

Respect practice guidance:

Values, purposes and methods of identifying who is doing what to whom in intimate partner violence (IPV)

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Contents

1. [Purposes of the practice guidance](#)
2. [Glossary of terms used in the practice guidance](#)
3. [Scope of the practice guidance](#)
4. [Relevance to risk assessment processes](#)
5. [Background to and need for the practice guidance](#)
6. [Value and purposes of identifying of identifying the different uses and impacts of violence in intimate relationships](#)
7. [Dangers of incorrectly identifying someone as perpetrator or victim](#)
8. [Gender and intimate partner violence](#)
9. [Different uses or experiences of violence in intimate relationships](#)
10. [Respect matrix of use and experience of intimate partner violence](#)
11. [Impact of intimate partner violence on children](#)
12. [Controlling and unkind behaviour in non-abusive relationships](#)
13. [Thwarted entitlement identified as abuse](#)
14. [Former victims who are now perpetrators](#)
15. [Ways clients may misleadingly present or be referred to services](#)
16. [Identifying risk](#)
17. [How to assess and identify appropriate responses](#)
18. [Bibliography](#)

1. Purposes of this practice guidance

- a. To provide a clear, evidence based statement of Respect's position on the ways that perpetrators and victims of domestic violence and other adults may use violence and abusive behaviour in intimate relationships and the ways that the different contexts may affect the impact of that violence;
- b. To identify how these different ways may be presented and the value and purpose of assessing who is doing what to whom and in what context in order to promote safety and effective services for adults using or experiencing force in their relationships and for their children.
- c. To support and aid the use or development of other practice tools and guidance, such as risk assessment procedures, assessment for suitability for perpetrator programmes or support services, safety planning, etc.

2. Glossary of terms used in the position paper

Abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, financial, verbal or other actions which are part of a pattern of controlling behaviour, causing fear, injury or control in the person experiencing them and carried out habitually through assumptions of entitlement by the person using them.

Abuse (Verb): *To use improperly or to excess; to treat with cruelty or violence, especially assault sexually; to speak to in an insulting and offensive way.*

(Noun): *The improper use of something; cruel and violent treatment, especially sexual assault; insulting and offensive language.*

Oxford English Dictionary (OED)

Coercive control: patterns of behaviour from one partner in an intimate relationship against the other which have the effect of controlling the behaviour, decisions, feelings and other aspects of the life of the person against whom it is used. This may be without any current or overt threat of physical violence, yet create a context in which one person is almost constantly fearful of the actions and reactions of their partner and therefore modifying their behaviour according to the other partner's wishes, often without being explicitly told to do so, as a result of the fear they live with.

Coerce: *(verb) to persuade (an unwilling person) to do something by using force or threats. OED.*

Domestic violence: the UK government definition of domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, financial, sexual and other forms of abuse by an adult against a partner or ex-partner or other family member. It explicitly includes female genital mutilation, forced marriage and "honour" based violence. This is an incident based definition and therefore does not make any distinction between incidents used to control or frighten or causing injury or fear and those used in self defence or defence of children. It is also gender neutral.



The Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Office definitions are more explicit about gender, including recognition that the majority of victims are female. They both also use the term “domestic abuse” instead of “domestic violence”.

Force: the use of or act of using violence and threats to coerce someone, whether they are used as forms of control by an abuser/perpetrator or as forms of self defence or resistance by a victim/survivor.

Force: (Noun) *physical strength or energy as an attribute of action or movement; an influence tending to change the motion of a body or produce motion or stress in a stationary body; coercion backed by the use or threat of violence; mental or moral strength or power; a person or thing regarded as exerting power or influence; an organised body of military personnel, police or workers; the army, navy and air force. OED*
(Verb): *to make a way through or into by force; to push into a specified position using force to achieve or bring about by effort; to make someone do something against their will; to impose something on; to artificially hasten the development or maturity of a plant. OED*

Intimate partner violence (IPV): is the use of violence, threats, coercion, sexual, emotional and other abuse and other actions by an adult to their adult intimate partner or ex-partner. This is included in other definitions of domestic violence but refers only to violence in an intimate relationship, not within another family relationship. It is this context for domestic violence that is the focus of this position paper.

