

**‘An eight day working week: LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Sector Snapshot’  
FINAL REPORT**

Catherine Donovan and Kate Butterby

2020

© Durham University 2020

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for educational or non-profit purposes without special permission from the copyright holder, provided acknowledgment of the source is made.

Published by Durham University 2020  
Department of Sociology  
Old Elvet  
Durham  
DH1 3HN  
UK  
Email: [catherine.donovan@durham.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.donovan@durham.ac.uk)



**Executive summary**

**Introduction:** This study grew out of an ESRC Social Science Festival Event in November 2019. The event brought together the members of the National (England and Wales) LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Network for professionals and researchers whose work focuses on domestic abuse (DA) in the relationships of lesbians, gay men, bisexual women and men, trans women and men and non-binary/gender queer folk (LGB and/or T+).

The most pressing issues facing the LGBT+ DA sector are: funding, sustainability, and the increasing need for their services. Four of the organisations present did not yet know if they would have funding for the financial year 2020-21; and the only Welsh representative had seen their project close earlier in 2019. A study involving LGBT+ DA sector was decided on with aims to:

- i. Evidence the precarious nature of the sector's funding;
- ii. Evidence the impacts of the funding context on the day-to-day working practices of the sector at an organisational and individual level;
- iii. Make this evidence visible to key funders in order to effect positive change.

**DA in the Relationships of LGB and/or T+ People:** Numerically it is heterosexual, cisgender women who are most often victimised by DA. However, recent analysis of the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW)<sup>1</sup> indicates that bisexual women are nearly twice as likely (10.9%) as heterosexual women (6%) to report partner abuse whilst lesbians are also more likely than heterosexual women to report partner abuse (8% as opposed to 6%). An earlier CSEW analysis also found that lesbians and gay men were twice as likely to report partner abuse (13%) than heterosexual/straight people (5%). Currently, the CSEW does not ask about transgender identities, but trans people have been identified as the group more likely to report DA than lesbians, gay men or bisexual people.

**Context:** The snapshot study was carried out within a broader, national context of austerity wherein central and local government public sector funding has decreased between 2009/10 and 2019/20 by over £45 billion, from 21% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 12.6%. In 2010/11, funding to DA services was cut by local authorities by nearly a third.

Disproportionate impacts of spending cuts for specialist services for LGBT+ communities has also occurred. A Trade Union Congress report indicates that whilst only 0.04% of voluntary sector funding goes to the broader LGBT+ sector, it relies more heavily on this source of funding than other sectors so is more vulnerable to cuts.

**This Study:** Practitioners from the seven organisations in the sector were invited to send a copy of their diary for the week beginning February 24<sup>th</sup> 2020. This was just before the Government announced the national lockdown in response to the global pandemic of Covid-19. This report should be read in that context. Telephone interviews used the diaries as a prompt to ask about: whether the diary depicted a 'typical week'; what, if any, tasks were undertaken that were outside the practitioner's remit; whether and to what extent the hours worked were within or extra to the practitioner's contracted hours; the impacts (if any) of working outside contracted hours and remit; project sustainability; and their role, if any, in fundraising. The snapshot study received research ethics approval from Durham University's Department of Sociology's Ethics Committee. Organisations are anonymous and participants provided role titles for use in the report.

---

<sup>1</sup> All references are provided in the full report

Five of the seven projects took part in the study and eleven interviews with participants who hold a range of roles within their projects: providing face-to-face support to victim/survivors (5); development work (3); management roles (5); providing training for professionals (4). One project has national reach; three projects have countywide reach; and one project has citywide reach.

Core themes arising from the data are: typicality of the snapshot week; doing tasks outside practitioners' remit; the impacts of providing a service for LGB and/or T+ people; finding time; impacts of working in a reactive working environment; emotional impacts on practitioners; financial sustainability; and credibility work.

**Key Findings:** During the snapshot week, most participants worked longer than their paid hours, did work outside their remit and said that this is typical. The reason for this normalisation of overwork is the fragility or precariousness of the sector, which is conveyed in two ways:

1. *Economic Fragility:* Economic fragility is endemic in publicly funded organisations. Tendering processes favour large, national or international organisations with dedicated infrastructure supporting fundraising and consortium building. Smaller organisations such as are in the LGBT+ DA sector have to spend more time seeking funding, stitching together a patchwork of contracts. These local, LGBT+ DA services suffer in this environment and are not recognised for the added value they bring in specialist knowledge and expertise which they, often freely, pass on to partner organisations.

The short-term nature of funding has particular impacts for the LGBT+ DA sector. The lack of security in funding means that the depth of development work that can be done in LGBT+ communities to raise awareness about DA and the existence of specialist LGBT+ DA projects, and to build relationships of trust between them, is extremely limited. The development work needed with the local and/or regional statutory and specialist DA sector is also limited.

2. *(Re)establishing the Credibility of the Sector:* The second way that fragility is conveyed is through accounts given of how the credibility of the sector has to be continuously (re-)established with funders, with partners, within statutory and third sector specialist DA organisations, as well as within LGBT+ communities. This is made all the more difficult by arguments that, because of equalities legislation, there is no need for specialist services for minoritised groups because generic services can provide for everybody who needs them.

Credibility work is needed because of the dominant public story about DA (Donovan and Hester 2014) as a problem of physically violent, heterosexual cisgender men for heterosexual cisgender women; and the lack of monitoring data being collected about sexuality and gender identity to evidence the needs of LGB and/or T+ service users. Consequently, the LGBT+ DA sector spends significant time (re-)making the case for their work and/or raising awareness about the particular needs of LGB and/or T+ survivors.

*Emotional Impacts on Projects and Practitioners:* The fragility of their organisations results in too many occasions when participants are exhausted, worried, and frustrated. Positive emotions are also expressed about being managed well, working within supportive teams, keeping victim/survivors safe and job satisfaction. Most often, however, working reactively results in negative consequences, such as a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration with multi-tasking; that planned tasks are left unfinished; with concerns about delivery quality and timeliness; and a working experience that is often very stressful. There is a danger that the negative impacts will lead to burn-out and the loss to the sector of expertise and experience that is, more generally, in short supply.

*Service Users:* Participants were not asked about their perceptions of whether and how service users are impacted by a such a precarious sector. However, concern for actual and potential service users are threaded through their accounts. Further research is needed with LGB and/or T potential and actual service users to explore their experience of help-seeking both in the LGBT DA sector and more widely. What is clear is the work of participants shielding service users from the realities of a precariously resourced sector which is often to the detriment of the participants themselves.

*The impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic:* This research was conducted before the nationwide lockdown that started in March 2020. Conditions of working have become more difficult and challenging since then for a combination of reason: changes in the funding regime, the focus of national concern about domestic violence has been almost entirely on (heterosexual, cisgender) women being victimised by (heterosexual, cisgender men), the pandemic continues to exist with resultant new national and local restrictions on movement and association which have made face-face working extremely difficult; the pressures of working from home. Further research is needed to explore them.

**Recommendations:** Funders/Commissioners should take cognisance of the:

- Fragility (economically and in terms of credibility) of the LGBT+ DA sector
- Extra time/resource needed by the LGBT+ specialist DA sector to establish recognition of the credibility of their work, the needs of LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors, and the need for specialist practitioners who are trained and have expertise in LGB and/or T+ DA.
- Credibility work undertaken by the LGBT+ DA sector in providing regular and frequent awareness raising about LGBT+ DA, both within the mainstream and specialist women's DA sectors and within the wider community and LGBT+ communities. Conversely, mainstream and specialist women's DA sectors require opportunities for awareness raising and training as a process rather than as a one-off training session about LGBT+ DA. Funders/Commissioners should recognise in tender documents that this work should be costed in order to recognise the added value of this work that improves the professional development of the DA sector.
- Burden for small organisations such as those in the LGBT+ DA sector of not being able to secure core funding, and change funding streams to allow organisations to make visible, and apply for, costs for administrative support, recruitment, writing and costing funding applications, partnership working, human resources and credibility work.
- Emotional impact of working in the LGBT+ DA sector and understand their own part in exerting negative pressures on those working in this sector. They should commit to addressing this through adopting the recommendations in this report.
- Need for longer run-in times for commissioned services and longer term funding (for three rather than one year); and the avoidance of the pressures of end-of-year underspends. This will enable staff retention, long-term strategies, security for the organisation, employees and service users.
- Importance of equalities monitoring of victim/survivors of DA across the statutory and specialist DA sectors to include sexuality and gender identities as a way of building local knowledge about need and assist strategic development of specialist provision. They should build in expectations about monitoring and service user consultation in commissioning processes.
- Need to commit to adopting and implementing the recommendations published by Galop<sup>2</sup> in their guidance for commissioners *Commissioning for inclusion: Delivering services for LGBT+ survivors of domestic abuse*.

