

6. Case studies in more detail

In this chapter we explore the case studies described above in more detail, showing how you could work through the process of identifying what is going on, assessing client needs in more detail and responding. We have added some more case studies to provide more detail, particularly for the first section on male victims, as they are likely to be the majority of men presenting at your service.

Main category of client – VICTIMS of domestic abuse

We have given several examples of male victims as this is the majority of the work you will be doing.

Daf

Daf is 73 years old and has been married to his wife Megan (aged 60) for 27 years. Last night she attacked him with a glass and he ended up in hospital. He says Megan has always had a fierce temper and that this has been getting worse for the past few years. Until recently the abuse was mostly verbal but there have been several incidents recently where he has been punched and kicked. Now he is worried that this will be the start of an increase in violence. He doesn't want the police involved as he doesn't want to get her in trouble or to end the relationship. He wants some advice.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/ risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daf's age may mean he is less able to protect himself. • Megan has increased her use of violence and the severity. • She has used a weapon in the most recent incident. • Daf does not want to end the relationship and is unwilling to call the police. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does Daf think Megan might do? Does he think she is likely to hurt him again? • Is Megan showing any signs of wanting to change her behaviour? Does she realise she is behaving violently and illegally? • Does Daf feel to blame for Megan's violence? • Is Megan stronger than Daf? How is he protecting himself? Has he ever felt he needed to use violence to protect himself? • Does he feel controlled by or fearful of Megan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure Daf that there are people who can help and that he is right to ask for help. Encourage Daf to understand the full range of services the police can provide and that they are the only agency with the power to remove Megan if he is at risk. Explain to him that this doesn't have to mean the end of the relationship. • Talk through other options such as using the civil courts or going to stay with another family member for a while. Help him to understand that he isn't responsible for Megan's violence and that she is the one who will have to decide to stop. • Help him to explore his choices for the future, such as temporary separation, taking some action to show Megan that she can't use violence, considering a permanent separation, living separately but continuing to have a relationship. • Tell Daf about the Elders' Team in the local authority who can assess his needs and help.

Respect Toolkit for work with male victims of domestic violence

Roberto

Roberto was with Justin for three years. Justin was an alcoholic and they both used drugs together. The couple lived in Justin's housing association flat. Roberto loved Justin but was also scared, because he was aggressive. Justin pushed everyone away from him and he used violent behaviour and threats to keep Roberto away from everyone. Roberto is Italian and doesn't have any family in this country. When Justin wanted to detox, Roberto supported him and Justin was so grateful that he asked Roberto to marry him. However, Roberto found out he was seeing someone else and the relationship broke down. However, Justin then proceeded to threaten Roberto, saying he would kill him if he ever started another relationship. Roberto called the police but thinks that they didn't believe him. He feels completely devastated, scared of the future and has been having suicidal thoughts. He is sleeping on a friend's sofa at the moment but this is only temporary. He needs some support and help.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roberto's lack of family in this country and the fact his friends have all been pushed away by Justin leave him isolated. His suicidal feelings make him a risk to himself. His past experiences with the police make him unlikely to seek further help from them. Justin's threats to kill him may be real and, coupled with past behaviour towards Roberto's friends, indicate extreme possessiveness. Past use of drugs may also re-occur on either side 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was Justin physically violent to Roberto? Did he ever injure him? Does he feel scared of Justin now? When was Justin last in contact with Roberto? How was that contact? Has Roberto re-established contact with any of his friends since he and Justin split up? Is Roberto in contact with his family? Is he out to his family? Has he attempted to claim benefits? Has he attempted suicide in the past? Where does Justin live in relation to Roberto – is it far, does he know where Roberto is living? Is Roberto still in contact with Justin? Has Roberto ever had any medical treatment for his injuries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reassure Roberto he has done the right thing to make contact and that he doesn't deserve to live in fear, that Justin does not have the right to do this and there are things which can be done to help keep Roberto safe. Let him know that as a citizen of the European Union he is entitled to some benefits. Ask if Roberto can make contact with friends or family as this might help his isolation. Refer Roberto to a specialist support group for gay men if one is available locally. Suggest Citizen's Advice Bureau for help with benefits. Tell him about what the police can do – ideally you should have a trusted contact in the local police who you know is likely to be understanding of GBT men Suggest he writes down past incidents, particularly if he has had medical treatment. Discuss a safety plan for how to deal with future threats and how to keep away from Justin. Explain housing rights and options. Refer him to Stonewall Housing for housing advice if he is in London and wants to move within London. Make sure he knows about the Samaritans if he is suicidal or might become so.

