



What should a service for trans* survivors of domestic abuse be like? Transforming Domestic Abuse Survey Report

INTRODUCTION:

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans*ⁱ Domestic Abuse Forum (LGBT DAF) is a project that links practitioners, activists, researchers, service providers, commissioners, funders and representatives from public sector departments working in or around the issue of LGBT domestic abuse.

The network exists to provide individuals and organisations with support to develop, implement and improve services for LGBT people who have experienced domestic abuse.

Sharing information, knowledge and best practice is at the core of LGBT DAF. The publication of research studies such as Engendered Penalties, Count Me In, and the Trans* Domestic Abuse Survey (Links available from www.lgbtdaf.org) highlighted a lack of services able to deliver specialist support to trans* survivors of domestic abuse. The research indicated that there was some good practice in service delivery but this was patchy. Expertise was linked to individual practitioners/organisations, rather than widespread practice, using a shared language and common understanding of risk when supporting trans* survivors.

To help fill this gap in knowledge, we organised our first conference titled *Transforming Domestic Abuse*, that took place in London on the 22nd September 2012. The aim of the conference was to improve domestic abuse service provision for trans* people by sharing best practice, new research and pool expertise held by sector organisations, activists and trans* people and work towards literally transforming the way services were delivered to trans* people.

The conference was hosted in partnership with Gendered Intelligence, Gender Matters, Broken Rainbow and Galop and invited all who had an interest in improving services to trans* survivors of domestic abuse to come along.

RESEARCH

To find out what trans* people wanted from a service, that supported trans* survivors, we constructed a confidential on-line survey with names and contact details removed to protect anonymity. The survey was developed and written by the Conference Trans* Advisory Group and went live for two months: one month before the conference and another month after the conference. Participants were also invited to complete the survey at the conference.

Who responded to the survey?

79 people responded to the survey.

96% answered questions as individuals and 3% on behalf of organisations.

73% did not have the same gender identity as the one assigned to them at birth. The list of self-defined gender identities demonstrates the range of trans* identities, and the need for awareness of trans* identities for those working with, or supporting trans* survivors.

Gender identities responses included:

- *Agender-male genderfluid*
- *Female*
- *FTM*
- *Genderqueer*
- *Genderqueer, genderfluid, trans, man*
- *Genderqueer transguy*
- *I'm questioning, born a female - I want to be a male*
- *Male*
- *Male, transguy*
- *Trans man*
- *Transmasculine gender queer*
- *Trans woman*
- *Woman*
- *I am a transguy but I preferably do not call myself transman just male. Although medically female I would much prefer male pronouns in all situations and be known as male. A bit edgy right now but that's how I feel at the moment.*

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1. If a new service supporting trans* survivors were developed, what should it be like?

Some themes that emerged included:

- Awareness of diversity and wide range of gender binaries
- Possible inclusion of outreach element
- A service run by trans* / LGB people
- An advice and a safe space, akin to Women's Aid

Comments included:

“Run by trans people and allies, not by people who don't understand us. Able to go out to people who would find it hard to get out or go to places where they are unsure of their own safety.”*

“Trans people deserve the same wealth of resources as that available to white cisgenderⁱⁱ women. Survivor services needs to be able to cater to everyone's needs. This extends to trans status, gender, race, ethnicity,*

ability, class, etc. So any new service should seek to be as diverse as possible. Some people will need support groups. Others will need counseling. Many will need legal, medical, family and police liaisons due to the fact that these groups can be especially bad to transgender people. The legal system is set up in a disadvantageous way for trans folks, cops are quick to turn trans people away at best and harass them at worse, families are not always supportive and the medical establishment can quickly abuse their powers."

*"Trans * people should be involved in the development and running of the service. the service should be pro actively inclusive of all gender variant /intersex identities, including forms ect..It should also be inclusive of people from other minority communities and address issues around multi oppressions."*

2. What kind of advice or support should be available?

96% wanted any new service to include housing advice or support (other requirements included mental health (97%), legal protection (90%), work with young people (82%))

Comments included:

"Intersecting support like trans and BME"

"Support person to assist during obtaining legal/medical assistance"

Several people made comments organisations not working with perpetrators.

"Absolutely nothing to associate perpetrators of abuse with the same organization that's supposed to be helping abusers."

3. How services should be available?

Everyone wanted the service to be available in person, while 96% wanted it available by phone and 95% by email: suggests that ability to contact a service through a variety of means is critical.

Comments included:

"All of the above with particular emphasis on in person services"

"Video chat and other internet tools like that can be very useful if someone doesn't happen to live in an area with trans friendly resources."*

"Everything! Anything! Even a smile from a stranger when I was going through that made my day so much better."

4. If advice was given in person, where should this advice be available?

92% wanted the service sited in a trans* social / support space, while 77% wanted it in a LGBT social / support space.

Comments included:

*“Different people will have difference preferences. All the services which trans * survivors (might) access should be competent around providing advice”*

5. What opening hours of an advice service should be available?

87% of people wanted the service to be available between 5pm and 8pm, while 83% wanted it available at the weekends. 76% opted for a 9 to 5 service. A lot of the comments noted the needs for a 24 hour service: "Abuse does not stick to a schedule".