Self defence (“reasonable force”):

UK law allows individuals to use what is called “reasonable force” in prevention of any crime or making an arrest to:

- Defend themselves from a criminal attack;
- Prevent an attack on another person in that particular circumstance;
- Defend property against criminal attack.

The force used must be reasonable and proportionate to the threat.

The legal definition is included in as an appendix to this position paper.

Violence: physical or sexual behaviour likely to or intended to cause fear, injury or control in the person assaulted or to stop other things from happening, such as other violence. **UK law prohibits violence against another adult except in cases of reasonable force (see above).**

Violence (noun) *1 behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill. 2 strength of emotion or an unpleasant or destructive natural force. OED*

Violent resistance: The use of violence in resistance to domestic violence and abuse, which may be after many years or incidents of abuse. This is sometimes prompted by a feeling that there is no other option or that nothing or nobody will ever stop the perpetrator. This definition is partly covered by the UK law on reasonable force but only where the attack from another was imminent and only with proportionate force. It also includes violence used as a protest against the violence used against them (such as pushing the perpetrator away after being raped by them), or as a way of



Victims fighting back after an incident or many years after living with abuse may not be classed as reasonable force unless a court decided it was reasonable, given the circumstances, to use force out of fear of future attack, possibly taking into account the victim's mental health.

3. Scope of the practice guidance

The practice guidance is to aid assessment and identification of clients who are carrying out or experiencing intimate partner violence only, not other forms of domestic violence or abuse as defined by the government definition (see next section for a glossary of terms). This latter definition includes violence from any adult family member as well as from partners and ex-partners. The research and practice information is less well developed for guiding assessments of violence and abusive behaviour and other forms of force from family members other than partners and ex-partners. When such research and practice evidence becomes available Respect will update or add to this practice guidance or create a new one to cover these relationships.

4. Relevance to risk assessment processes

This document is NOT a risk assessment procedure. However, it will be useful for supporting risk assessment and management as well as other responses to clients affected by and/or using domestic violence. Risk assessment processes will be affected by changing factors as well as static ones, which may include reviewing the situation and who is being hurt by whom. This document will help to support this process but does not replace risk assessment.

Some victims may also be perpetrators of other forms of abuse or violence such as child abuse or neglect. Some perpetrators may have in the past been victims, or may also be experiencing violence from another family member. The identification in this paper as a victim or perpetrator is of intimate partner violence only.

In particular, this paper works from the understanding that when children are suffering because of living with or leaving intimate partner violence, the source of risk for that suffering is the perpetrator of that intimate partner violence. If the victim is also directly abusing the children, this may mean that they are both a victim of intimate partner violence and a perpetrator of child abuse. Each of these problems will need to be addressed in order to promote the safety of the child.

5. Background to and need for this practice guidance

In our work as practitioners, researchers and policy makers we have all come across the difficulties which are sometimes present in responding to people who are referred to us as victims or as perpetrators but who we come to believe, through our interaction with them and the information



available to us through assessments are wrongly categorised or are minimising their own use of abuse.

Practitioners carrying out assessments or group work with men who have used violence against their partners are familiar with the assertions some men make that they have been abused too. The ability to keep a clear and strong line that all abuse is unacceptable can sometimes be a difficult task if a practitioner feels that the victim has used self defence, or that the violence is a form of resistance.

Statutory and voluntary agencies increasingly report dealing with what they describe as “violent couples” or “violent families”. Child protection workers similarly come across situations in which they state they are unable to be clear about who is doing what to whom and with consequences and in what context, particularly if they have been trained to adopt a believing response to clients who present as victims. Various phrases have been developed by researchers and others and subsequently used by some practitioners, often not in the way they were intended and unsupported by research evidence, as a way of categorising families or couples where there is or is alleged to be violence from both parties, regardless of other circumstances such as history of abuse from one to the other. A stance of “no tolerance” towards violence can often obscure recognition of the use of legal and reasonable force, for example in self defence. Debates in practice and research have explored this theme in recent years yet practitioners in the mainstream and sometimes also in the specialist domestic violence sectors remain unsure of how to respond. This practice guidance helps specialist and generic practitioners to develop a clearer understanding of what might be taking place in a particular couple or family.

