

Responding to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans+ (LGBT+) Domestic Abuse: The History of the Movement and a Vision for its Future

7th March 2025

Celebrating 10 years of CRiVA

Session Outline

01

Welcome, House
Keeping and
Introductions

02

The Journey So Far
(morning session)

03

A Vision for the
Future (afternoon
session)

Welcome, aims and funders

- *Aim:* Consider the LGBT+ domestic abuse movement – past, present and future
- Builds on recent events including University of Westminster and ESRC Festival of science in 2025
- *Funder:* Durham Universities EDI Fund
- Coincides with LGBT+ History Month: 'Activism and Social Change'



LGBT+
History
Month

Founded by:
SCHOOLS
OUT



Aims

-  To explore and celebrate the history of the LGBT+ domestic abuse movement
-  To raise awareness about responses to LGBT+ domestic abuse in the present
-  To develop a vision for the next 20 years

House Keeping

- Fire alarm
- Self care
- Breaks
- Toilets
- Hybrid event

Our Journeys

- Professor Catherine Donovan
- Dr Kate Butterby
- Dr James Rowlands

Professor Catherine Donovan

Professor

 [ORCID profile](#)



Dr James Rowlands

Assistant Professor - Director of EDI

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 [ORCID profile](#)



Dr Kate Butterby

Postdoctoral Research Associate



**How We Got Here –
The Big Picture:
Social Change and
the Project Itself**



Setting the Context of LGBT+ Lives in Britain

Only in last 20 years LGBT+ people secured legal equalities:

- 1998 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and section 66 of the Sentencing Act 2020 protected characteristics under hate crime legislation
- 2000 (Scotland), 2003, England and Wales repeal of Section 28
- 2002 Adoption and Children Act allows same sex couples jointly adopt
- 2004 Civil Partnership
- 2004 Gender Recognition Act
- 2008 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act allows lesbian couples to enter both names on birth certificate and deletes 'the need of a child for a father'
- 2010 Equality Act
- 2014 Same Sex Marriage Act

Domestic and Sexual Violence

- 1994 Crime, Justice and Public Order Act: ‘It is an offence for a man to rape a woman or another man
- 2004 Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act includes same sex relationships – cohabiting or not – in civil measures: non-molestation and restraining orders
- 2009 Home Office definition includes the phrase: “[domestic abuse] can affect anybody, regardless of their gender or sexuality”
- 2021 Gov proposes to ban conversion therapy on basis of gender identity or sexuality – yet to be implemented
- 2016 Government Women and Equalities Committee proposes review of Gender Recognition Act
 - Leads to development of gender critical ideologies/campaigns contesting access to single-sex spaces in domestic and sexual violence sector

Setting the Scene

- Domestic abuse is a significant social concern affecting LGBT+ people.
- However, there are several challenges
- Despite increased awareness, barriers to help and support remain, including by mainstream services
- Barriers made worse because:
 - LGBT+ domestic abuse sector is small and precariously funded
 - Providers and the workers are often isolated and stretched
- Generally, domestic abuse is high on political agenda but limited focus on LGBT+ domestic abuse
- Despite increasing number of researchers working in this area, the evidence base is low
 - Particularly about minoritised groups within LGBT+ communities – intersecting identities

LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Service Provision Mapping Study (Donovan, Magić and West, 2021)

