



# **FULL DISCLOSURE:**

## **TAKING ACTION AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE WITHIN LONDON'S LGBT+ COMMUNITY**

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# Introduction



The London Assembly is the voice of London, and that voice is most powerful when it is raised in support of the most vulnerable in our city. LGBT+ domestic abuse victims are without question in that category. The number of victims in London is growing relentlessly, against a backdrop of underreporting, poorly-resourced services and an often-uncomprehending criminal justice system.

Many LGBT+ people come to London because they want to find a safe place. They want to fit in, to be the best versions of themselves, to find love, to be happy – I know, because this is my story, too. Tragically, for some the dream becomes a nightmare as they find themselves victims of domestic abuse.

Those who find themselves in this deeply unpleasant situation often encounter services that are not marketed at them, and are therefore less accessible. Those services that are marketed at them are often chronically underfunded and struggle with capacity. For example, leading LGBT+ domestic abuse charities were so stretched they struggled to find time to meet with me and my team, despite the fact this report is about how their work can be supported.

Those victims who do manage to access services find they are often inappropriate, incorrectly structured for LGBT+ people and under-resourced. The situation is untenable, with increasing demand meeting an increasingly struggling sector. And all this takes place against the backdrop of massive under-reporting of domestic abuse in London's LGBT+ community.

Something has to change. This report offers some tentative suggestions about how to tilt the pitch back in the favour of LGBT+ victims. It looks at how to prevent domestic abuse in the LGBT+ community, how to improve reporting of it so the true picture in London is known and how to ensure better outcomes for victims when these offences occur.

I hope colleagues on the London Assembly – and beyond – will take up the recommendations in this report and join me in advocating for LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse across London.

**- Nick Rogers**



## Recommendations

- **Recommendation One:** MOPAC should recommence funding to provide emergency accommodation for LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse on a permanent basis.
- **Recommendation Two:** The Mayor should advertise LGBT domestic abuse awareness and information on victim support on the TfL network.
- **Recommendation Three:** The Mayor should update the LGBTQ+ Venues Charter to include the displaying of public health and safety information for the LGBT+ community, including information on domestic abuse.
- **Recommendation Four:** Extend the Metropolitan Police's hate crime data sharing agreement with Galop to cover domestic abuse to assess the hidden demand, specifically the number of calls to their helpline.
- **Recommendation Five:** MOPAC to explore launching a specialist programme to address the behaviour of LGBT+ perpetrators.
- **Recommendation Six:** The Government should update the section on vulnerability within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales, to specifically consider sexual orientation.

# The Current Situation

LGBT+ domestic abuse is a growing issue in London. During Sadiq Khan's first year as Mayor, in the financial year 2016/2017 there were 607 offences reported. By 2020/21 this had risen to 793, an increase of 31 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

While these statistics account for around one per cent of all domestic abuse offence, this offence is rather widespread within the LGBT+ community, with 38.4% having experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives, which demonstrates there is significant underreporting.<sup>2</sup> In particular, studies have shown that gay men are less likely to report or recognise domestic abuse compared to lesbian or bisexual women.<sup>3</sup> The same survey showed that 40% of the female respondents and 35.2% of the male respondents reported being victims of domestic abuse.<sup>4</sup>

This will be a bigger problem in London than elsewhere, not only because London has the highest population in the UK, but also because it has a higher proportion of its population identifying as part of the gay community than the rest of the country. In the latest ONS statistics (2019), 2.6% of London's population identified as gay or lesbian, 1.2% as bisexual and 0.7% other. London also had 6.5% say they don't know or refused to answer.