Research is helping to develop our understanding of how men and women experience and use intimate partner violence and we want to continue to use rigorous evidence as well as practice experience to guide our work. The highly experienced practitioner and risk assessor Calvin Bell wrote a thorough research review (2004, reproduced 2009), first placed on the website for the Men’s Advice Line (then known as MALE). This has helped Respect to develop a clear approach to our work with male victims and with women using violence, as well as work through our understanding of how to respond to situations where both adults are described as being violent. This practice guidance draws on this research review and others in order to ensure that our practice is well guided by rigorous evidence. This document is not in itself a research review. The references to other research reviews appear at the end of this document, in the Respect position statement on gender, the Respect male victims toolkit and in forthcoming Respect briefing papers.

Some victims in refuges and other specialist women’s support services report being arrested as the perpetrator when they have tried to defend themselves. Other victims report that they have been reported to the police as perpetrators when they have never used violence but may have stated their intention to leave the relationship or to report the abuser to the police. If victims feel that their own, sometimes entirely legal, use of violence is not understood and that they will be treated as perpetrators if they come into contact with agencies which are supposed to help them, they may be more likely to increase their own use of force as part of their own protection strategies.



This increases the risk to their partner, themselves and any children in the family. Practitioners need tools to be able to understand the differences in use of violence and how to respond to these.

Some victims sometimes describe themselves or are described as a perpetrator or one half of a mutually violent relationship if they have used any form of physical or non physical force at all, even legal reasonable force. This happens particularly, but not only, when they have used physical violence. They may then not be protected or even placed at further or increased risk. They also suffer guilt and labelling by other agencies that should be protecting them, if they are wrongly categorised as perpetrators or using “mutual” or “common/situational couple violence”. This paper helps practitioners to understand more about what might be going on and to find out and respond appropriately.

A range of agencies now uses whole-family or couples based responses to domestic violence, sometimes as part of a response to several problems within the family. In many cases the intervention itself may be increasing the risk of further or more serious violence, in others the intervention will be weak or ineffective without an understanding of who has done what to whom and with what consequences. In order to assess carefully the suitability for and risks of or to a family participating in conjoint intervention, practitioners will need to be able to identify the different uses and impacts of violence within the family and if possible be able to identify a perpetrator and victim. Respect is working with other agencies to develop ways of assessing suitability and risk for conjoint interventions and this paper will help to inform these assessments.

Careful monitoring and assessment of our work with male victims has helped us to develop ways of being able to gather and assess information quickly and effectively, often in a short space of time such as the length of time of a phone call to the Men’s Advice Line. This has provided us with substantial practice evidence to combine with other practice experience and research to develop systematic ways of assessing who is doing what to whom. We would like to make available to others the evidence based tools we have developed to do this.

Our work with perpetrators has helped us to identify ways of working with and gathering information from men about their use of and experiences of violence in order to be able to identify who is at risk from whom. Perpetrators often state (often truthfully) that their partner has also used violence. For practitioners to be effective at holding perpetrators to account and if possible to help them to change it is useful to understand the different contexts, meanings and legal situations for different uses of force. Practitioners working in perpetrator programmes are constantly working on ways of doing this and many of them have shared their expertise with us when feeding back on our consultation for this paper. This experience and knowledge is invaluable for other agencies that may also come into contact with perpetrators including those presenting as victims.

The preparation of publications and other resources within the Respect helplines and of the Male Victims’ Toolkit, as well as the development of the REDAMOS client information management database (©Respect 2009) have presented us with an immediate need for a well thought through organisational position on different uses of violence in intimate relationships. This paper has attempted to document the processes of assessment already present in domestic violence work. The



system of assessment was piloted with the Men's Advice Line in December 2008 – January 2009, revised and tested again for three months on the Men's Advice Line from April – June 2009. The report of this monitoring exercise is available from Respect as part of the tool kit for work with male victims. We are exploring piloting the entire procedure and guidance with a range of organisations in different settings and with different client groups at the time of writing (September 2009).

Case, risk and treatment management, group work with perpetrators and support work with victims are all safer when they are informed and underpinned by as clear an understanding as possible of who is at risk from whom and in what context. This requires an identification and if necessary re-assessment of different uses and impacts of violence in intimate relationships.