---

<sup>2</sup> Galop is the United Kingdom's only LGBT+ anti-violence charity <http://www.galop.org.uk/>

## **Acknowledgements**

Catherine and Kate would like to acknowledge the participation of all of the organisations and practitioners who took part in this study. We know how busy you are and appreciate you giving your time to this research.

We would also like to thank Dr Jasna Magić and James Rowlands for their incredibly helpful comments on an early draft of this report.

## 1. Introduction

This study grew out of an ESRC Social Science Festival Event in November 2019. The event brought together the members of the National (England and Wales) LGBT+

Domestic Abuse Network for professionals and researchers whose work focuses on domestic abuse (DA) in the relationships of lesbians, gay men, bisexual women and men, trans women and men and non-binary/gender queer folk (LGB and/or T+). The network members recognise that LGB and/or T+<sup>3</sup> survivors of DA might access statutory and/or third sector mainstream victim/survivor organisations and/or specialist heterosexual, cisgender women's services - indeed, often, they find themselves providing support and training to those organisations to do so. However, the network is set up to provide mutual support and improve visibility for the work being done by the seven projects across England who have dedicated workers focussed on promoting or addressing the needs of LGB and/or T+ survivors. This includes improving best practice and policies in the LGBT+ specific domestic abuse (DA) sector to ensure that they are fully accessible to all members of LGBT+ communities (see Magić and Kelly 2019). In this report we refer to this group of projects as the LGBT+ DA sector, or 'the sector'.

A core part of the agenda at that network meeting was whether and how the practice within the sector might be evaluated. However, during the discussion about evaluation it became clear that the most pressing issues facing the sector are: funding, sustainability, and the increasing need for their services (Colgan, Hunter, & McKearney, 2014; Magić and Kelly 2019). Network members reported that funders are typically reluctant to provide core funding which means that practitioners end up working more hours than they are paid and doing tasks that are outside their remit in order to keep organisations going. Four of the organisations present did not yet know if they would have funding for the financial year 2020-21; and the only Welsh representative had seen their project lose its funding earlier in 2019. By the end of the meeting we decided that a snapshot study to explore a week in the life of organisations in the sector could evidence the precariousness of the sector. The aims were to:

- iv. Evidence the precarious nature of the sector's funding;
- v. Evidence the impacts of the funding context on the day-to-day working practices of the sector at an organisational and individual level;
- vi. Make this evidence visible to key statutory and third sector funders in an attempt to influence funders' decisions about what they will fund, for how long and on what terms.

### 1a. Organisations taking part

This report documents findings from the snapshot study undertaken by Durham University and funded by the ESRC SPF. All seven projects comprising the sector were invited to take part. In order to describe the projects we draw from the work of Magić and Kelly (2019) which identifies four types of organisations that might have dedicated workers whose focus is DA in the relationships of LGB and/or T+ people:

- an LGBT+ community organisation or partnership of LGBT+ organisations that includes workers dedicated to LGBT+ domestic abuse;
- a domestic abuse service that includes dedicated workers focused on LGBT+ domestic abuse;

---

<sup>3</sup> When referring to organisations or communities the acronym LGBT+ is used for brevity. When referring to individuals, the acronym LGB and/or T+ will be used in order to make the point that trans and non-binary people are not necessarily lesbian, gay or bisexual.

- an LGBT+ domestic abuse project delivered by an LGBT+ organisation but as part of a wider domestic abuse/violence against women and girls (VAWG) partnership (which can take several forms);
- and a stand-alone LGBT+ domestic abuse organisation (see also Magić and Kelly, 2019).

Currently, no organisations in England fall into the fourth category, but the seven projects invited to take part in this study fall into the other three. Six of the seven provide face-to-face services for LGB and/or T+ survivors of DA whilst one is a development project building capacity in their regional mainstream services to better provide for and respond to LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors of DA.

#### 1b. Domestic Abuse in the relationships of LGB and/or T+ people

Domestic abuse is defined by the Home Office as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional. (Home Office 2013)

Numerically it is heterosexual, cisgender women who are most often victimised by DA (Walby and Towers 2018). However, recent analysis of the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW) by the Office for National Statistics (2018) indicates that bisexual women are nearly twice as likely (10.9%) as heterosexual women (6%) to report partner abuse (as it is called in the CSEW) whilst lesbians are also more likely than heterosexual women to report partner abuse (8% as opposed to 6%). An earlier analysis of a CSEW in 2010 also found that lesbians and gay men were twice as likely to report partner abuse (13%) than heterosexual/straight people (5%) (Smith et al., 2010; see also Magić and Kelly 2019). Currently, the CSEW does not ask about transgender identities, but in their report, Magić and Kelly (2019) identify trans people as the group more likely to report DA than lesbians, gay men or bisexual people.

The sector does not only provide support to those victimised by intimate partners but also to LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors who experience DA from family members, which is itself a serious problem (Magić and Kelly 2019). Data from elsewhere also suggests that by the time LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors seek formal help they are experiencing a range of complex needs such as substance use and/or poor mental health, more so than their heterosexual counterparts (Safe Lives 2018). In their report of delivery across the sector, Magić and Kelly also show that a third of LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors of DA from intimate partners and family members have a disability and between 30-50% identify as Black, Asian, from another minority ethnic group or as a refugee (Magić and Kelly 2019). Thus LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors are not seeking help as early as their heterosexual counterparts and potentially face multiple barriers to seeking help because of their intersecting identities.

#### 1c. The Wider Context

The snapshot study was carried out within a broader, national context: one of austerity wherein public sector funding (including both central and local government) has decreased from 21.2% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 12.6% between 2009/10 and 2019/20 (Jones et al., 2015). This equates to cuts of approximately just over £45 billion during that time (Dagdeviren et al., 2019). The financial



cuts have been felt unevenly across the country and those areas with most need have been hardest hit. Women have also been disproportionately impacted both financially because of their overrepresentation in public sector employment cuts and because they have seen their caring responsibilities increased as public service provision is reduced (see Donovan and Durey 2018 for a discussion of this). In the domestic abuse field the impact has been severe for victim/survivors because of reduced specialist services being available and decreased ability of survivors to be financially autonomous after leaving a DA relationship (McRobie 2013). The work of Towers and Walby (2012) indicates that funding to domestic abuse services was cut by local authorities in 2010/11 – 2011/12 by nearly a third; that 9% of those seeking refuge on a typical day were turned away because of lack of space; and all 8 major Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service providers faced cuts in funding of 25% or more. Sanders-McDonagh et al (2016) have argued that in these conditions women are not only experiencing DA but also structural violence from the state. Walby and Towers (2012) also pointed to the ways that DA services designed for, in their terms, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women are further, unequally impacted by the spending cuts.

Similar patterns of disproportionate impacts of spending cuts for specialist services for LGBT+ communities can also be seen. A Trade Union Congress (TUC) (Colgan et al., 2014) report indicates that whilst only 0.04% of voluntary sector funding available goes to the LGBT+ sector, the sector relies more heavily on this source of funding than other sectors so when public sector funding is cut this has a more severe impact (Colgan et al., 2014; see also Mitchell et al., 2013 for impacts within LGBT+ youth work). Underpinning austerity is a neoliberalist ideology that means not only is the intention to make the state smaller (Taylor-Gooby, 2012) but that competition is understood to be necessary to make the third sector more efficient. Available public funding is now being distributed through competitive tendering processes, and charitable (and to some extent, public) funders prefer to fund innovation rather than the core costs of organisations. The tendering processes tend to advantage larger national third sector or corporate providers who are able to mobilise fund-raising activities more easily and build consortia, neither of which are easy for smaller organisations (Clayton et al., 2015), especially those that can be characterised as ‘by and for’ minority communities such as those in the LGBT+ DA sector. Finally, funding regimes often provide grants in the short term which makes planning, sustainability and strategic work very challenging, partly because it is not certain whether particular services will be refunded but also because of the impacts for staff turnover of having little security about long term funding. This presents a particular problem for the sector which is already too small: the drain of expertise and experience is a serious concern.