On average LGBT+ victim satisfaction is -4 compared to the baseline for London.<sup>5</sup>

There is already some help for members of the LGBT+ community who suffer from domestic abuse. Galop provides a specialist helpline and provides advice for those seeking help. They also provide an online chat service.<sup>6</sup>

Galop say that there are types of domestic abuse specific to the LGBT+ community.<sup>7</sup> This may make it harder to identify LGBT+ domestic abuse because the signs may be different, and those who have worked with domestic abuse victims in the heterosexual community may not immediately recognise these.<sup>8</sup>

This leads onto the wider issues of the police working with the LGBT+ community and the issues which affect them. Victim satisfaction among the LGBT+ community in London is eight percent lower than among all Londoners.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2021/2403>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/1793/bma-domestic-abuse-report-2014.pdf> page 32

<sup>3</sup> <https://interventionsalliance.com/domestic-abuse-in-lgbt-communities/> 2.0

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/1793/bma-domestic-abuse-report-2014.pdf> page 32

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/public-voice-dashboard>

<sup>6</sup> <https://galop.org.uk/types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://galop.org.uk/types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/publications/police-and-crime-plan-2021-25> 5.4

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/force-content/met/about-us/met-business-plan-2021-22-quarter-2-progress-report.pdf>

In response to the Stephen Port murders case the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has created local LGBT+ police advisor roles.<sup>10</sup> They also provide training on LGBT+ issues. There are currently over 160 officer and staff LGBT+ Advisers. This cohort includes a mix of regular police officers from Constable to Inspector ranks, police staff and PCSOs, volunteer Special Constables and Liaison Officers.<sup>11</sup>

Further to this, the MPS already has an LGBT+ Advisory Group, which advises on and monitors police issues which affect LGBT+ people who live in, work in, study in or are visiting London.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> London Assembly Police and Crime Committee, 25/1/2022 – 10:30

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/force-content/met/about-us/Background-to-business-plan-Force-Management-Statement-June-2021.pdf> page 109

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.lgbtag.org.uk/search/label/group>

# What the Mayor and Metropolitan Police Service are doing

During the pandemic, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) provided emergency accommodation for LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse to escape abuse and find safe refuge. However, the contract for this service has come to an end. The service was well received, it had 129 referrals in total, however, this was for 4 bed spaces which shows there is high demand.<sup>13</sup>

The Outside project which ran the service would like to open a permanent refuge for LGBT+ survivors.<sup>14</sup>

Usual provision of emergency accommodation may not be suitable because LGBT+ victims will be more likely to have the perpetrator as the same sex as themselves, therefore may be nervous or unwilling to go into single sex accommodation.

There is the funding available to provide this. The Mayor has recently announced funding of £23.2m on a recurring basis towards schemes tackling violence and protecting the victims of violence.<sup>15</sup>

**Recommendation:** MOPAC should recommence funding to provide emergency accommodation for LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse on a permanent basis.

In response to a written question, asking what is being done to address LGBT+ domestic abuse, the Mayor replied:

*“Tackling the heinous crime of domestic abuse in the capital remains a key priority for me. My Office for Policing and Crime commission a range of services to both tackle the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse, and to provide support for victims and survivors.*

*“The London Victim and Witness Service provides specialist support to all victims of domestic abuse in London regardless of their identity.*

*“This includes specialist provision for LGBT+ victims. The MPS Public Protection Improvement Plan seeks to improve the response and work of the police to these crimes. The MPS is also working closely with leading LGBT+ organisations to build relationships and understand the best ways to tackle specific concerns arising within the community.”<sup>16</sup>*

The MPS is introducing new training on LGBT+ policing issues. During a Police and Crime Committee Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022, Sir Stephen House, the Deputy Commissioner of the MPS said:

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<sup>13</sup> Email from the Outside Project – 10/2/22

<sup>14</sup> Meeting held with the outside project on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/part\\_1\\_-\\_mayors\\_background\\_statement\\_2022-23.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/part_1_-_mayors_background_statement_2022-23.pdf) page 10

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2021/3745>

*“We are bringing in a whole raft of new training for officers, all the way from new recruits through to detectives, in terms of effectively spotting issues. There should be that natural curiosity and nosiness that we expect, frankly, from police officers to go, “Oh, that’s a bit strange, isn’t it?” which seems to have been lost, possibly through overwork, possibly through lack of supervision or too wide a supervision.”<sup>17</sup>*