6. The purposes and values of identifying the different uses and impacts of violence in intimate relationships

The background section above describes the key motivations for Respect to develop this position paper. We hope that it helps improve the effectiveness and safety of interventions with domestic violence in the following ways:

- a. To inform practitioners' decisions about suitability for specific responses, such as perpetrator programmes or advocacy services for victims;
- b. To help practitioners, victims and others to be able to identify more clearly the legal use of "reasonable force" and also to use this understanding in safety planning and risk monitoring;
- c. To help practitioners to work more empathetically and effectively with victims who have used legal violence or other forms of violent resistance, including working with them to understand and identify the possible consequences of their own use of violence of continuing to use violence and the possible benefits of other forms of safety and protection;
- d. To help practitioners to be clear with perpetrators about illegality and impact of their own use of violence on their partners and ex-partners;
- e. To provide opportunities for practitioners to discuss with perpetrators how their use of violence differs from that of their partner, particularly but not only when their partner's use of violence is legal;
- f. To inform safety planning with adults experiencing and in some cases using violence or abuse;
- g. To inform risk assessment, monitoring and management with perpetrators, survivors and children.

In summary, correct and well informed assessment of the different uses, experiences and impacts of violence in intimate relationships will help practitioners to help to protect everyone in the family from further harm, including both or all of the adults and the children.

7. The dangers of incorrectly identifying someone as perpetrator or victim

If victims are incorrectly identified as the perpetrator or as part of a mutually violent couple, there are risks of consequences which will put them and others at increased risk. Similarly, if someone is 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:

- The victim may never be taken seriously as the victim by the Police thereafter
- The victim may lose care of children
- The victim may become even more isolated and may start to provoke or instigate assaults against the perpetrator. This will result in his/her safety being compromised.
- 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 victim may feel there is no alternative but to use violence and/or weapons to protect self and/or children, increasing risk to everyone
- The victim may increase 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 to the violence
- The victim may shut down emotionally, minimising the to self and others the nature and effects of the violence and thereby making it harder for agencies to respond
- The risk to the victim and any children is likely to increase
- There will be implications for applications or contested applications for child residence and contact
- Children’s schools and other relevant agencies may not share information with the adult wrongly identified as the perpetrator or take their concerns about the other parent seriously
- The victim may be 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
- The perpetrator may be referred to victims’ services, which would be a waste of resources and an inappropriate or unsafe response
- Increased risk of suicide for the victim

The terms “mutual violence” or “equal combatant” are also very often misleading and do not present a true and useful picture of the situation. Calvin Bell, in his thorough review of the research about male victims (Bell, 2003) concludes his review with practice implications clearly stated as follows:

“Given that our understanding of domestic violence is based upon the misuse of power to maintain control over the other then the term ‘equal combat’ and ‘equal combatants’ can confuse our analysis and cloud our ability to assess the real dynamic of the relationship and thus gain an awareness of who is exerting a pattern of control through coercive methods against the other. Implicit in our analysis is that there is no equality, thus the notion of ‘equal combatants’ and ‘mutual battering’ is erroneous. It



is incumbent on the practitioner to understand where the power lies and, as Pence states 'to determine who is doing what, to whom and with what effect'. When a man says he retaliated it is important to understand not only what he did but what was the effect on his partner." (Bell, 2004, reproduced in the Respect Male Victims Toolkit, 2009)

This review of the research on domestic violence and gender has been an important basis for the development of work with male victims in the UK, particularly for the work in Respect's Male victims' project and Men's Advice Line. This helped to prompt the need for and value of having this practice guidance, most of which has been included in the Respect toolkit for working with male victims of domestic violence (Respect, 2009).

8. Gender and intimate partner violence

Respect acknowledges and recognises that men and women can and do use violence in intimate relationships. Our work with male victims on the Men's Advice Line, our development of resources for male victims and for women who use violence, the development of our toolkit and associated training for work with male victims are all evidence of our organisational commitment to meeting the needs of both male and female victims and to working effectively and safely with both male and female perpetrators. We also recognise that some victims of either gender can also be perpetrators of child abuse or contribute to child neglect.

However, gender is a significant risk factor for:

- the onset of intimate partner violence (the majority of intimate partner violence victims are female and the majority of perpetrators male)
- the risk of homicide (the majority of domestic homicide victims are female and the majority of perpetrators male)
- the risk of injury and fear (the majority of victims of intimate partner violence causing injury and fear are female and the perpetrators male)
- the risk of ongoing intimate partner violence involving more than four incidents of physical violence (the majority of victims assaulted more than four times in their lifetime are female and the perpetrators male)
- the risk of sexual assault (the majority of rape and sexual assault victims are female and the majority of perpetrators male) and
- the risk of post separation violence (the majority of post separation violence victims are female and the majority of perpetrators male).