Peter

Peter was being abused by his ex-partner Katie for two years. He talks about self-harm and attempted suicide which appears to be as a result of the combination of the abuse and his mild learning disability. He felt he couldn't hit back because she is a woman. When Katie and their two sons moved out of his house six months ago, he was relieved, but she continued to harass and threaten him. He wants to move out of the area as they live close by, with Katie's new boyfriend who Peter thinks is violent. He wants to sort out regular contact with the children and he is worried that Katie's new boyfriend might be scaring them. He has some support from family but they don't know about the abuse. He says he wants housing advice.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/ risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter has attempted suicide and self-harmed in the past; • There is an additional risk from the new boyfriend including possible risk to children; • Peter is has a mild learning disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have Peter or the children ever been injured by Katie? • Has Peter ever reported the violence to the police? • Does Peter currently feel afraid of Katie? • Is Peter still feeling suicidal? • What is it that makes Peter think the new boyfriend is violent? Has Katie's new boyfriend used or threatened violence against Peter or the children? • Are there particular areas where Peter will feel especially safe living, or places where Katie's family or friends might live or she might go, where he will feel unsafe? Has Peter tried applying for housing already? Does Peter want the children to live with him? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the assessment forms in chapter 4. • Reassure Peter that he is right to ask for help and that he doesn't deserve to be abused or threatened. • Contact children's services to discuss the possibility that there are children at risk of immediate harm • Refer Peter to a good solicitor for advice about child contact or residence. • Give him clear advice about his rights to public housing and his options to sort this out privately.

Victim who has used violent resistance

Aftab

Aftab says he left hospital this morning after being stabbed in the chest by his partner; he says he was lucky it wasn't too deep but could have been a lot of worse. Aftab says that over the years arguments gradually escalated and she's hit and slapped him several times. He's been walking on eggshells in case he said or did the wrong thing and often Judy would get angry with him if he didn't do something she expected him to. Today, for the first time, Aftab retaliated by slapping Judy several times after she hit and slapped him. He says that he is ashamed, he was taught that it was wrong to hit women but says he did intend to hurt and stop her from hurting him. He is worried that he might do it again. It wasn't the first time she grabbed a knife but the first time she used it so now Aftab is afraid for himself and his son as well as afraid of what he might do to her. Aftab says that Judy has a lot of past stress from her childhood and maybe that's why she behaves like that. Aftab and Judy have a 3 year-old boy who Aftab looks after full time. Aftab doesn't know where to turn or what his options are.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Escalating violence, severe injuries, use of knives Credible evidence of fear Child exposed to an escalating violent situation Aftab underestimating the severity of the situation and making excuses for Judy Aftab made the choice to respond with violence and this put him at more risk as Judy responded with stabbing him Aftab is anxious, possibly depressed They still live together Need to check more what is going on – is Aftab as violent as Judy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is Aftab afraid, controlled, injured? Does he feel that Judy is ever afraid of him? Does Aftab want the relationship to continue? How does Aftab feel about his situation? What would he like to happen? Has Aftab involved the police about the recent incident? If not, would he? Does Aftab have somewhere else to stay? Where is the child? Is he safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the identification form in chapter 3 and the assessment forms in chapter 4. Explain to Aftab what will happen if he presses charges against Judy and what the law can do for him Find a legal advice centre or helpline for Aftab, particularly in relation to his son and getting residence Explore strategies with Aftab about staying out of harm's way – develop a safety plan with him Talk to Aftab about referring him to a MARAC Explore the need for refuge space or a B&B

Perpetrator (presenting as a victim)