During Mayor’s Question Time in March 2022, the Mayor said there is £1 million of support for LGBT+ victims of domestic and sexual violence for 2021/22 and 22/23 to provide specialist support to stay in safe accommodation and to ensure that they all can access support when needed. Further to this there is an £11.3 million fund for domestic abuse which will also support LGBT+ victims as well as others. This will be used to fund Galop to provide a pan-London caseworker and to allow Stonewall Housing to provide housing information, advice and support for LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse and to ensure they can live independently and rebuild their lives.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/londonassembly/meetings/documents/b24275/Minutes%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20QA%20MPS%20and%20MOPAC%20Wednesday%2023-Feb-2022%2010.00%20Police%20and%20Crime%20Committee.pdf?T=9> pg 20

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/londonassembly/meetings/documents/b26342/Appendix%202%20-%20Oral%20Answers%20to%20Questions%20to%20the%20Mayor%20Thursday%2024-Mar-2022%2010.00%20London%20Assembly%20Ma.pdf?T=9> page 31



# How to increase reporting of LGBT+ Domestic Abuse, including recognising it

The current estimated population of London is 9.4 million.<sup>19</sup> Given that 2.6% of London's population identify as gay or lesbian, 1.2% as bisexual and 0.7% as other, this equates to around 420,000 people in London – all of whom will use London services. Given that 420,000 people is a large audience, the Mayor could use Transport for London's (TfL) advertising space on the underground and buses to advertise LGBT+ domestic abuse awareness and information on victim support. The population figure may be higher due to those who refused to answer or said they do not know their sexual orientation in the survey.

**Recommendation:** The Mayor should advertise LGBT+ domestic abuse awareness and information on victim support on the TfL Network.

London has a LGBTQ+ Venues Charter for which 28 venues and three pub companies have signed up.<sup>20</sup> This could be a good way to share important information in LGBT+ venues. Part of the charter encourages venues to display LGBTQ+ magazines, literature and posters. This could be expanded to encourage them to display important LGBT+ health and public safety information, which could include specialised advice and information on domestic abuse.<sup>21</sup>

**Recommendation:** The Mayor should update the LGBTQ+ Venues Charter to include the displaying of public health and safety information for the LGBT+ community, including information on domestic abuse.

Another issue is that decision makers may be unaware of the scale of the problem of LGBT+ Domestic Abuse and do not have access to key statistics. When asked how many calls had been made to the specialist LGBT+ charity, Galop's Domestic Abuse helpline, the following answer was provided by the Mayor:

*"We do not fund the LGBT domestic abuse helpline and do not hold this information."*<sup>22</sup>

There is already a data sharing agreement with Galop for hate crime to assess the hidden demand. This could be extended to domestic abuse.<sup>23</sup>

**Recommendation:** Extend the Metropolitan Police's hate crime data sharing agreement with Galop to cover domestic abuse to assess the hidden demand, specifically the number of calls to their helpline.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/london-population>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2021/0720>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/lgbtq\\_venues\\_charter.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/lgbtq_venues_charter.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2021/3746>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/force-content/met/about-us/Background-to-business-plan-Force-Management-Statement-June-2021.pdf> page 106

## How to prevent LGBT+ Domestic Abuse

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) leads the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DAPP) which aims to help people who have been abusive towards their partners or ex-partners to change their behaviour and develop respectful, non-abusive relationships.<sup>24</sup> This covers two projects in London, the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP) and RISE Mutual CIC.<sup>25</sup> This is a general service and there is currently no specialist service for London's LGBT+ community,<sup>26</sup> which as I have demonstrated, have their own unique needs.

The Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service, Cranstoun, has been exploring launching a perpetrator programme. With specialist help from LGBT+ charities such as Galop, this could provide a much-needed service.