The national surveys of the prevalence and incidence of domestic violence in the UK and USA provide substantial evidence to support these conclusions. Research which asserts gender equivalence in intimate partner violence (see, for example Archer, 2000 for a review) has been subject to criticisms in rigorous reviews of the available research (see for example, Kimmel, 2003, Belknap and Melton, 2005; Bell, 2004; Dobash and Dobash, 1992).

Typologies of perpetrators and/or victims of intimate partner violence have introduced the concept of differentiating in understanding of underlying causes of intimate partner violence or in effective treatment or responses (see for example, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 2004; Johnson, 1995 and 2008). However, these typologies are still connected to gender. Johnson states unequivocally in his 2008 work reviewing intimate partner violence that gender is a key determining factor in the use, experience and impact of all of his categories of intimate partner violence, including the so-called “situational couple violence” (Johnson, 2008). Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart’s work on typologies of perpetrator draw heavily on very gendered risk factors such as “misogynistic beliefs” and in any case the typologies are of male perpetrators only (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994). Johnson’s work and typology research are often mistakenly misquoted as gender neutral and meaning equal violence and risk for and by men and women, which contributes to a lack of understanding of the significant variations between men’s and women’s experiences and use of intimate partner violence.

Bell identifies practice implications drawn from his review of the research as follows:

“Any service aimed at supporting male victims must be founded in an understanding that domestic violence is gender-based and not gender-neutral. That male victims are a minority and that the reduction of risk and an increase in safety is the basis of our work.” (Bell, C; 2004, reproduced in the Respect Male Victims Toolkit, 2009)

The overwhelming majority of violence in general is committed by men (Kimmel, 2002). Gender inequality is both a cause and a consequence of violence against women in public and private worlds. It also contributes to differences in options for separating from a violent partner. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UK Gender Equality Duty guidance and other policy instruments recognise that violence against women is both a cause of and a consequence of discrimination against women and gender inequality.

It would therefore be irresponsible and unsafe for us to ignore gender, indeed in many, perhaps most cases, this will be one of the most significant factors.

There are of course other factors which contribute to risk and this document is a support to, not a replacement of, well developed evidence based risk assessment processes and the regular monitoring of dynamic risk factors such as relationship status, mental health and suicide risks. Children may also be affected by legal use of reasonable force; they may also use such force themselves and may be affected by other uses of violence in their families.

This practice guidance should be read in conjunction with the Respect position statement on gender, which identifies a substantial body of research and practice evidence to demonstrate that gender is the strongest risk indicator. <http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/briefing-papers.html>

9. Different uses or experiences of violence in intimate relationships

There are no definitive categories into which everyone can fit – there will always be some exceptions. The experience of the Men’s Advice Line, the Respect Phonenumber for perpetrators and other services working with perpetrators, guided by rigorous, relevant research on the nature (see, for example, Johnson, 2008), prevalence (Kimmel, 2003; Walby, 2004), frequency and impact of domestic violence, indicates that the following categories of clients are the most common:

1. **Victim/survivor:** someone who is or has recently been experiencing violence, abuse, fear, force, threats and/coercive control from an intimate partner or ex-partner. They may need legal or practical protection, emotional help and support, advocacy and other forms of help.
2. **Perpetrator:** someone who is or has recently been using violence, abuse, fear, force, threats and/coercive control to an intimate partner or ex-partner. They are likely to be suitable for domestic violence intervention programmes for perpetrators. They are likely to have committed criminal acts and may need criminal or civil legal sanctions to enforce changes in behaviour or attendance at a programme or separation from their partner.
3. **Victim who has used violence:** a victim, as defined above in (1), who has used or is using force occasionally for defending themselves or their children or as a means of resistance against or expressing frustration with the patterns of coercive control and fear being used against them or as a way of preventing a likely attack on them or their children. In many of these situations the violence they use will be legal as it is reasonable force to prevent crime. They may need legal and other help and also consideration of how their own use of violence may be or become illegal or unsafe. They will also need safety planning which incorporates an understanding of their own use of violence and strategies for reducing this if possible. Some former victims also start to use violence in the next relationship they have after leaving a perpetrator as a defensive coping strategy for difficulties in relationships, or out of fear of future violence. Others use violence as a means of revenge when the perpetrator becomes old or infirm. In these cases they may be the only person using violence at that time and may be identified as perpetrators. Whilst their use of violence is not legal, it would usually not be appropriate to refer them to the same services as perpetrators. They may need specialist services to intervene with their use of violence with recognition of how their past experiences have combined with other factors to bring this about.
4. **Perpetrator whose victim has used some violence:** perpetrator, as defined above in (2), whose victim has used or is using force to defend themselves or their children or as a means of defence from, prevention of, resistance against or frustration with the patterns of coercive control and fear the client is using against them.

