
- A woman's substance use can be seen as an excuse for violence by the perpetrator
- Perpetrators may control or withhold substances as a means of abuse
- Perpetrators may spend the family's money on substances denying women money for vital goods or services
- Perpetrators may abuse their partner by forcing her to use substances against her will
- Perpetrators may sabotage women undergoing treatment for substance use

Services should ensure that substance use is not seen as a cause of violence, but rather that they can be used a way of controlling partners. It would help workers to understand how often a perpetrator uses, what he uses, when he uses and where to allow them to develop a greater understanding of his situation and focus on their intervention accordingly. See page 146 for questions or assessment tools which will enable you to do this.

5.5 Referrals to perpetrator programmes

The Respect network accredits and supports perpetrator programmes that work from a perspective of also supporting the survivors of violence. As an organisation you need to ensure you

MYTH

The best treatment for drug users and alcoholics is abstinence

FACT

Abstinence can be frightening and impractical for some people. Gradually reducing their intake and harm caused by using can be a better alternative.

have contacts with your local perpetrator program, so that your referrals are appropriate. When referring to perpetrator programmes you should look for programmes which fulfil the following criteria and are also part of the Respect network.

5.6 Focus of perpetrator work

All Programmes should contain the following as core elements:

- An understanding of what constitutes violent behaviour
- That the perpetrator is 100% responsible for his behaviour
- That violent behaviour is a choice
- That violent behaviour is functional and intentional
- Challenging of tactics which seek to deny minimise and/or blame
- Challenging and changing the attitudes and beliefs which support his violence
- Acknowledging and questioning the social and gendered context of domestic violence
- Challenging men's expectations of power and control over partners
- Developing men's capacity to understand the impact of their violence on their partners and children both in the long and short term

- Encouragement to learn and adopt positive, respectful and egalitarian ways of being
- Projects should avoid collusion with the perpetrator's rationale

Perpetrator work which specially addresses the issue of domestic violence should ideally only be undertaken alongside specialist, resourced, associated support work with partners / ex-partners. Each male client should attend the perpetrator programme for at least 75 hours over a minimum of 30 weeks.

Anger management is an inappropriate intervention in domestic violence cases because **perpetrators do not have a problem managing their anger**. Instead they make conscious choices to use violence and abuse as a mechanism of power and control over their partner. If they really couldn't control their anger they would hit out at other people too.

5.7 Work with partners and ex-partners of perpetrators

Perpetrator work must be undertaken where separate support is also offered to both partners. Each partner should be offered a range of services in a safe environment in accordance with their needs. As a minimum this should include 6 individual safety planning sessions and/or access to a weekly support group for women.

The partner/expartner should be proactively contacted:

- At the point of referral
- If there are significant absences
- If he is assessed as unsuitable
- If he drops out or is suspended from the programme
- When he completes the programme

- If there is a specific concern for his/her children's safety.

Couples work is not an appropriate setting in which to address men's abusive behaviour towards women. While these spaces may appear safe, the violent repercussions for women who speak out in front of a partner can be serious. In addition, it is unlikely that a women will feel free to speak openly about her experiences while her violent partner is in the room. Couple based work also implies that both partners have a problem rather than placing responsibility on the perpetrator.

5.8 **Points to remember:**

- Regardless of whether substances are used or not, it is never appropriate to condone or excuse violence
- Abusive men are responsible for their behaviour
- No one deserves to be violated
- Men's violence to partners and ex-partners is an attempt to control and manipulate them
- When working with clients you should adopt an holistic approach. What other issues may impact on your work together? E.g. drug use, ethnicity, language, disability or sexuality

“Violent men need long term re-education and a lifelong commitment to abstinence (from violent and abusive behaviour) in all its forms”
(Jacobs, 1997, p.7)