## **2. The Snapshot Study**

Discussions about this study were informed by the snapshot studies annually conducted by Women’s Aid to ascertain the state of their members’ provision on the same day of the year<sup>4</sup>. The approach in this study was an invitation to practitioners from the seven organisations in the sector to send a copy of their diary during the same week – the week beginning February 24<sup>th</sup> 2020. It is important to note that this was just before the Government announced a national lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The public were advised to stay at home, protect the NHS and safe lives. This meant that most work in the sector moved to online and organisations were run from home. Working with service users also moved online and this had profound impacts for the work that this study does not explore. Following this, telephone interviews were conducted using diaries as a prompt to ask about:

- Whether the diary depicted a ‘typical week’
- What, if any, tasks were undertaken that were outside the practitioner’s remit

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-provision-annual-survey/>

- Whether and to what extent the hours worked were within or extra to the practitioner's contracted hours
- The impacts (if any) of working outside contracted hours and remit: for practitioners, the organisation.
- The sustainability of the project and their role, if any, in fundraising

The snapshot study received research ethics approval from Durham University's Department of Sociology's Ethics Committee. No organisations are identified and all participants are anonymous and given research ID numbers and a work role title, which participants chose themselves. Once the interviews had been successfully transcribed the diaries and voice recordings were destroyed.

Five of the seven projects took part in the study and eleven interviews were conducted with practitioners working in different roles across the five projects. The eleven participants hold a range of roles within their projects:

- Five participants provide face to face support to victim/survivors as Independent Domestic Abuse Advisers (IDVAs), Case workers, Helpline workers, Group workers with survivors
- Three participants have development work as part of, or fully, their role
- Five participants have management roles: either as line or service managers
- Four participants provide training for professionals as part of their role

The geographical remit of projects also varies:

- i. One project has national reach
- ii. Three projects have county-wide reach
- iii. One project has city-wide reach

During the interviews it became clear that regardless of the geographical or funding criteria they have, projects often provide a service to service users or professionals who need help and/or support to provide an appropriate service, respectively.

Four of the five of the projects taking part in the study are part of LGBT+ organisations; and one is part of a specialist DA organisation.

The interviews were analysed thematically, building from the interview questions, and including themes identified in common across the interviews that were not expected. The following section is structured around these themes.

### **3. Findings**

Core themes arising from the data are:

- 3a. Typicality of the snapshot week
- 3b. Doing tasks outside practitioners' remits
- 3c. The impacts of providing a service for LGB and/or T+ people
- 3d. Finding time
- 3e. Impacts of a reactive working environment
- 3f. Emotional impacts on practitioners
- 3g. Financial sustainability
- 3h. Credibility work

3a. Typicality of the snapshot week

Most of the participants had worked more hours than they are contracted to do during the snapshot week. Only half said the week was 'typical':

- A couple said they work more;
- A couple said they work less;
- One said they have no 'typical'.

The majority often work more hours than contracted – from many more to a small amount more. The regularity of working more hours and the number of hours worked over the contracted hours depended on a range of factors, amongst which are:

- The role the practitioner has in the organisation (those in senior roles are more likely to talk about the routine nature of working more hours than they are paid for and),
- The size of the organisation (smaller organisations are more stretched, more regularly), and
- The funding context (e.g. towards the financial year end and/or project year end is often a pressure point for projects).

Most said managers are supportive about taking time back/ taking leave. Most said it is not possible to take all the hours back they are owed. Seven of the eleven participants explain that they often build up many hours in time off in lieu (TOIL). These seven described the difficulties of taking this time back: because they are owed so much it is impossible to take it all back within their contracted time; because they have not got any free days that could release them to take TOIL; or because of the impact of taking TOIL which will leave them with more work to do:

*'I've got hours and hours and hours of TOIL, time off in lieu, which means because I work longer I never... I won't get it back cos it's about a hundred and forty hours' worth' (ID5 Manager).*

*'Accruing all this TOIL because we have to work overtime, but actually having no free days to actually take any of that TOIL' (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)*

Planning to take TOIL was mentioned as sometimes successful, but, more often than not, giving more time to the organisation than they are paid for is normalised. Three participants refer to this when they talk about everyone eating lunch at their desk, not taking very long lunch breaks, or not taking a lunch break at all. There is a tension here between most participants referring to a positive management culture that encourages people to take time back and promotes self care, and the reality of working in a sector where working more hours than are remunerated is normalised. We come back to this in the conclusion, though the implications of overworking are threaded throughout the report.

### 3b. Doing tasks outside the practitioners' remit

Only one participant said they did not do tasks outside their remit. In general, people tend to do organisational tasks that are outside their remit. Organisational tasks are usually funded by core funding. However, most of the organisations in this study have project rather than core funding. This means that organisational, infrastructure and administrative tasks, for example, fundraising, recruitment activities, covering for colleagues, duty roles (e.g. running reception, Safeguarding Lead), all have to be covered. This is often by anybody who is available or sometimes, as with the

Safeguarding Lead, by specific named senior people in the organisation. Phrases used such as ‘all hands on deck’ or ‘contributing to the organisation’ are common in people’s accounts.

There was a sense of equity in how these crucial tasks are divided up:

*‘Whoever’s sort of got capacity will just sort of pick up on them [extra tasks], but we... yeah it tends to get divvied out fairly evenly’ (ID3 Development Worker)*

*‘It gets really busy on reception duty. So a lot of that that’s not within my job remit technically, but it’s something that I have to do in order to contribute to the organisation’ (ID12 Senior LGBT Independent Domestic Violence Advocate)*

Fundraising can be a particular problem, partly when the size of the organisations means that fundraising is rarely a dedicated role. Often, fundraising is part of the role of senior managers but several participants have been drafted in to do specific bits of fundraising activities for their own project, from writing bids to collating data from their project to be used in a bid. Often the nature of the funding regime is that funding deadlines can be extremely short and require urgent responses:

*‘I did write that full bid that got sent to [name] who we’re funded by. ... [It] wasn’t meant to sit with me, but because we weren’t aware that that funding had been released we had three days till the deadline, so I had to be [all] hands on deck and do that’ (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)*

### 3c. Providing a service for LGB and/or T+ people

Regardless of whether participants work for an LGBT+ organisation, the fact that they work in a project whose focus is DA in the relationships of LGB and/or T+ people means that there is an added layer of work required that is often unpaid. This additional layer entails raising the profile of the needs of LGB and/or T+ people, to increase their visibility in mainstream discussions and forums and ensuring they are included in local and national strategic developments. It also involves networking and reach out activities aimed at LGBT events and groups to make visible the work of the sector and their services in LGBT+ communities locally and regionally. This profile raising – whether amongst potential service users or amongst practitioners, policy makers, or funders – is not one-off but part of a process of building relationships of trust in the credibility of the work of the project and in the services that are offered to victim/survivors of DA. Most of the practitioners referred to this work as being an extremely important aspect of their organisation’s remit, if not their own, and most were very willing to do more than their hours and work outside their remit in order to make it happen. There are several types of this kind of work:

#### 3c.i. LGBT+ specific events in the Calendar

There are various times in the LGBT+ calendar when sector projects work to raise their profile. This can be through LGBT History Month, during Pride, Trans Pride, on and/or around IDAHOT day:

*‘We all just pitch in so you get the history month events, you get trans remembrance, different things the way they do through the year, whoever’s got capacity will sort of pick up on it, yeah it tends to get divvied out fairly evenly’. (ID3 Development Worker)*

### 3c.ii. Mainstream events in the calendar

Other events in the calendar are also perceived as important to have a presence at:

*'But I am asked to do ... for example ... Disability Pride or something like that, I will go and, and, and be on the stand all day' (ID6 LGBT Specialist Senior Officer)*

*'A colleague had arranged to do a stall, an outreach stall for [organisation] ... at the local college. The college rang up and said oh, oh, where's the stall? And the colleague was like, 'oh my god; I hadn't got it in my diary' and was really overloaded and had double booked. So myself and another team member said, it's fine, we'll just go and do it' (ID2 Development Worker)*

