

## **3. Identifying**

### **3.1 Value and purpose in identifying who is doing what to whom - The need to explore the situation with men presenting as victims**

Exploring and assessing the experiences, needs and risks of men presenting as victims will give practitioners a good understanding about who is a genuine victim, who is a perpetrator and who is a client in an unhappy but not domestic violence relationship. This will improve the effectiveness and safety of interventions with domestic violence.

It will help practitioners to:

- avoid the unintended consequences of mistakenly identifying someone as a perpetrator or victim
- identify more clearly the legal use of 'reasonable force' and also to use this understanding in safety planning and risk monitoring
- work more empathetically and effectively with genuine victims who have used legal violence or other forms of violent resistance; working with them to identify the risks of continuing to use violence and the possible benefits of other forms of safety; helping them to develop a safer plan
- be clear with perpetrators about the illegality and impact of their own use of violence on their partners and ex-partners
- have opportunities to discuss with perpetrators how their use of violence differs from that of their partner, particularly when their partner's use of violence is legal
- ensure their risk assessment, monitoring and management processes and procedures are well informed
- develop safety planning with adults experiencing and in some cases using violence or abuse
- make informed decisions about suitability of specific responses and services, such as advocacy for victims, referral/signposting onto perpetrator programmes etc

#### **Key learning point**

**Correct and well informed assessment of the different uses of and impacts of violence and abuse in intimate relationships will help practitioners to protect everyone in the family from further harm, including adults and children.**

### 3.2 The dangers of incorrectly identifying someone

If male victims are incorrectly identified as the perpetrator or as part of a mutually violent couple, there are consequences which will put them and others at increased risk. Similarly, if men are incorrectly identified as the victim when they are in fact the perpetrator, this will mean that their partner/ex is identified incorrectly as the perpetrator or as part of a 'mutually violent couple'.

In either case, incorrect identification is likely to have the following possible consequences:

#### **Consequences for a victim incorrectly identified as a perpetrator**

- Not taken seriously as the victim by the Police thereafter
- Losing care of children
- Becoming even more isolated
- Feeling there is no alternative but to use violence and/or weapons to protect self and/or children, increasing risk to everyone
- Increased use of alcohol, prescription drugs and other substances used as a coping strategy, which presents additional risks to self and to children, and also makes it harder for agencies to respond appropriately
- Psychological impact of not being believed – which may mean shutting down emotionally, minimising to self and others the nature and effects of the violence and thereby making it harder for agencies to respond
- Being referred to a perpetrator programme, which would be a waste of resources, inappropriate or unsafe and may increase depression or anger in the victim and increase control by the real perpetrator
- Increased risk of suicide, of abuse from perpetrator and of harm to children, as a result of the above

#### **Consequences for a perpetrator incorrectly identified as a victim**

- The perpetrator may be referred to victims' services, which is inappropriate, unsafe and a waste of resources
- The perpetrator/abuser may feel that they can do what they like to the victim without a fear of consequences and this in turn may result in an increase in severity and frequency of physical or other attacks
- The perpetrator will not have access to services which can help them change

### Consequences for the children

- Child contact or residence decisions may be unsafe or inappropriate for meeting children's needs and welfare
- Children may be confused about what is happening and why
- Children may mistrust authorities if they see the decisions as wrong or unsafe
- Children may be put in situations of risk and danger

### 3.3 Brief assessment process - gathering evidence during a short meeting or telephone call

Even in a short session on phone or in person, it is both possible and important to find out as much as possible about who is doing what to whom, with what consequences and in what context. Practitioners on the helplines and in projects for male victims have found the following questions useful:

- Can you tell me about the last time something violent or frightening happened?
- Can you tell me about the worst time there has been?
- Can you tell me what you usually do when this happens?
- Do you ever feel afraid to make certain decisions or do certain things because of what you think your partner/abuser might do?
- Have you ever been injured by your partner/family member – tell me more about that?
- Has your partner/family member ever been injured during an incident? Can you tell me more?
- Are you frightened of your partner/abuser? Are you frightened of what they might do to the children?
- What are you frightened of in relation to your situation?
- Do you think your partner is frightened of you? Have they ever said that they are frightened of you?
- What do you want to happen now?

## Respect Toolkit for work with male victims of domestic violence

To analyse the implications of what you have been told:

- Use the checklist below
- Carefully consider which of the statements has evidence to support it and which has evidence to suggest it is not the case in this client's life
- Consider the categories of clients presenting as male victims
- Now think about the information, safety planning and support the man might need according to the levels of risk he is living with or causing, using the checklist below.