A diagrammatic representation of these categories appears on the next page

10. Respect matrix of use and experience of intimate partner violence (©Respect)

This diagram provides a visual version of the descriptions above.

	<i>IN coercive control OVER partner/ex, because of own use of violence, abuse, controlling behaviour, threats etc</i>	<i>UNDER coercive control FROM partner/ex use of violence, abuse, controlling behaviour, threats etc</i>
	↓	↓
<i>Uses or has used physical or non physical force against partner/ex</i> →	Perpetrator of intimate partner violence	Victim (IPV) who has used some form of violent resistance
<i>Experienced or experiencing physical or non physical force from partner/ex</i> →	Perpetrator (IPV) whose victim has used some form of violent resistance	Victim of intimate partner violence

In some cases it will be difficult to tell who is doing what to whom, at least initially and sometimes indefinitely. This tool kit provides guidance and procedures for assessing who is doing what to whom and then for using this information to identify what might be appropriate responses.

11. Impact of intimate partner violence on children

Children and young people have a range of responses to their parents' use of violence or their lack of use of violence. Some are extremely distressed by any violence. Others develop coping strategies which lead them to self-harm or hide away from the violence or stay away from home. Some express frustration that the other parent did not use self defence.

Whether the violence they witness was a perpetrator abusing the victim or the victim using self defence, they may suffer significant harm as a result. Working to protect them from this harm means working to end all of the violence. Protecting the victim from violence and providing them with adequate safety strategies would reduce the need for them to use legal self defence or illegal violence as resistance. Treating the victim as a perpetrator would reduce their protection and would therefore not reduce the violence to them, which would exacerbate the risks for children. Both

forms of violence need to be addressed in ways which are likely to protect all those involved. Identifying who is the perpetrator and who is the victim is an integral part of this process.

It is important to remember that someone who is a victim of intimate partner violence may also be a perpetrator of another form of abuse, such as abuse or neglect of a child. The abusive effects of living with domestic violence on children should, however, be clearly identified as the responsibility of the person who chooses to use this violence. Where victims have used violent resistance or self defence, this may be legal and also understandable particularly if they feel that they have not been protected by other agencies and cannot ask for help. However, using violence is a risky strategy for victims and is also likely to cause distress or harm to children. Whilst the response to victims using violence should show understanding of their situation, it is important to be clear with them about the risks of doing this for themselves and for their children and to find alternatives.

12. Controlling and unkind behaviour in non-abusive relationships

No adult relationship is entirely free from actions which could be classified as potentially controlling or abusive. This happens particularly but not only at times of relationship breakdown. Practitioners need to be guided by clear understanding that the distinction between an unhappy relationship and an abusive one is the presence of absence or fear and coercive control.

One adult may call their partner or ex-partner names or use guilt or manipulation against the other. If there is no violence, or threats or history of violence or threats, it is very unlikely that this will result in a pattern of coercive control. The other partner may be unhappy or distressed but they will have the choice to respond as they wish without fear of violence or abuse as a consequence. In a relationship where there is intimate partner violence and a pattern of coercive control, when one partner uses verbal abuse or controlling behaviour, the other partner will often not feel able to respond or consider ending the relationship without fearing for their safety or that of their children or other violent or abusive consequences.

An adult may be experiencing other difficulties in their relationship which may include the possibility of the relationship ending. They may be very fearful of that future without the other person. They may be bitter or angry about the relationship ending. This sometimes means that they present to specialist services or are sometimes identified as victims of domestic violence. It is important for practitioners to identify when there is a lack of fear, injury and control as well as when there is, in order to ensure that the appropriate responses are provided. For example, someone in an unhappy relationship may benefit more from practical help or individual counselling than a specialist domestic violence service.