### 3c.iii. Providing training and support to partner organisations

Several participants talk about their awareness of how poorly serviced LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors can be by statutory and/or third sector partners. One participant described that as part of their role they had built up a database of organisations across England and Wales where they had some confidence that if they referred anyone to them they would receive a respectful response:

*'[Q]uite often like the, you know, [in] a lot of the areas the police and ... a fair amount of other services are quite racist and homophobic. And ... also like especially butch masculine women, lesbian phobic. ... So it's how to ... work within that of, of making sure that we're creating safe spaces. So for instance, with everybody like with my database, I wanna make sure that if I'm referring someone to their organisation that I'm not referring them to a racist organisation if they're black, because otherwise I'm just repeating the trauma for them, do you know what I mean? ... so when I phone up organisations I go ... 'have you had training around working with black lesbians, as an example, or around transwomen or around transmen?'. So that I'm very much aware of who I'm referring, and if they haven't I wouldn't be referring people there'. (ID8 LGBT National Domestic Violence Caseworker)*

This participant had developed this database as part of her role. Other participants are finding time to try to manage any referrals they make of their own LGB and/or T+ service users to mainstream organisations, to ensure that the organisation is given all the information they need so that they do not have to ask questions participants do not think they would ask well:

*'So there's a lot of work, there's a lot conversations with other professionals, and I think the difficult thing that we see is already we're in a national housing crisis and [city] is being hit hard, and what we're having to do is actually really put an LGBT victim's case forward, because one, they're [other professionals] not aware of it; secondly, they don't understand it; and thirdly, they haven't got experience with working with LGBT victims of domestic abuse. So not only are we having to signpost and make those referrals, but we're actually having to have conversations with these professionals over the phone to like inform them of the severity and the risk associated with, for example a trans young person being in that accommodation. So that's kind of a... that's a lot of work that's being done just for one individual ... So I feel safe and comfortable to ask these questions, gather that information, where we know that we can make those appropriate referrals, whether I feel like... Whereas I feel LGBT people are falling between gaps when they're presenting at mainstream services and because these questions aren't being asked.'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

Some participants talk about how their conversations with partners can lead to them providing training to improve the service that LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors will get if they approach other services for help. Some participants, particularly development workers, have training as part of their remit. Others

identified the provision of training as opportunities to take, regardless of whether it is in their remit, if they think it will result in changed understanding amongst practitioners about LGBT+ DA.

Such lack of faith in partner organisations' ability to provide an appropriate response to LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors can impact on strategic decisions of a project. For example, a participant describes how changes to the local multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) resulted in a large increase in their referrals. The project was faced with how to meet the increased need with their less than adequate capacity. The participant explains their dilemma and how they resolved it:

*'We were so inundated that we had to think about having a waiting list and think about not taking cases outside of [city]. Which we were really reluctant to do, because the only other organisation that people can refer to is a... is like a [partner] organisation that also has a service for male victims of domestic abuse. However, they don't have the specialist knowledge about domestic abuse experience by gay or bisexual men, and ... we were really reluctant to do that... [but] we had to kind of stop cases coming outside of [city] for a while.'* (ID12 Senior LGBT Independent Domestic Violence Advocate)

Such are the problems that participants are having to consider: a wider context of provision that their experience tells them does not have the knowledge or expertise to respond appropriately to LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors. That this project was accepting referrals from outside their remit is another particularity of working in this sector.

#### 3c.iv. Responding beyond their geographical remit

Another aspect to being part of an LGBT+ project providing frontline or development services for LGB and/or T+ survivors of DA is the pressure placed on them to respond to service users and/or other organisations who are located outside their geographical remit and/or who do not meet the criteria for inclusion and/or partnership. Participant ID12 has already explained the predicament her project faced.

Participants implicitly refer to a moral obligation that they and their organisations feel to provide an appropriate response to anybody who turns to them for help. This can include responding to people who approach them from abroad as well as further afield within the UK from their geographical remit. The nature of the work they do and the risks that victim/survivors of DA can face mean that they are unwilling to respond by saying that they cannot provide a service:

*'[E]ven though we are based in [city], we receive referrals from all over. And even though we're not able to hold that case because our support depends on having face to face appointments, but we will still support that person to the best of our ability. So that phone call [indicated in their diary], I mean we even talked through safety planning in that phone call. So already we were doing a lot there. ...We have clients travelling from [areas in the UK], just for our face to face appointments, but then again... I've had [international countries], all these people who are contacting us for that support, and we will do our best to email or call and give that support that's needed'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

Participants are aware that LGBT+ specialist DA services are thin on the ground in the UK and this means that they find themselves working beyond their contractual remit in order to ensure everybody who approaches them will receive a response that is appropriate to their need and risk:

*'Outside of remit calls can include non-LGBT+ people who are experiencing DV. We signpost these on when we realise they're not our client group, but sometimes when it's clear the situation is quite serious and the person has taken a big step in reaching out, we may treat this call as we would any other before referring them on to a local, mainstream service.'* (ID1 Helpline and Development Worker)

The response of the last participant exemplifies the responses of most participants that the group who might approach their project for help are possibly at great risk of being harmed by perpetrators of DA. Their sensitivity to this means that, on balance, many feel they are not just able to refer on when individuals fall outside the projects' geographical or client group remits. Instead participants attempt to assess the callers' needs and ensure that they provide the necessary service, including a referral on as necessary. In this sense they provide more to the DA sector more generally than they are paid for; their professionalism is an added value.

Working in the LGBT+ DA sector requires more than only completing the job as outlined in the contract. Participants realise that a large part of their work involves advocating on behalf of LGB and/or T+ DA victim/survivors and their needs. As one of the participants explained:

*'So I think it's just maybe about like not as our day to day running, but behind all of that there's a lot of work that's being done about kind of, you know, we're activists, that's, ... what I call what we do working for LGBT services. We're not just providing support and training and consultancy, we're actually activists and campaigners for LGBT people every day, and that can be exhausting (laughs).'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

We return to the emotional toll this takes on the sector later but it is important to say here that this commitment to advocating for LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors – for being activists – is also reflected in the willingness of many to put in more hours than they are paid for or able to take back through TOIL.

### 3d. Finding time

Whilst most participants talk about often working more hours than they are contracted to as a 'normal' occurrence, they also talk about the ways in which they find the time to complete this extra work. These include:

#### 3d.i. Using travel time

Participants talk about using their travel time to and from work and/or meetings to write emails, read documents, write responses and/or reports/ make telephone calls:

*'So like on Monday night I tend to do like emailing on the train back from [Town A] back into [Town B] where I am midweek. So ... I make up time'* (ID5 Manager)

*'I can be exhausted, so I mean I can finish my day, get home and be absolutely exhausted. I do unfortunately take work home with me, so if it's not doing the work I will be thinking about work. On my walk to work and home from work I'll be planning things. I'll be trying to think of creative things that I can do with the programme. How I can problem solve. How can I deal with situations? So it can come up a lot. I mean, I have my emails on my personal phone, and I will look at them even when I'm not working'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

### 3d.ii. *Stretching the working day*

Participants talk about either working later into the day/evening or getting into work before they 'start' in order to prepare for their work. In the following excerpt, the practitioner is explaining how they arrived at work earlier than their usual start time in order to make a distinction between one of their roles which is client facing as a case worker, and another role they had as a development worker:

*'So I got in early and made sure that I was all ready for the helpline, so you know, I get a cup of coffee, I go through the emails so that I know that I'm sort of ready for that. And then I try and make sure that anything, like if I can get through some [development] stuff before I get tied up with clients... I sort of wanted to make that happen. So I actually worked for longer than I would normally on a Friday' (ID1 Helpline and Development Worker)*

In the following excerpt the participant describes how, routinely, taking preparatory work home – reading MARAC meeting papers, writing up case notes, etc. This is partly because there is not enough time to do such work during the day but also because participants like this one, are keen to ensure that they are prepared:

*'I work across [region] as well, so trying to get out to see all those clients and then when I get home [I have to] write up those case notes. Or if I'm representing at MARAC with clients I very often end up doing prep for that the night before.'* (ID6 LGBT Specialist Senior Officer)

This participant and others also talk about wanting to ensure that they can do outreach work that fits with existing LGBT+ community groups. If they meet in the evenings then participants work in the evenings. If victim/survivors arrive just before the end of a session participants will stay until the service user has been responded to adequately. Participants providing other services also talk about their willingness to be flexible about the end-times of their day if a victim/survivor has reached out for help:

*'[F]or example on Monday, I do my drop-ins over at the [local LGBT organisation], but they're open till six, so it's already above my hours. But if a client comes in for example at quarter to six, I'm not gonna be out directly after six and any follow up work that's needed from that. And sometimes I just have so much to do that I just go home and carry on just working (laughs).'* (ID6 LGBT Specialist Senior Officer)

### 3d.iii. *Working through lunch breaks*

As indicated above another way of stretching the working day is to work through and/or truncate lunchbreaks.