Terry

Terry says that he has been unfairly arrested by the police when he pushed his girlfriend Nicky away from him during an argument. He says that she is verbally abusive to him and that she is always winding him up to see how far she can push him. He says that he has only pushed her away 'once or twice' and that he doesn't understand why the police have arrested him. When asked if Nicky has used violence against him he laughs and says no, she's just verbally a wind-up, but it's not his fault he has to lash out. He wants to know how he can get legal help as he feels he is the victim in the situation.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terry sees himself as a victim but he may be the perpetrator. This would place his partner at increased risk, if other agencies start to believe him. Terry's frustration with the situation may increase this risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has there been any violence in the past? What happened in those incidents where he pushed Nicky away? Was she injured? Was he? Has she tried to leave him? Who called the police? Have the police charged him? Did the police also arrest Nicky? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the information gained from the answers to the questions above to gain a clearer idea of what is going on – use the identification form in chapter 3. Explain that if he wants legal help he is entitled to have a solicitor and if he can't afford to pay the solicitor, he can apply for Legal Aid. Ask him to consider if Nicky is in fact the one being hurt and that no matter how annoying he finds her, he isn't allowed legally to hurt her, including pushing her away.

Learning point: Perpetrators often use the language of 'victim' as they feel hard done by and aggrieved. Domestic violence services have always assessed the needs and circumstances of clients in order to provide the most appropriate service. This means listening to what they say, gathering relevant information and making a proper assessment of the situation, using professional expertise and assessment tools, with men and with women.

Perpetrator (presenting as victim) whose victim has used violent resistance

Olufeme

Olufeme describes being 'wrongly arrested' by the police. He has a long list of complaints about the police. He says that he has been banned from his home town by the terms of a legal order. When asked by the worker how this order came about (as this is quite difficult to get) Olufeme says that he did hit his girlfriend Ayo but that she was 'disrespecting him' and that he also has marks from Ayo's 'abusive behaviour' (his words) but adds that he was able to 'deal with her'. When asked what this means, Olufeme says 'She deserves what she gets, she's argumentative and she knows what I am like – the police should have seen this, but they are all against men and believed her, just because she was crying and on the floor when they came'. When asked for more information about how he has been marked he shows the worker scratches on his arms and says he has bruises on his thighs. Eventually he explains that when the police arrived Ayo was on the floor because Olufeme had been repeatedly kicking her. She had tried to push him off her, once kicking for his genital area, hence the bruises to his thighs. He describes this as him being abused.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olufeme is not accepting responsibility for the impact of his violence • Ayo's use of violence is likely to increase risk to herself and to Olufeme if she increases the level of violence • If Ayo continues to use violence she may be identified as the perpetrator and not get appropriate help or safety planning • However, the terms of the order are very strong – if such an order has been granted (and it is important to check) then the courts and police must have had good evidence of the level of risk from Olufeme to Ayo. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Olufeme fearful of Ayo? Does he feel controlled by her? Has he ever had to have medical treatment? • Does Olufeme think that Ayo is fearful of him? Does he think that she feels controlled by him? Does he usually get his own way in the end? • Who finishes arguments? How? • Has Ayo ever had to have medical treatment? • What are the exact terms of the legal order? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it clear that if an order has been made to Olufeme, it is his responsibility to comply with it, no matter how unfair he thinks it is. He is entitled to seek legal advice and find out if he has the right to return to court. But if he does not comply with the order he will have committed a criminal offence and could be taken to court again. • Use the questions to identify more what is going on and to explore the situation with Olufeme – this may help him to see the situation differently (or it may not). The identification process form in chapter 3 will be helpful here. • Find out what Olufeme wants from you – it may be that there is nothing you can provide him with.

(Possible) mutual violence

Whilst we have given this case study under this heading, we must stress that until you have done more assessment about who is doing what to whom and with what consequences you cannot be sure whether or not this is mutual violence, or one of the other categories of client described above. The focus must be on finding out more, prioritising safety for the child and both adults whilst keeping an open mind about what is going on.