13. Thwarted entitlement identified as abuse

Some callers to the Men's Advice Line describe themselves as abused and provide as examples of the abuse behaviours which are failures on the part of their partner to meet their gender based expectations. Recent calls within one week included a man who identified his wife's failure to make dinner as abusive, another who felt that his partner's insistence on drinking only orange juice that was not from concentrate as "torturing me" and others with a similar sense of injustice based on their partner's failure to comply with their expectations. It is important to remember that an individual's insistence that they are abused does not in itself provide evidence that they are and that in some cases it may be a sense of thwarted entitlement that leads them to this conclusion, similar to the sense of thwarted entitlement which leads some others to use violence. If there is no violence or threats, such behaviour could not usually be sensibly described as abusive by an agency whose job is to protect and support victims of domestic violence.

14. Former victims who are now perpetrators

Some former victims also start to use violence in the next relationship they have after leaving a perpetrator as a defensive coping strategy for difficulties in relationships, or out of fear of future violence. Others use violence as a means of revenge when the perpetrator becomes old infirm. In these cases they may be the only person using violence at that time and may be identified as perpetrators. Whilst their use of violence is not legal, it would not be appropriate to refer them to the same services as others and they may need specialist services to intervene with their use of violence with recognition of how their past experiences have combined with other factors to bring this about. Practitioners working with both adults may want to ensure that this support is provided for former victims who are now using violence. Practitioners should still be clear with the current victim that this is not acceptable or legal behaviour and that they don't deserve this.

15. Ways clients may misleadingly present or be referred to services

Clients may well be referred to or present at a service, either a generic service or a specialist domestic violence service, in a variety of other ways. It is important as a worker to be aware that anyone, male or female, may present as victim, perpetrator or as being in a relationship in which both are violent.

Based on our experience with male victims and with perpetrators we have identified 3 key ways that someone may be wrongly identified – or may wrongly present – as a victim or perpetrator:

Someone or a couple in a relationship where both are using or have used violence

When referred to or presenting at a service, men and women are sometimes described or describe themselves as both being violent. Professionals and the clients may well infer from this that they are both **equally** violent or with equal consequences for risk. This often takes place when one or both clients are also experiencing compounding problems such as substance misuse or mental ill-health.

It is very rare to find someone who is both using and experiencing violence and abuse of equal severity, risk and consequences to and from an intimate partner or ex-partner. The situation is often complex. Victims may well be using legal reasonable force but nevertheless present a higher risk of injuring their abusive partner than vice versa. Perpetrators may be escalating their own use of violence, which could be leading to an increased risk that the victim will retaliate.

If the man is presenting or being described as being in a mutually violent relationship, this indicates the need for more detailed assessment, using if possible a range of sources of information from the client, their partner or other agency working with their partner, other agencies and professional judgement if the worker is skilled and experienced at responding to domestic violence.

Perpetrator who is actually a victim

Sometimes, if the victim has used violence in resistance, self defence, retaliation or to defend children or others they may be wrongly identified – or wrongly present – as a perpetrator. This mis-identification can be further exacerbated if the person concerned does not want to identify themselves as a victim.

Victim who is actually a perpetrator

Sometimes, if the person using intimate partner violence has experienced force used by their victim as self defence, defence of children, resistance or retaliation they may be wrongly identified – or wrongly present – as a victim. In these cases they may have used this incident or incidents to distract attention away from their own abusive behaviour, or other agencies may have identified them as “both as bad as each other”.

16. Identifying risk

Victims and children are clearly at risk from the perpetrator who is using violence and the perpetrator is responsible for this risk. The CAADA risk identification tool “Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based violence” (DASH) will help practitioners to evaluate the risk to the victim and if necessary to refer him to a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

http://www.caada.org.uk/practitioner_resources/riskresources.htm Respect has also prepared guidance for practitioners working with perpetrators on how to use this tool in perpetrator work (Respect website).

17. How to assess and identify appropriate responses

Practitioners will need to consider evidence from, if possible, both parties and any referring agency when assessing how the situation fits into the matrix. This could be by using standard assessment forms for domestic violence services, such as many practitioners are already using. Respect staff have developed forms to assist this process, available in the male victims’ toolkit.

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