*'We just eat at the desk most days.'* (ID8 LGBT National Domestic Violence Caseworker)

### 3e.iv. *'Juggling' tasks*

A further thread that runs throughout people's accounts about finding time is their need to 'juggle' what they are doing. Sometimes, as in the following excerpt, it is trying to juggle between different roles held in the organisation; sometimes these different roles are on different contracts, but more often they are the result of lack of funding which means that one practitioner is responsible for several different roles:



*'I think the level of work is frustrating anyway because there's so much to it. The fact that we're a charity means that we have very little money. And with regards to my role, it really could be split up into at least three different members of staff, but obviously it's me having to take on everything with that.'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

Sometimes the juggling takes place between what has been planned for the day or week and what 'comes up' and has to be responded to:

*'And actually, I did have that [indicating an activity in their diary] planned out for, you know, a bigger chunk of time than it was, but then these immediate things came along, you know. So it looks like all these things [in the diary] are very well segmented, but actually they're not, they're all mixed in with each other ... It's the fundamentally trying to find a balance between the frontline service and that time, and all the other stuff. And that is... so the stress is constant about that is these little, little segments of time'* (ID5 Manager)

A third way that juggling takes place is more expected, but nonetheless disruptive, and drives a more reactive mode of working between the tasks that are within the remit of the practitioner, and the tasks that need to be done because the organisation does not have core funding:

*'So sometimes I will be juggling. There will be times when I'm juggling, and that can feel quite pressured, just because I'd planned to do all my, say, clients that day, but actually we need someone to answer the helpline. So ... that's when it gets more stressed out in a way.'* (ID8 LGBT National Domestic Violence Caseworker)

*'Well yeah. Yeah, like balancing the need to be reactive to many, many things and many people. And trying to drive forward a delivery plan of aspirational or, you know, like a check, you know, we have a development plan that, and lots of targets that we've set to achieve, like managing to get that done at the same time as being reactive that's a challenge.'* (ID9 Manager)

### 3e. Being Reactive

Almost all of the participants refer to the need to be flexible in order to react to changing circumstances in the work place. Being flexible to respond to unplanned workplace needs almost always has an adverse impact on planned work but also, as we have seen above, impacts the hours participants work in any day or week, and also on their sense of professional satisfaction (see below for the emotional impacts of working in this sector).

*'If something comes up and then suddenly I need to [laughs] kind of deal with that, though, you know, we're really, really not a crisis service, it's just some things are kind of just unavoidable.'* (ID4 LGBT+ Domestic Violence Advocate)

*'[B]alancing the need to be reactive to many, many things and many people. And trying to ... check, you know, we have a development plan that, and lots of targets that we've set to achieve, like managing to get that done at the same time as being reactive that's a challenge.'* (ID9 Manager)

*'If I put things in my diary, a lot of the time it doesn't actually get done when I put it in my diary, it's when I'm free, because I can have people coming to my desk asking me questions, they could be safeguarding things that come up. So it's very much a flexible working role... if I look at my diary at the beginning, in the morning, and think oh, I'm quite free there, most of the time that's the complete opposite, actually, things get filled up.'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

Participants can see the positives of being able to be flexible: for clients, colleagues and self, and for the organisation (even if there are costs, which we return to below).

### 3e.i. Clients:

*'[T]hat means that the people that need it most can be seen. Do you know what I'm saying? So ... someone was on the end of the phone like and they've got a noose around their neck or if they've ... they're, they're in the car and literally they've just... they've managed to escape and in the car, and ringing up while they're in the car, like what do I do now. We're there, do you know what I mean. We're, we're saving lives. Flexibility means that we're saving people's lives.'* (ID8 LGBT National Domestic Violence Caseworker)

*'I guess the fact that I am able to respond to clients and anyone who works in the frontline. So when you go into something often it can be like a simply, you know, a catch up session or a closing session or not expecting anything major to come out of it, but when you come out you're making three different referrals to different agencies, it means having that flexibility is really important.'* (ID6 LGBT Specialist Senior Officer)

### 3e.ii. Colleagues and self:

*'My priority after service users is [colleague]. So [colleague] has been in role for six months now and it, it's an intense role to be there. So my staff wellbeing, you know, that's a very important thing with being flexible. And to make sure that if [colleague] needs to debrief after a casework session or is struggling ... then I need to be available to be able to manage that. So that's really important.'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

*'I've never had that flexibility in a job before. So for me it's something, it's just like, 'oh wow, this is really cool' [laughs]. I mean, I could see with people that maybe different people, but with me... I feel like from that I'm really appreciated in this job.'* (ID8 LGBT National Domestic Violence Caseworker)

### 3.e.iii. The Organisation:

*'Like I know that for my manager knowing that there is some kind of backup always here, where someone who could easily be here and just jump on the helpline and do stuff, is probably quite reassuring. It means that the service is a lot more sort of stable ... But we almost never have to close, you know, we're... I don't... I cannot remember the last time that we like had to close because someone was sick and we just couldn't find cover, or someone was on holiday and we just couldn't make it work.'* (ID1 Helpline and Development Worker)

*'We do a lot of work with other organisations, so because it's not delivery, because it's that sort of work of the services, we need to match their hours. So it might be going to visit a youth group and that group runs six till eight in the evening, that's the time I need to be available to go and do it...So you just... if you couldn't do those hours you just wouldn't have that connection with that organisation.'* (ID3 Development Worker)

### 3.f. The emotional impact of working in a precarious organisation

Emotions and the emotional and physical impacts of their working conditions are threaded throughout participants' accounts. Being 'exhausted', feeling 'stressed', 'frustrated' 'worried', 'deflated' is quite common for many participants. Often these feelings are a reaction to, on the one hand, the mental agility required to 'juggle' and be responsive to changing circumstances, to find extra time, to reorganise current schedules and to (re)negotiate moving deadlines. On the other hand, feelings can also be a reaction to their realisation that they often do not finish things off in the ways they would want to, are not able to meet deadlines, or to dissatisfaction with the quality of what they have done. For example:

*'I mean, I remember days when I was so exhausted and ... there would be a weekend and Monday would come and I would still be completely deflated because the week was so exhausting. And you know, basically yeah, it's just you... I think it's just basically taking physical and mental toll. You know, the fact that you just can't really keep on top of things anymore because you're so stressed. You know, because you juggle so many different balls, you don't even know which one's in the air anymore and which one's fallen down. So you kind of, you know, you're not... once I felt I wasn't on top of things, I you know, I phys... I stopped and I said, you know, something needs to give.'* (ID1 Helpline and Development Worker)

*'I think I have frustrations around the fact that often I don't have that flexibility, or that the areas of my work that can be flexible then end up getting neglected until they can't be neglected anymore. And then they... I end up doing it often in my own time, or I have to kind of re-jiggle with my client commitments so that I make sure I can set a couple of days doing what I need to do that's not urgent, that doesn't require that flexibility.'* (ID6 LGBT Specialist Senior Officer)

*'So I think because they're such different work, like coming in with my development hat on and then finding I have to do helpline work, sometimes I might not come in emotionally in a place where I'm like ready to take calls from distressed people... And it can be frustrating if there's something where I'm like I have this day to get this thing done. And I really want to get it done cos I've got lots of other stuff next week, so I don't have flexibility for this to sort of, you know, get pushed back... Then having to do that kind of cover is... can be a real pain.'* (ID1 Helpline and Development Worker)

The emotions articulated here are the result of lack of time, having to be in reactive mode most of the time, the pressure of too often being asked to work outside the remit of their individual contracts and a lot of tasks being shared amongst too few people. Because of its nature, this work can be stressful, both for participants providing the frontline face-to-face work with victimised service users, and for participants managing these services and trying to ensure future funding for what they know to be an important service. On top of those stresses, there are the stresses of trying to achieve their project aims with not enough resources – financial or time. Sometimes the conditions of funding produce their own stresses as funders expect data about projects' work to evidence that they have met targets, can evidence service user satisfaction and that the project is providing value for money. The following participant describes what might help with relieving the pressures in their job. The service they describe is funded by many different funders (the participant makes a mistake in how many which in itself indicates the impact of how many there are) and they all require data:

*[What] would help alleviate that pressure? [Pause] ... I think the security of funding would be really helpful in that sense, in that... the monitoring [demands] being less. Cos I'm like being, you know, at the moment the helpline has got four funders, and I'm asked to respond to four different types of want. Wait a second is that right? ... Three and I'm asked to produce the*

*monitoring input to three or do three monitoring reports each quarter. It's like about a week gone, and then do all the reactive stuff. (ID9 Manager)*

Underpinning all of the participants' accounts and articulated here in ID9's account is the precarious nature of organisations' finances to which we now turn.