If you have longer, or are working with a man over several meetings or phone calls, you may find it helpful to refer to the formal assessment process included in this toolkit in Chapter 4. This process will take a few hours and should usually be carried out over more than one session.

### **3.4 Checklist tool to use to help identify who is doing what to whom and with what consequences**

Record a tick in the 'evidence' column for all those statements for which you have some evidence and indicate in the final column if there is a lack of evidence or evidence to the contrary.

## Respect Toolkit for work with male victims of domestic violence

Evidence type	Evidence	Lack of evidence
1. Client has experienced incidents of violent or abusive behaviour from partner or other		
2. Client has been injured or needed medical attention as result of partner's behaviour		
3. Client is in fear of violence to self or child		
4. There is a pattern of coercive control – e.g. client feels controlled and can't make decisions		
5. Client is fearful of violence at separation or separation violence has already taken place		
6. Client is NOT using violence or threats		
7. Authentic descriptions of incidents, injuries, fear, control etc.		
8. Client has made some use of violence as self-defence during attack or to prevent attack from partner/ex		
9. Client has made some use of violence to protect children from partner/ex		
10. Client has made some use of violence in retaliation to violence from partner/other		
11. No injuries to client or child		
12. Client is NOT afraid of partner/other		
13. No pattern of coercive control in either direction		
14. Client's descriptions of violence from partner/ex are inauthentic		
15. Client has used violence against partner/ex and NOT as self defence or resistance		
16. Client's partner/other been injured/needed medical treatment as result of client		
17. Client's child has sustained injuries as result of something client did		
18. Client's partner/ex has NOT used violence or only in self defence		
19. Client's partner/ex is afraid of client		
20. Pattern of coercive control in which client is controlling partner		
21. Client has threatened partner/other person or child		
22. Client has used coercion/threats/violence to gain sexual access to partner/child		
23. No clear evidence or unclear patterns of evidence, such as evidence mixed throughout this list		

### 3.5 Analysis and coming to conclusions

This tool is intended to record information systematically to guide a professional's judgement, not to produce exact answers in every case. Professionals who are skilled and experienced in working with responses to intimate partner violence will be able to use their experience, clinical judgement and sense of authenticity, as well as the number of ticks in each row or section to come to a conclusion. Those without specialist skills will need to rely more on the ticks and on collecting verifiable evidence.

#### **Victim of domestic violence**

If **there is evidence** to support the statements in rows 1 – 7 **and no evidence** to support those in rows 14 – 22, this is likely to indicate that the client is the victim of domestic violence. If there are any in rows 14 – 22, check that they are not actually violent resistance or self-defence (which should be recorded in rows 8 – 10). Clarifying questions about the incidents will help to provide more information, as will other information from other sources.

#### **Perpetrator of domestic violence**

If there is evidence to support the statements in rows 14 – 22 and no evidence to support those in rows 1 – 7, this is likely to indicate that the client is the perpetrator of domestic violence.

#### **Victim who is also using or has used violent resistance**

If there is evidence that some of the statements in rows 1 – 7 are true but also some evidence that the statements in rows 8, 9 or 10 are true and evidence that the statements in rows 11 – 22 are NOT TRUE this is likely to indicate a victim who is also using or has used violent resistance.

#### **Perpetrator whose victim has used or is using violent resistance**

If there is evidence that some statements in rows 14 – 22 are true, some evidence that statements 1 and 2 are true and evidence that the statements in rows 3 – 7 are NOT TRUE it is likely that the client is a perpetrator whose victim has used or is using violent resistance.

#### **Unhappy relationship or not clear**

If there is evidence that rows 11 – 13 are true, it is possible that there is no domestic violence in this relationship but that the client is unhappy in the relationship and has identified some behaviour as abusive. If there is evidence that rows 1 – 10 are true it is possible that the client is a victim of domestic violence. However, if there is little evidence in rows 1 – 10, particularly if there is evidence that rows 1 and 2 are NOT true, this is likely not to be a victim of domestic violence. If there are also ticks in rows 14 – 22 it is likely that the client is a perpetrator. More information will be needed to be clearer about this.

### **Unclear evidence – no conclusion yet**

In some cases there will be insufficient evidence to form even a tentative conclusion. In these situations it is important not to reach a hasty or false conclusion and to record instead that there is no conclusion and carry out further assessment if possible.

### **Risk**

Professionals should complete a CAADA/DASH risk identification form for each client, using the information gathered above and if necessary supplementing this with additional questions. This should be reviewed and amended regularly, particularly at key risk points such as separation.