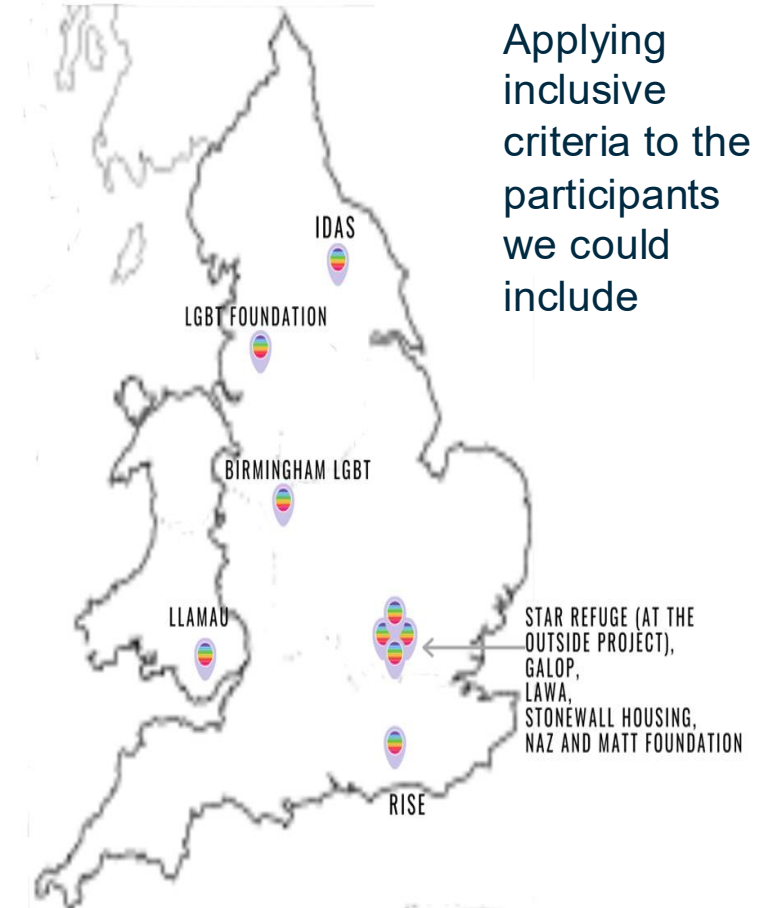
Surveyed 207 DA orgs across E&W

56 organisations replied (27%)
[six LGBT+ organisations with no domestic abuse support

37 mainstream DA services with no specialist support for LGBT+ v/s]

The final sample refers to thirteen services identifying as VAWG organisations, domestic abuse organisations, or LGBT+ organisations providing specialist domestic abuse services/support to LGB and/or T+ victim/survivors

This map is by and for LGBT DA services in England and Wales



Introducing The Timeline

- Met with 20 people who have worked across England, Scotland and Wales over the last 20 years, and asked three questions:
 - What has been their contribution to the LGBT domestic abuse sector
 - What are the milestones over the last 20 years
 - Who/ what organisations should be included in the history
- Names of some pioneers who have been named (some of whom are not with us anymore) include:
 - Caroline Jones, Michael Verriers, Debbie Gold, Peter Kelley, Mary Hull, Emma Roebuck, Bob Green, Luke Martin, Mel Metcalfe, Maari Nastari, Amy Roch
- Others we've got with us today:
 - Maria Sookias, Steph Keebles, Maraí Larasi
- The timeline is a draft, it's a work in progress and we're conscious that it is England heavy), so we will be developing it further

Maria Sookias (her/she)

Deputy Helpline Manager, National
Domestic Abuse Service - Refuge



Unity at a time of Crisis. Talking about
working in both LGBTIQ and VAWG
sectors in the late 1980s, and now



Professor Maraí Larasi (she/her/dem)

Deputy Helpline Manager, National
Domestic Abuse Service - Refuge



Fragmented recollections on a movement





Comfort Break

11.15 – 11.30

Moss (he/him)

CEO of Loving Me



Domestic abuse service run by and for
the trans+ and non binary community





domestic
abuse
commissioner



Reflections and Questions



Lunch Break

12.30 – 13.00

**Setting the Scene:
Responses to the
Morning and Some
Reflections on
Learning so Far**



What Have We Learned?

- The tenacity, determination and commitment of the sector – to keep going, meet the need, develop, learn
- The precarity of the sector – short-term funding leading to expertise drain, burnout, working for free
- The key role of individuals who drive the work, chase funding, have a vision
- These individuals are more or less seen or known about, and may be working locally, regionally, or nationally
- The individuals are vital in driving:
 - Innovative thinking and funding applications
 - Creating spaces to speak with/work in partnership with the wider domestic abuse/VAWG sector
 - Creating spaces to speak to government and other stakeholders
 - Pioneer new services, addressing new/emerging needs

What Have We Learned?