### 3.g. Financial Sustainability

Funding, the sustainability of organisations, and the consequences of working in a precarious sector are all issues that impact directly on participants' experiences of their working lives. For some participants whose roles were more defined, the consequences were experienced through the contracts they had. One participant had two different contracts for the two different roles they held. The first was salaried and came with entitlements to sick pay. The other was a zero hours contract whereby they were not entitled to sick pay. The following provides an insight into the ways this created an internal dialogue about the pros and cons of each generally:

*'So there's a few of us that if we are sick for a week that's... a decent chunk of income that's lost... [The] principle of the fact of the thing is that we should have that. The same for holidays, although we do accrue holiday pay. So if we take time off we don't get paid for it, but at the end of the year we get paid accrued holiday for the time that we've worked, if that makes sense?... it's something that we were sort of discussing a little bit yesterday, and the sort of the whole organisation when we were talking about Coronavirus. Cos I was kind of like, hmm, if someone comes in when they're unwell and they don't realise it and they make me sick, I won't get some of my income, whereas it's different for other people. But... what was I gonna say? But it does have some advantages ... Cos I'm like if I'm not feeling it and I don't want to come in, I'm not getting paid, so this is a very fair exchange, they're not paying for sick pay, you know. Whereas for sort of paid days I'm like am I really sick? You know, can I really justify this day off because I'm still gonna get paid for it.'* (ID1 Helpline and Development Worker)

Others talk about the impacts of funders who only provide short-term funding, make funding decisions very late, make decisions near the end-date of current contracts, fund on a rolling short-term basis, and do not fund core costs. Only one of the organisations has paid roles dedicated to fundraising. This means that fund-raising activities can creep into a variety of people's roles either directly because they are senior managers and fundraising is part of their role, or staff who get asked to engage with fundraising activities, or indirectly because they have to cover for those who are pulled into fundraising activities.

A result of having to share out the responsibility for fundraising to practitioners who do not have fundraising within their job description is individuals feeling responsible for the livelihoods of their colleagues – which takes an emotional toll on them:

*'[I]t's just that uncertainty that kills me sometimes. And it's also because...there's a couple of people in the office that are dependent upon, you know my, what I say and what I do. And I know, you know, it's not my job to make sure that they have employment, but in a way it is, or I think it...So I would say in that sense fundraising is really, really, yeah, it can be really heart breaking sometimes, in terms of just like, you know, whether what I've just said and... the phone call that I made, what... did I say the right things. You know, did I give them what they needed to, you know, to make that decision.'* (ID1 Helpline and Development Worker)

The consequences of such a precarious funding context whereby grants are given on an annual basis rather than for the longer term, where they are project based, rather than core funding, and where funding decisions are often made very close to the end of the life of the project, all cumulatively have

negative impacts on the organisations' work, and employees. Not being able to plan ahead is identified as having detrimental impacts for the work:

*'But it's again, with regards to these programmes, we're getting twelve months funding and, you know, its instability. It has an effect on staff's mental health because there's a lack of assurance on where we're gonna be in twelve months' time. I mean, with regards to me, I'm so passionate about this role, and it's not just about my job going, but it's about where those service users are gonna go anymore. Who's gonna be able to then go to those meetings when I'm not... if I'm not here [as a] voice for these people concerns? That has a really detrimental effect on my mental health. So it is... it's a constant anxiety. I mean, working in this programme, you never have stability, you're always concerned about where's that next lot of money gonna come from, and also, are there gonna be cuts?' (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)*

*'It is due to end in June. This feels insecure and whether there is going to be continuation funding (as the [current] funding is contingent on finding match funding) is not known. So essentially I need to set a cut-off point – the point where I need to accept it will not be refunded! Whilst this is the nature of short term funding, [organisation] is as compassionate around this as it can be and I know [organisation] couldn't be doing any more than it is to secure funding. If we do get continuation funding it will only be secure for another year so the short term insecurity will to some extent just continue!' (ID2 Development Worker)*

Funders can also be capricious, being able to make decisions to their own timetables rather than the organisation's. They can also make late decisions or can impose funding restraints, which can all add to the stresses an organisation and its employees have to absorb in how it operates and responds:

*'And a way funding can be is that they can suddenly provide you with a, they say a great opportunity, which is that they've got a huge underspend and they give you an enormous amount of money to spend very, very quickly. But that same sum could fund my service for ten years, you know, it's silly really' (ID9 Manager)*

*'Well, I suppose that's what it's like, isn't it? It's like, I mean, there's no security, so you just have to get on with it.... Yeah, it's very normal. And most charities it's like that, it's just you get a contract for six months. So it's like you're almost always chasing money.' (ID8 LGBT National Domestic Violence Caseworker)*

The following participant makes the point about the size of the organisation that does not have the 'backroom' infrastructure of other charitable organisations to support fundraising, recruitment and other administrative infrastructural activities:

*'So there's something about being a specialist LGBT organisation, where you know, you're not, you know you don't have a big HR team, you don't have a big finance team, you don't have a, you know, a press officer. So you're doing all of those things and doing bits of them.' (ID5 Manager)*

The last participant makes common cause with the rest of the charitable sector but other participants make the point that there is something particular about the LGBT+ DA sector that underpins its financially precariousness. The following participant hints at the extra work their organisation needs to do to achieve credibility and to get recognition for the necessity of their existence:

*'I feel like projects like ours are somehow considered 'negotiable' or 'niche' or 'innovative' when realistically we should be a pillar in our community services. We are never short on work or clients, or need but we are always short on time. ...somehow we are not guaranteed a future, and our staff are not guaranteed a future. Its honestly heart-breaking that an organisation taking on this much work, supporting this many LGBT+ people – in such an*

*original way, has to push so hard to keep going. It just makes me feel like LGBT+ specific support is an exceptional occurrence' (ID4 LGBT+ Domestic Violence Advocate)*

We turn to the issue of credibility work now.

### 3.h. Credibility Work: Making Visible the Invisible

When participants reflect on their experiences in specialist LGBT+ DA organisations, it is clear that there are challenges they have to face which requires the extra work referred to in section 3.b above and throughout this report.