**Recommendation:** MOPAC should explore launching a specialist programme to address the behaviour of LGBT+ perpetrators of domestic abuse.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/parents-and-carers/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-perpetrator-programme/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/parents-and-carers/directory-of-providers/#A15>

<sup>26</sup> Notes from a meeting with Dr Luke Martin

# How to better address LGBT+ Domestic Abuse once it occurs

Supporting victims throughout the process is key to tackling domestic abuse. Victims should be able to get the support they need to feel safe and move on from the impact of abuse.<sup>27</sup>

Currently, the Government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales, says that a number of factors should be considered when assessing if a victim is vulnerable. These include if relevant, their social and cultural background, religious beliefs or political opinions, ethnic origin, domestic and employment circumstances, age, disability and mental health.<sup>28</sup> Sexual orientation is not mentioned. In specific circumstances, victims should be treated as more vulnerable. For example, in 2016, Pride in London published survey data where 74% of respondents said they felt the need to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>29</sup> Often this is simply not discussing publicly, but in some circumstances it's to hide their sexual orientation from their family out of fear of their reaction. This needs to be considered when dealing with LGBT+ victims, who may be fearful that reporting domestic abuse will reveal their sexual identity to others without their permission.

**Recommendation:** The Government should update the section on vulnerability within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales, to specifically consider sexual orientation.

The Metropolitan Police Service recognises sexual orientation in its Investigation of Domestic Abuse Policy, stating:<sup>30</sup>

*"The policy recognises people who identify as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, or Trans (LGBT+) or another sexual / gender minority may not be willing to come forward and report a domestic abuse incident. Domestic abuse does take place within same-sex relationships. Officers are instructed to not disclose the LGBT+ status of the victim or suspect to their colleagues or family members. MPS personnel are instructed to consider the protected characteristics of the victim/suspect (as defined by Equality Act 2010) and treat according to their needs and avoid making assumptions or stereotyping. Policy users are directed to the HBA and FM policy and FGM policy should any of these issues or incidents arise"*

This is a positive statement and helps investigating officers understand some of the needs of LGBT+ domestic abuse victims. There may be room to strengthen this policy. While those in the LGBT+ community will suffer the same types of domestic abuse as others, there are some types which may be unique or more prominent. This can include:

- Threatening to disclose a partner's sexual orientation, gender identity, gender history, or HIV status without their consent
- Coercive and controlling behaviour around someone's romantic or sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Denying that LGBT+ people in intimate relationships can experience domestic abuse

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/crime-info/types-crime/domestic-abuse/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime-in-england-and-wales-victims-code>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-36603501>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/foi-media/metropolitan-police/policies/domestic-abuse-eia.pdf>

- Undermining someone's romantic or sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Using hormones or gender-affirming medication to control someone
- Trying to change or suppress someone's orientation or gender identity

Assumptions is another issue that may need to be better addressed in the Domestic Abuse Policy. When called to domestic incidents police officers often misinterpret scenes of LGBT+ domestic violence, mistaking partners for brothers, friends or flatmates. This could be overcome by mentioning that relationship statuses should not be assumed and that if unsure, a police officer attending an incident should ask.

## Recommendations

- **Recommendation One:** MOPAC should recommence funding to provide emergency accommodation for LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse on a permanent basis.
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- **Recommendation Three:** The Mayor should update the LGBTQ+ Venues Charter to include the displaying of public health and safety information for the LGBT+ community, including information on domestic abuse.
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## Conclusion

Work is being undertaken to address LGBT+ domestic abuse in London, but it very much seems to be in its infancy. In terms of numbers, it seems small compared to domestic abuse offences committed against heterosexual women, but there is clearly demand for services which is not being met.

The MPS is working on improving its response to LGBT+ issues, especially in the wake of the Stephen Port murders case, however, this is largely focused on hate crime.

Ensuring that the police understand LGBT+ domestic abuse and avoid incorrect assumptions is key to tackling this problem as well as making sure victims know that they are victims in the first place. Another key aspect is making sure victims have a safe place to go once they come forward. There appears to be no provision of specialist accommodation for victims of LGBT+ domestic abuse at this time.

The below recommendations aim to address these issues and provide services and support specific to victims of LGBT+ Domestic Abuse in London.



**GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY**  
**CONSERVATIVES**