



Position Statement

- Gendered Crime
- Gender Inclusion and Commissioning
- Gender Neutral
- Use of the word “disproportionate”
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
- Funding
- IDVA statistics/Marac

(A) Gendered Crime

The charity does not believe that domestic abuse should be defined as a “gendered crime” or should be viewed as being “gendered in nature” – it should be defined as a crime – as it is both legally (all UK legislation is gender neutral), and, in terms of equality and human rights.

This is on the basis that that men and women can be both perpetrators and victims in heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

The view that domestic abuse is a gendered crime is old-fashioned, regressive and non-inclusive – we take a modern, progressive and inclusive view of domestic abuse.

A view that domestic abuse is a gendered crime does not reflect the diversity of domestic abuse victims in the UK today and seeks to minimise the experiences and support for male victims and victims from the LGBT+ community.

Defining domestic abuse as a “gendered crime” is an ideological position, and ideology has no place in the field of domestic abuse practice.

(B) Gender Inclusive and Commissioning

We believe in a gender-inclusive and gender-informed approach to responses, services and support to victims that are able to reflect the gender differences in the experiences and barriers that some victims face (the majority of experiences and barriers are the same for victims from all genders).

Ultimately, victims of domestic abuse should receive, as the primary consideration, support and recognition based on their individual risk and need. Factors such as gender, race and sexuality are all important but not as important as their primary consideration as an individual.

We agree with Commissioners (local councils, Police and Crime Commissioners and Clinical Commissioning Groups amongst others) who are commissioning services that are inclusive. This includes services and/or a single service that support women, men and children who are victims of domestic abuse.

If there is a single service, the key is that all professionals, policies and the support given is tailored to the individual and a key part of this will take into account the gender of the victim. **This means the service is both gender inclusive and gender informed (both female and male-victim friendly) at the same time** – and – reflects the experiences of victims within the communities they represent.

A single service ('prime contractor') could of course subcontract to another organisation to provide a service for male victims.

Professionals in the domestic abuse sector (primarily Independent Domestic Violence Advisers and Domestic Abuse Service Managers) are trained to support all victims of domestic abuse and take into account the gender nuances of victims when they are relevant (they are not always). They are primarily the professionals who are driving the change from a gender exclusive view of domestic abuse to a gender inclusive view – as they seek to support all victims irrelevant of gender.

Failure of course for a commissioner (or any statutory service) to provide support for male victims in their community and/or to give a better service to a female victim with the same need/risk as a male victim is a breach in (a combination of) the Equalities Act (2010), Care Act (2014), Serious Crime Act (2015), Human Rights Act (1998) and Housing Act (1996).

(C) Gender Neutral

Many prominent organisations and commentators are complaining that commissioning organisations and the narrative on domestic abuse are taking a gender neutral approach to domestic abuse.

We disagree.

We believe some of this positioning is ideologically driven to ensure that a gender-exclusive view of domestic abuse ("domestic abuse is a gendered crime) remains and that this would be to the detriment of male victims in heterosexual relationships and the full range of LGBT+ victims.

Commissioning organisations and the narrative on domestic abuse is changing (albeit in the case of the latter – there is a long way to go) to ensure there is a modern, progressive and inclusive view of domestic abuse that reflects the pattern of domestic abuse in the UK today. We welcome this inclusive approach (see above on how it works in practice) which is for for the 21st Century.

We do agree however that a gender-neutral approach is wrong as it serves neither female or male victims. But it is important not to paint a single commissioned service

providers as being a gender-neutral service if it is clear that it provides support for all victims (gender inclusive) and does so with gender-informed approach (taking into account a victim's gender, if relevant).

(D) The use of the word “disproportionate” to describe domestic abuse gender differences

There is a growing use now of the phrase “women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse” – in the summary narrative of domestic abuse.

This phrase is used by a range of statutory organisations (College of policing, UK Government, for example) and is a gender exclusive and regressive framing of domestic abuse that minimises the existence and experiences of male victims of domestic abuse.

This is because it is used to continue to frame domestic abuse as a “women's issue” and a not a person issue (as an aside, suicide, rough sleeping and poor educational attainment affects men more than women but no one, including Government, frames these issues as ‘disproportionately’ affecting men).

This framing is correct at one level as domestic abuse does disproportionately affect women as one overall gender, but does not disproportionately affect an individual woman who is a victim anymore than an individual man (with the level of risk/need).

However, the framing does not distinguish or seek to distinguish between women/men and woman/man.

The outcome is that public and statutory sector perception and attitudes to domestic abuse remain that domestic abuse is a “women's issue” (and a heterosexual women's issue at that). This means the service that men receive is inferior, societal attitudes remain gender-exclusive and non-supportive and funding for services remains limited.

(E) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

The current national policy framework for domestic abuse places all victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse/violence, stalking, ‘so-called’ honour violence and forced marriage as a victim of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) – even when the victims are male. This is a policy contortion.

We wholeheartedly support VAWG but men should not be placed under this umbrella. There should be a parallel strategy called “Ending Intimate Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy”.

The continuation of continuing to classify and treat, in public policy terms, male victims of these crimes as being victims of “Violence Against Women and Girls” is non-inclusive and regressive. This is because it:

- It is factually incorrect to class men and boys who are victims of these crimes as victims of crimes against women and girls;
 - The approach minimises and disrespects the lived experience of men and boys who suffer these crimes, contributing to their vulnerability;
 - Reporting rates for male victims of these crimes continues to be far too low, which then has an impact on service provision and funding. It is our judgment that current policies act as a disincentive and barrier to reporting;
 - Male victims of these crimes continue to be more invisible than they should be to society at large and current government policies contributing to this;
 - The approach hampers the creation of nuanced and gender responsive statutory services and understanding at a national, regional and local level, and,
 - There continues to be under provision of resources and funding at through national, regional and local bodies.
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(F) Funding

We do not believe any funding should be taken away from female victim services and given to male victims – we want more funding for all.

(G) Only 5% of high risk domestic abuse victims are male

This is untrue or not proven

The Current information from Safe Lives is:

- The percentage of male victims/survivors referred to Marac is 5% (95% female).
- The percentage of male victims/survivors accessing services is broadly in line with the percentage of male victims/survivors seen at Marac (5%). However, unsurprisingly male victims and survivors are underrepresented in refuge provision:
 - Outreach: 6% male
 - Idva: 5% male
 - Health-based: 4% male
 - Refuge: 1% male

However this data (not Safe Lives' fault) is being used a proxy for the number of the proportion of either 'only 5% of high risk victims are male' or 'only 5% of victims accessing services are male so that is all the services they need'

However, the use of the Marac data as a proxy for the number of high risk victims is statistically erroneous and gives an inaccurate picture of domestic abuse.

The reason using the Marac data (we wholeheartedly support Safelives and the Marac system) in this way to frame the number of high risk victims is wrong is because it is being used as a proxy for the percentage number of actual number of high risk victims by gender when what the Safe Lives data actually shows is the percentage number of victims who are being assessed as high risk and heard at Marac.

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We know that in the Marac system:

- Men under-report domestic abuse
- Services either non-record or under-record
- Men minimise the harm they suffer.

It cannot possibly (without evidence to the contrary) that if 33% of victims are male (via anonymised ONS reports) and 24% of victims who report to the police are male (according to FOIs to 43 police forces) then how can that fall to 5% with regard to high-risk victims?

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