The following participant comes back to the issue of credibility, pointing to the way that their organisation is treated by local partner organisations. They describe a double-undermining of them because they are both a charitable organisation and a specialist LGBT+ specific organisation:

*'A new director that was put in place [in a partner organisation] and I had to go back and kind of reiterate what we'd already said. So it was having to rebuild the partnership. And I think ... why I'm including that in what I'm saying is because I think working in the third sector and the charity sector, we sometimes get forgotten about. I think if it was a statutory service we wouldn't have experienced that, it would have been very clear that that information should have been passed over...I think it's just about struggles with being, firstly an LGBT Specialist Domestic Abuse Service, but secondly in the wider scheme of things, working for a charity and coming from a charitable organisation we do experience these barriers...So it's just... it's time consuming and exhausting really that we have to kind of go through that whole process from the start, because that handover wasn't made.'* (ID7 Domestic Abuse Coordinator)

Participant ID7 also speaks about how much time is spent explaining to the mainstream DA sector why specialist LGBT+ DA services are needed and the needs of gay, bisexual and trans men and trans women. The education and awareness raising that is required by participants' organisations is continuous. This is in part because of factors such as staff turnover and lack of mainstream institutional visibility of the needs of LGB and/or T+ survivors. Additionally, it is due to the conceptual power of the public story of DA as a problem of cisgender, heterosexual men for cisgender, heterosexual women, a problem of physical violence, and a problem of a particular presentation of cis-heteronormative gender – the big 'strong' cis heterosexual man being physically violent toward the small 'weak' cis heterosexual woman (Donovan and Hester 2014; Donovan and Barnes 2020). The following participant who is a development worker explains the need for a long-term approach to changing the culture of mainstream DA organisations:

*'[Sighs] I think I feel like obviously if you had more people, like you could do more, but in some ways I think the capacity isn't so much about time in that moment... it's about longevity. So I'm not sure any more important work would be done if we'd of had four workers for a year, because essentially organisations need the time to go on a journey. Services need to think... be able to think, oh funny, I don't know as much about LGBT lives as I thought I did. Oh, right, oh maybe we do need to change policies, or what would that look like. And then they really need time to sort of embed the thinking, and I don't think that would have been improved. ... What it would desperately need is to continue, as I think pretty much everything we've done will vanish.'* (ID2 Development Worker)

## 4. Discussion and recommendations

This section draws together the snapshot data to highlight key messages and recommendations.

### 4a. The context

The broader context within which this study has been conducted is one of austerity localism (Donovan and Durey 2018). Successive Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010 have argued that austerity has been a necessary economic policy. This has been delivered centrally through government departments making unprecedented cuts across all public sectors and public sector spending. The policy promoting localism has also insisted that decisions about local need are best made by local people, albeit with limited funds and central government regulation of the level that local authorities can set council tax. At the same time these governments have also established and embedded funding regimes that are intended to inject competition into public sector spending, including to the third sector, and open up traditional statutory and third sector areas of work to private business providers. Underpinning these developments is a neoliberal ideological position that includes an inherent distrust of state provision of services, a desire to keep money and decisions about the spending of that money in the hands of individuals through low personal taxes; and the belief that market forces and competition increase efficiency, ensure best value services and keep services on a sound business footing. The consequences of these ideologically driven political and economic policy decisions have been far-reaching and much of the literature has focussed on the impacts and implications for current, potential and disenfranchised service users (e.g. see Rushton and Donovan 2018). In this report we focus on the national LGBT+ DA sector and the professionals who work there.

### 4b. Key Findings

During the snapshot week, most participants worked longer than their paid hours, did work outside their remit and said that this was typical. The reason for this normalisation of overwork is the fragility or precariousness of the sector which is conveyed in two ways:

#### 4b.i. Economic Fragility

Economic fragility is a commonly recognised experience in publicly funded organisations. The funding regime that relies on commissioning and tendering for contracts has in-built short-termism, encouragement to competition *between* rather than partnership working *within* sectors, funding-led decisions about organisational aims and objectives, a constant need to design 'new' or 'innovative' projects rather than providing core funding for organisations' infrastructure, and a propensity to a reactive working environment. The impacts of the commissioning/tendering funding regimes on the third sector more generally has been evidenced (Clayton et al., 2015) and have relevance for the LGBT+ DA sector (Donovan and Durey 2018). Tendering processes tend to undermine localism, which was one of the rationales for the introduction of tendering: the nurturing of local knowledge in local services that are best located to meet local need. Instead, tendering processes favour large, national and/or global third or private sector organisations/corporations with dedicated infrastructural support for fundraising and consortium building who are able to dominate in this funding regime and deliver the numbers commissioners focus on in their target setting (Clayton et al., 2015). Smaller, 'local' specialist LGBT+ DA services suffer in this environment and are not able to secure recognition for the added value they bring in specialist knowledge and expertise they have built up (see Magić and Kelly 2019) and pass on in the ways outlined in this report. Consequently, they have to spend

more time seeking funding from trusts and foundations, stitching together a patchwork of contracts to realise innovative ideas and/or reflect the agenda of those funders.

The short-term nature of funding also has particular impacts for the LGBT+ DA sector. The lack of security in funding means that the depth of development work that can be done in LGBT+ communities to raise awareness of DA, the existence of specialist LGBT+ DA projects, and to build relationships of trust between them, is extremely limited. Development and outreach activities are typically not included in projects' budgets yet participants talk about how important this work is. Short-term funded projects also mean that the development work needed with the local and/or regional DA sector – statutory and specialist – is also limited. Too much time that could be spent on building relationships of trust and credibility is often diverted to issues of funding or otherwise done on top of the work that is paid for. In addition, in order to cement partnership working relationships and build capacity in partner agencies to provide an appropriate 'first response' to any LGB and/or T+ person who might approach them, the LGBT+ sector often offer training and/or awareness raising sessions to those partners. This is not always funded properly and partners are often not expected to pay for it. The sector believes it will mean that LGB and/or T+ survivors might have a better response as a result and consequently they are prepared to invest the time on top of their other paid-for activities.

#### 4b. ii. (Re)establishing the Credibility of the Sector

The second way that fragility is conveyed is through accounts given of how the credibility of the sector often has to be continuously (re-)established with funders, with partners, within statutory and third sector specialist DA organisations, as well as within LGBT+ communities. This is made all the more difficult by arguments that, because of equalities legislation, there is no need for specialist services for minoritised groups (see Donovan and Durey, 2018). The argument that 'we're all the same' – which was successful for the same-sex marriage campaign – has been persuasive, with many funders and providers who believe that existing services providing support for victim/survivors of DA are able to deliver 'the same' service to any service user. In that sense the LGBT DA sector can make common cause with specialist services for survivors who feel marginalised by generic services because of their race, age, disability and so on. There is growing evidence of the need for awareness of the differences in experiences that arise as a result of victim/survivors' intersecting identities including of gender, sexuality, race, faith, social class, citizenship status, disability, and age in the delivery of services. Magić and Kelly (2019) make the case that there is important value in providing specialist services that can develop expertise and knowledge to respond to the particular needs of LGB and/or T+ survivors (see also Donovan and Barnes 2020).

Habitually engaging in credibility work can be likened to the coming out process<sup>5</sup> that individual LGB and/or T+ people describe: it is an on-going process that, depending on the context, can feel more or less stressful, threatening, welcoming, 'easy' and/or liberating. A key reason for this credibility work is the dominant public story about DA (Donovan and Hester 2014). This public story also constructs a binaried victim/perpetrator, female/male understanding of the problem which can make it difficult for practitioners and those experiencing DA to understand and respond to violent/abusive women and/or victimised men – regardless of their sexuality; and can present real problems for trans and non-binary gendered victim/survivors about whom there is very little known. The assumption that victim/survivors of DA will present in particular ways, as weak or passive also feeds ideas about, on the one hand, who can be victimised by DA and how they might present; and on the other hand, who can be violent/abusive and how they might present (Donovan and Barnes 2020).

---

<sup>5</sup> With thanks to James Rowlands for this insight.



National and local policy about DA is based firmly on the public story and this feeds into the funding decisions that are made by governments, local authorities, charities and commissioners. Thus assumptions about heterosexual, cisgender femininity and masculinity (that can also make it difficult for heterosexual cisgender victim/survivors to get the help they need) can seriously impede LGB and/or T+ survivors seeking and receiving appropriate support. For LGB and/or T+ people the public story can have serious ramifications for their own ability to recognise and name their experiences as DA, for the response they might receive from informal and formal sources of help they approach, and the availability of appropriate services that can recognise and meet their needs in a respectful way.

The lack of visibility of LGB and/or T+ DA survivors in the national discussion about DA is a result of a combination of factors:

- The impact of the public story amongst LGB and/or T+ people themselves which prevents them coming forward to seek help from formal sources of help;
- The impact of the public story on the awareness of practitioners in statutory and third sector agencies that can prevent them from 'seeing' DA in the relationships of LGB and/or T people and/or providing an appropriate response;
- The lack of consistent monitoring data being collected about sexuality and gender identity across the statutory and specialist DA sectors.

Consequently, the LGBT+ DA sector spend significant time (re-)making the case for their work and/or raising awareness. The case also has to be regularly (re-)made that specialist LGBT+ services/practitioners are needed to ensure that LGB and/or T+ survivors will be reassured that the service they receive will be respectful, understanding and aware of the broader context in which LGB and/or T+ people live their lives.