Dave and Julie

Dave and Julie have been together for five years, married for three and they have a four year old daughter. Dave tells us that Julie has an alcohol problem which is also present in many of her family of origin. He says that she has hit him and bit him, including in front of other people. However, he also tells you that he has hit her, causing bruises. He says he has been arrested several times and had to spend a night in the police cells on one occasion when he assaulted her in the street. He was cautioned but not charged. He resents the fact he has been in trouble with the police and blames her. He says that Julie is not a fit mother and wants to separate from her and have custody of their daughter as he thinks she will not be safe living with Julie, plus his extended family have always been very involved in her care. He says they both want to separate but they are still living in the same house as they can't sell it. There is violence from each of them regularly. He doesn't say if this has happened in front of their daughter.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't know if there is a perpetrator and victim or if this is mutual violence – and we need to find out as much as possible about who is doing what to whom and with what consequences • Julie's use of alcohol is likely to increase the risk of violence and of serious violence. • There may be violence in front of or involving the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Dave afraid of Julie? Does he think Julie is afraid of him? Has either of them been injured or needed medical treatment because of the other's violence? • Has there ever been any violence in front of Julie and Dave's daughter, or when she has been in the house? • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your key task as a professional is to assess and to find out as much as possible about who is doing what to whom and with what consequences • Dave needs to be aware that no matter how much he feels provoked, he must not use violence. Safety planning can help in the short term and during the process of separation and beyond.

Respect Toolkit for work with male victims of domestic violence

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie and Dave are trying to separate, which increases risk. • The fact that they can't sell their house means that they are still living together and the violence is likely to continue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are children's services planning to do? (you should try to talk to the social worker involved, with Dave's permission) • Does Julie acknowledge her drinking problem? Is she having any help for this? • What does Dave think he can do to avoid using violence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dave or Julie could move out of the family home into temporary accommodation whilst their house is sold. They could let out their house in the meantime. • Dave will need legal advice about a residence order for their daughter. It may be that they do not agree about where their daughter should live after separation. Dave needs to understand that this is a process that will take time and, understandably, he will be very frustrated around this.

Unhappy relationship - no abuse

Graham

Graham divorced his wife on grounds of unreasonable behaviour. He said she was keeping secrets about her finances and although he gave her the chance to change her ways she didn't do so. They still live together in the same property with their 6 year-old boy. Graham tells you the divorce made him ill, he was signed off work and eventually lost his job. He now lives off benefits and pays most of the bills despite the fact that his ex-wife has a job. He complains that not only does she refuse to pay her share of the bills but she also spends a lot of money every month buying cigarettes. Graham says he wants her out of the house, which they're trying to sell before they go their separate ways, and has even thought about changing the locks so she can't get back in and he can live there with his son. Graham is looking for advice about this and he also wants to know how he can get residence of his son.

Identify	Assess	Respond
Vulnerabilities/risks	Questions to ask	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graham is fed up with the situation and may make bad decisions, such as locking his ex-wife out of the house Graham seems to be aggrieved and this is affecting his health and well-being There is indication that Graham is using controlling behaviours (expecting his ex-wife to change the way she managed her finances, disapproving of her smoking now, considering to lock her out of the house) and is expressing ownership of the house and his son - this should be explored further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has there been any violence or abuse? Are there any arguments witnessed by the boy? How does Graham think his son has been affected by all this? Does Graham's ex-wife contribute to the house and to their son's upbringing in other ways? Does Graham think he could cope if he had residence of his son? What does his son want? Has he spoken to anyone else about this? eg school teachers, other family members, friends etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graham needs to access legal advice about pursuing residence of the boy and about the financial situation (his wife not paying bills) Graham might benefit from talking to a counsellor or his GP - he needs to take care of his health and well-being Explore strategies with Graham so his bad relations with his ex-wife are not played out through their child You will need to be clear with Graham what the limits of your service are for him - if you are specifically funded to work with male victims he may not be entitled to much of your time as you will have to prioritise men at risk - however, his situation could still be risky so keep an open mind and do make sure he knows about safety options even if you don't think he is a victim - you may be wrong