Comments included:

“As flexible as possible, including at least some days outside of school hours”

“Whatever time it opens there should be also be an emergency out of hours Contact”

“24/7 ideally. Should definitely be available at major holidays as those often lead to an increase in domestic abuse

6. Who should ideally staff the service?

Cisgender delivery of trans* services was identified have been problematic in the past with trans* people being excluded from cisgender services as well as LGB services.

46% felt that the service should be staffed by trans* and LGB staff - 34% wanted trans* only staff. This difference could be summarised by two comments below:

“Keep the ciscays out of it. They already have clinics of their own, which kick out Trans people often.”*

“Honestly, good training matters a LOT more than identity of the staff; however, trans staff would probably be helpful and be more welcoming for some folks.”*

Comments in this section were split between people who vehemently opposed cisgender staff delivering trans* services, to people accepting that trans* staff would be an ideal, but acknowledging the difficulty in attracting

funding to staff these posts and importance of staff who were well trained and informed about both trans* identity and domestic abuse would be equally important.

Most respondents agreed that trans* staff should be employed to deliver front line services as the ideal option. With organisations who run services, building trust with trans* communities as well as ensuring that trans* staff receive high quality training on domestic abuse.

7. Which type of support would be ideal?

People preferred the option of 1-2-1 support (99%), compared to group support (60%), although in the comments, again, people noted the importance of options.

Comments included:

“Different methods of support work for different people. Options are good.”

“Peer support is also key.”

“Maybe group for later on in the process”

8. Any other comments.

This question inspired people to make comments that reinforced the experience of exclusion and huge sense of need when trans* people try to access services. People told us they were frustrated, angry, and desperate. There are strong views about the importance of this issue, people’s right to good support, failures in mainstream and LGBT services, and service providers general lacked understanding about complex and layered identities and the intersection of domestic abuse.

Some responses are listed below.

“If people don't know what kinds of unique issues and difficulties trans people face, they cannot help.)”

“Trans youth are a very vulnerable group and should be provided for. The service should have strong links with the community. The service should have a strong focus around confidentiality, especially as the trans * community is one that is relatively small and interlinked.”*

“Transgender individuals need just as varied of resources as everyone else. Each person will have different needs.”

“Build alliances with other marginal organisations”

“... needs to develop across UK (including N. Ireland), to offer safe places as with refuges”

“... there are SO MANY resources that are desperately needed for trans survivors that it's hard to list specify.”*

“It would be great to have some support and help with the LGBT abuse issue. I am trans and I sometimes wish the abuse and the fear of harassment could be dealt with better. (With some help and protection from others.)”

“Overall, just provide as much as is possible. Trans people pretty much have 0% of the resources in this ciscentric world. The cisqueers don't even give a shit, half the time. Provide as much as possible for the people that don't get jack, or when they do get something, it is a fist. Be considerate of intersectionality-- note that a lot of Trans* people are poor, non-white, nonchristian, neurodiverse, or may not even be part of the gender binary. Also make sure you have a nonsegregated bathroom.”*

“In my experience I tried to report the abuse but was treated like it was my fault by the police. This made it even worse and further increased my mistrust of those who should be there to support me. It would need to be tailored to the individual person and situation and trust developed that must be maintained otherwise it is lip service and pointless.”

“We think you should research the work that has been done already. I.e. Legal background from Press For Change, etc The service needs to take into account the differing stages and forms of gender identity, it would be ideal if this were represented within the staff and volunteers and management committee.”

“The organisation needs to tailor the support given to each person based on individual need, circumstances, case and progress.”

“I think any group or service set up for trans people needs to be “Nothing About me Without Me ethos”*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Responses make it clear that good practice around supporting trans* survivors of domestic abuse is rare. There are significant barriers to accessing services.

The evidence clearly shows that trans* people themselves identify domestic abuse as a very significant issue and that both mainstream and LGBT services overwhelmingly fail to offer any service, never mind quality inclusive services where trans* people can feel safe, welcomed and

appropriately supported. This situation is unacceptable, both in a human sense and in terms of legal rights under the Equality Act.

In the light of this unacceptable situation, we recommend:

- Domestic abuse services must address the needs of all trans* people, recognising multiple support needs and people's legal right to equality within service provision due to their protected characteristics.
- New services should to be trans* led or partnered with trans* organisations
- All staff need high quality training in domestic abuse; lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* identities; and in trans* inclusion practices.
- Quality of domestic abuse advice and support services can only be considered to be high quality if it is led by the trans* community
- These factors should be actively included in both the commissioning and providing of services.

More details are available on request by contacting:

maria@stonewallhousing.org.

All research, resources, presentations and conference reports are available to download free of charge from www.lgbtdaf.org

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ⁱ Trans* is an umbrella term that refers to all of the identities within the gender identity spectrum

ⁱⁱ Cisgender: The opposite of transgendered, someone who is cisgendered has a gender identity that agrees with their societally recognized sex

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