Credibility work is continuous as new partner organisations come into existence, as existing partner organisations have staff turnover, as the public story of DA keeps being reinforced in national and local strategy, policy and practice. The sector therefore often provides, free of charge and in addition to their own remits, awareness raising and training for the mainstream, statutory and third sector providers of DA support. As such they enhance the professional development of practitioners across the general DA sector and add value in ways that are not typically measured, evaluated or financially compensated.

#### 4c. Emotional Impacts on Projects, on Individuals

A final key theme that underpins the accounts participants provide of their experiences of working in the LGBT+ DA sector is the emotional impact and implications for individuals and organisations. Participants articulate the importance of the work they do and their commitment and intentions to meet the needs of individual survivors as well as champion those needs more generally within the DA sector and to policy makers and funders. The fragility of their organisations results in too many occasions when participants are exhausted, worried, and frustrated. Of course, there are positive emotions expressed by participants such as when they are managed well, working within supportive teams, keeping victim/survivors safe and experiencing job satisfaction. A reactive working environment can be experienced positively as participants in this study explain; being flexible can provide opportunities to respond quickly to emerging, unplanned-for situations, service-user needs and funding deadlines. Most often however, working reactively results in negative consequences, such as a sense of dissatisfaction that planned tasks are left unfinished, multi-tasking that can lead

to frustration, 'juggling' and concerns about delivery quality and timeliness; and a working experience that is often very stressful. There is a danger that the negative impacts will lead to burn-out and the loss to the sector of expertise and experience that is, more generally, in short supply<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4d. Service Users

Participants were not asked questions about their perceptions of whether and how service users are impacted by a such a precarious sector. As is clear in this report, participants concerns about service user needs and the ability of participants to provide the best service they can are threaded through their accounts. Further research is needed with LGB and/or T potential and actual service users to explore their experience of help-seeking both in the LGBT DA sector and more widely. What is clear in the accounts given in this study is the commitment of participants and their organisations to mitigate against the actual and potential resource (financial, geographical) barriers that exist as far as they are able to ensure that those who reach out to them will have a respectful and professional response that is appropriate to their needs. There is a strong sense of participants shielding service users from the realities of such a precariously resourced sector which is often to the detriment of the participants themselves.

#### 4e. The impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic:

This research was conducted before the nationwide lockdown that started in March 2020. Conditions of working have become more difficult and challenging since then for a combination of reason: changes in the funding regime, the focus of national concern about domestic violence has been almost entirely on (heterosexual, cisgender) women being victimised by (heterosexual, cisgender men), the pandemic continues to exist with resultant new national and local restrictions on movement and association which have made face-face working extremely difficult; the pressures of working from home. Further research is needed to explore them.

**Recommendations:** Funders/Commissioners should take cognisance of the:

- Fragility (economically and in terms of credibility) of the LGBT+ DA sector
- Extra time/resource needed by the LGBT+ specialist DA sector to establish recognition of the credibility of their work, the needs of LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors, and the need for specialist practitioners who are trained and have expertise in LGB and/or T+ DA.
- Credibility work undertaken by the LGBT+ DA sector in providing regular and frequent awareness raising about LGBT+ DA, both within the mainstream and specialist women's DA sectors and within the wider community and LGBT+ communities. Conversely, mainstream and specialist women's DA sectors require opportunities for awareness raising and training as a process rather than as a one-off training session about LGBT+ DA. Funders/Commissioners should recognise in tender documents that this work should be costed in order to recognise the added value of this work that improves the professional development of the DA sector.
- Burden for small organisations such as those in the LGBT+ DA sector of not being able to secure core funding, and change funding streams to allow organisations to make visible, and apply for,

---

<sup>6</sup> Since the study was conducted during the two weeks in February and March we are aware of two interviewees who have left their organisation for a more permanent role elsewhere.

costs for administrative support, recruitment, writing and costing funding applications, partnership working, human resources and credibility work.

- Emotional impact of working in the LGBT+ DA sector and understand their own part in exerting negative pressures on those working in this sector. They should commit to addressing this through adopting the recommendations in this report.
- Need for longer run-in times for commissioned services and longer term funding (for three rather than one year); and the avoidance of the pressures of end-of-year underspends. This will enable staff retention, long-term strategies, security for the organisation, employees and service users.
- Importance of equalities monitoring of victim/survivors of DA across the statutory and specialist DA sectors to include sexuality and gender identities as a way of building local knowledge about need and assist strategic development of specialist provision. They should build in expectations about monitoring and service user consultation in commissioning processes.
- Need to commit to adopting and implementing the recommendations published by Galop<sup>7</sup> in their guidance for commissioners *Commissioning for inclusion: Delivering services for LGBT+ survivors of domestic abuse*.

## References

Colgan, F., Hunter, C. and McKearney, A. (2014). *'Staying Alive': The Impact of 'Austerity Cuts' on the LGBT Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in England and Wales*. London: UK TUC.

Clayton, J.; Donovan, C. and Merchant, J. (2015) '*Distancing and limited resourcefulness: Third sector service provision under austerity localism in the north east of England*' in *Urban Studies*, 53(4): 723–740.

Dagdeviren, H.; Donoghue, M. and Wearmouth, (2019). '*When rhetoric does not translate to reality: Hardship, empowerment and the third sector in austerity localism*' in *The Sociological Review*, 67(1) 143–160.

Donovan, C. and Barnes, R. (2020). *Queering Narratives of Domestic Violence and Abuse Victims and/or Perpetrators?* London: Palgrave.

Donovan, C. and Hester, M. (2014). *Domestic violence and sexuality: What's love got to do with it?* Bristol: Policy Press.

Donovan, C. and Durey, M. (2018). "'Well that would be nice, but we can't do that in the current climate.'" *Prioritising Services Under Austerity*, pp. 197-220 in P. Rushton and C. Donovan (eds.) in *Austerity Policies: Bad Ideas in Practice*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Home Office (2013). <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence>.

Mitchell, M., Beninger, K., Rahim, N. and Arthur, S. (2013). *Implications of austerity for LGBT people and services*. London: UNISON.

---

<sup>7</sup> Galop is the United Kingdom's only LGBT+ anti-violence charity <http://www.galop.org.uk/>

Jones, G., Meegan, R., Kennett, P. and Croft, J. (2015). 'The Uneven Impact of Austerity on the Voluntary and Community Sector: A Tale of Two Cities' in *Urban Studies*, 53(10): 2064-2080.

Magić, J. and Kelly, P. (2019). *Recognise and Respond: Strengthening Advocacy For LGBT+ Survivors Of Domestic Abuse*. London, UK. [http://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Galop\\_RR-v4a.pdf](http://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Galop_RR-v4a.pdf).

McRobie, H. (2013). *Austerity and Domestic Violence: Mapping the Damage*. OpenDemocracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/heather-mcrobie/austerity-and-domestic-violence-mapping-damage>).

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2018). *Women most at risk of experiencing partner abuse in England and Wales: years ending March 2015 to 2017*. London: ONS.

Rushton, P. and Donovan, C. (Eds.) (2018). *Austerity Policies: Bad Ideas in Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smith K., Flatley J., Coleman K., Osborne S., Kaiza P. and Roe S. (2010). *Homicides, firearm offences and intimate violence 2008/09* (Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales), 3rd edn. London: Home Office Statistical Bulletin.

Sanders-McDonagh, E., Neville, L. and Nolas, S-M. (2016). 'From pillar to post: understanding the victimisation of women and children who experience domestic violence in an age of austerity' in *Feminist Review* 112(1), pp. 60–76.

Taylor-Gooby, P. (2011) 'Does risk society erode welfare state solidarity?' in *Policy & Politics* 39(2): 147-161.

Towers, J. and Walby, S. (2012). *Measuring the Impact of Cuts in Public Expenditure on the Provision of Services to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls*. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/measuring-impact-cuts-public-expenditure-provision-services-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls/> [Accessed: 2 May 2020].

Safe Lives (2018). *Spotlight No.6 Free to be Safe: LGBT+ People Experiencing Domestic Abuse*. Safe Lives <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Freetobesafeweb.pdf>.

Walby S. and Towers J. (2018). 'Untangling the concept of coercive control: Theorizing domestic violent crime' in *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. Epub ahead of print 7 January 2018. DOI: 10.1177/1748895817743541.