- The role of research in supporting the work, providing evidence, and underpinning strategy
- Research is also important because those working in the LGBT+ domestic abuse sector are continually having to undertake credibility work – to prove the worth of the by and for expertise/knowledge
- Lack of visibility of family abuse in the LGBT+ domestic abuse sector generally and recognition of its importance for LGBT+ survivors

Calls From the Field

- Young people – Cait Jobson (she/her), Research Associate, Durham University
- Working with those who harm in LGBT+ communities – Alex Irving (they/them), Systems Change and Practice Development Lead, The Drive Partnership
- Emerging needs and risks – Steph Keeble (she/her), Director, Birmingham LGBT

Meeting the needs of young LGBTQ+ people - visions for the future

Cait Jobson,
Research Associate
Durham University



LGBTQ+
Co-Researchers



Economic
and Social
Research Council

Current situation

- **Dominant narratives and cultural context** in the UK and more widely hostile to LGBTQ+ and YP
 - Do young LGBTQ+ people feel not just 'included' or 'accepted' but welcomed?
 - How might services be inadvertently reinforcing or silent around these narratives?
- **Absence of specialist LGBT domestic abuse service** in the NE and more broadly across the UK
 - Are LGBTQ+ young people using non-specialist services?
 - How do/can existing DA services include young LGBTQ+ people in this absence?



Current issues

- **Lack of information/ fear/ trust** - for both services and LGBTQ+ young people
- **Limited capacity** of service providers
 - leads to reactive working and priority of 'risk'
 - YP feeling their experiences are 'not bad enough'
- **Limits to collaboration**
 - increased competition between services
 - referrals/signposting perceived as 'passing the buck' by young people



Working collaboratively with young LGBTQ+ co-researchers to co-produce key findings and reimagine possible solutions

“Co-researcher reflections:

As co-researchers, we found that there are some amazing and inclusive work being done and understand the context in which working in this field is constrained. However we worry that many LGBTQ+ young people aren't aware of the support available... We are worried that some organisations might not be accessible to everyone and highlight the emotional labour for LGBTQ+ young people to find specific and inclusive support if this is not obvious from the outset.”

(Collaborative writing by the Co-researchers)

Culture and narratives so ingrained it was difficult to reimagine possible solutions - constantly wanting our project to be **'realistic' and 'achievable'**.

How can we build hope?



Policy

- **Recognition** of need and **increased investment** in domestic abuse support
- Funding must be **long-term to ensure sustainable** and strategic planning and to avoid the loss of expertise through maintaining a reliable workforce
- Prioritise the **funding of specialist** (intersectional) provision
- Proactive and **partnership working** should be encouraged within funding models, not competition.
- **Equalities monitoring** should be embedded as part of service evaluations in ways which enable reflection and action
- Policy-making should have **greater engagement with 'by and for' organisations** and the importance of their knowledge and expertise in informing policy agendas should be recognised and funded.



Practice

- Support should **not just be inclusive but welcoming** of young LGBTQ+ people and particularly trans young people within both mainstream and specialist services.
- **Shift to reaching out** to young LGBTQ+ people.
- If advertising inclusive support, inclusive responses must actually be available
- **Monitoring of demographic data** – who is (and is not) using services?
- **Space for reflective practice:** questioning how identities are categorised as deserving and not deserving of support and how these understandings influence all stages of help-seeking and help-providing
- Aim to create **‘intersectional safer and brave spaces’**
- **Collaboration** and building partnerships
- **Involve LGBTQ+ young people** and other communities in the design of services



Research

- Future research should focus on **co-constructing an intersectional definition of domestic abuse** with diverse communities
- Exploration into **the role of informal support** such as friends in supporting help-seeking processes.
- Research should **collaborate with practice** to ensure its usefulness and implementation
- The possibilities of using **PAR methodology** to foster collaboration between researchers, practitioners and service users.



Alex Irving (they/them)

Systems Change and Practice
Development Lead, The Drive Partnership



Working with those who harm in
LGBT+ communities



Steph Keeble (she/her)

Director, Birmingham LGBT



Emerging needs and risks



Break Out 1

Reflect on what you have heard and seen today, focusing on:

- Understanding and meeting needs of LGBT+ affected by domestic abuse
- Building (strategic) capacity and leadership
- Taking care of ourselves and each other
- Embedding intersectionality across our work

Break Out 2

What Are the Priorities for the Next 20 Years?

Reminder About The Timeline

- We've met with 20 people who have worked across England, Scotland and Wales over the last 20 years
- Three questions:
 - What has been their contribution to the LGBT domestic abuse sector
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Plenary Session

Plenary Session with Keynote Speakers and Calls From the Panel

**Thank you for
today**

Please keep in touch,
and remember to take
care of yourself



The End