



MANUAL FOR WORKING WITH LESBIAN WOMEN EXERTING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN THEIR PARTNERSHIPS

0 INTRODUCTION

Aim of the project is to provide a manual focussing on specifics of working with lesbian women exerting abuse and violence in their partnerships. Looking at the diversity of women and enlightening specific circumstances of their lives helps to provide resources those women need. Those circumstances are owed to a society which still dismisses same-sex lifestyles. Thus lesbian women are still refused access to quite a few social resources.

In cases of domestic violence and abuse in lesbian partnerships the impact of social structures 'blinding out' same-sex lifestyles on victims and perpetrators becomes obvious: There are almost no social resources providing support needed by victims and perpetrators. 'Domestic violence' generally is defined as "physical, psychological and sexual violence to women by men". This definition ignores the possibility of domestic violence in same-sex partnerships. Consequently, neither victims nor perpetrators get services needed. Victims get re-victimized and perpetrators are in no need to stop their violent and abusive behaviour.

The discussion about domestic violence in lesbian partnerships seems to touch on a taboo in society: the idea of women as exerting violence and abuse. This idea breaks with traditional myths of women as being motherly, caring and self-sacrificing. Further, it questions the general assumption of women as victims and men as perpetrators. Consequently, mainstream discourses about domestic violence refuse any debates about domestic violence in same-sex partnerships and stigmatize it as a negligible problem of a social minority.

Finally, gay and lesbian subcultures themselves stigmatize debates about domestic violence since as a marginalized group they are in constant fear of "washing dirty laundry" in a deprecating society and thus promoting prejudices against lesbians and gays.

Nevertheless we are convinced that domestic violence and abuse in lesbian and gay couples needs to be named and measures of prevention and intervention taken. Lesbian victims need

appropriate support to end their suffering and lesbian perpetrators need to take full responsibility for their actions.

This manual enlightens the diversity of women and hopefully will encourage professionals and volunteers - especially within the lesbian and gay community - to provide needed services.

Broken Rainbow e.V

The national association of lesbian, lesbian-gay, and transgender anti-violence projects was founded in October 2002 and is registered, non-profit association. The head office is in Berlin, Germany.

Broken Rainbow e.V. aims to work effectively against violence and discrimination towards lesbian women and increasingly represents the interests of lesbian women on a national and European level. We are also taking first steps in addressing the issue of violence and/or discrimination against transgender persons. We perceive lesbian lifestyles as one of the many lifestyles that may be freely chosen. It is just as necessary to fight against the discrimination of lesbians as it is to fight against other forms of discrimination. We promote a 'politics of diversity' in which lesbian interests are of equal importance to those of other social groups effected by violence and discrimination, and whose discrimination is anchored in various areas of political, social, cultural and economic life.

Since 2002 we further run a social science project in Frankfurt/M, Germany which does research on hate crime and domestic violence in lesbian partnerships. Head of project is Dr. Constance Ohms.

Antidiscrimination department of Vienna

The Anti-Discrimination Unit for Same-Sex Lifestyles of Vienna was implemented in 1998 and is part of the City Councillors Office for Integration, Women's Issues, Consumer Protection and Personnel. Two officials and one assistant are working in the unit.

Main tasks are:

- Making suggestions to local government and local administration of Vienna about how to minimize discrimination of LGBT people according to legal situation. Most laws concerning LGBT rights are national laws. Federal provinces like Vienna are authorized to enact laws only within a very limited framework.
- Provide counselling for people experiencing discrimination on grounds of sexual identity or sexual orientation. A main issue in counselling is discrimination at the workplace.

- Education
Workshops about the legal and social situation of LGBT people are held for employees of the municipality, for students, social workers, nursing schools, apprentices of the City of Vienna and for various organizations dealing with equal treatment and diversity. The workshops aim at raising (political) awareness and encouraging discussions about issues like antidiscrimination legislation, transgender people at the workplace lesbian migrants etc..
- Networking and Cooperation
To achieve the aim of ending discrimination of LGBTs, the Anti-discrimination Unit of Vienna stays in close contact with NGOs, municipal departments and other relevant organizations. The unit provides information and supports international projects in being cooperation partner.

Lesbian Counselling Service Berlin

For more than 26 years the Lesbian Counselling Service Berlin provides in Berlin, Germany a psycho-social counselling service and an anti-violence project for lesbian women and transgender people. The anti-violence project supports lesbian women and transgenders who are affected by violence in vicinity, social environment or in partnership. The service offers specific counselling for victims and perpetrators of violence, treatment and outpatient treatment of addiction, outpatient aftercare of addiction, case management, events, lectures and training in those fields of activities.

Magenta, Brussels

Magenta is an association of professionals, specialized in LGBT health. We provide for LGBT people and their loved ones (family, friends...) information, help and support, therapeutic and psychosocial services. For professionals in the general field, we offer trainings, supervision and consultancy. We also take part at national and international researches dealing with professionals in LGBT health services. Our expertise on violence in same-sex relationships is recognised and we take part in Belgian networks and programs on prevention of violence in affective and sexual relationships.

Women's issues department Frankfurt/Main, Germany

Frankfurt is home to some 330,000 women – one third of whom are migrants. Women thus make up some 51 per cent of the City's 650,000-strong population. Since as early as 1989, the City Council section responsible for women's issues has actively lobbied for equal opportunities for the women of Frankfurt – not just in the labour market, but in society as a whole. We are proud to say that our work and efforts have paid off. Having achieved much on behalf of women in Frankfurt, we are optimistic about the future and all that remains to be done.

Main Focus

- Labour market policy, initial technical and vocational training, and education
- Combating violence towards women
- Girls' policy, culture and sport
- Urban development and planning

Our work is based on two underlying strategies: women's promotion and gender mainstreaming.

Achievements and Aims

- Develops concepts and measures for systematic gender equality policy
- Designs and finances projects for greater equality
- Acts as a service provider for women and girls, and establishes contacts with advisory services and public agencies
- Promotes intercultural understanding among women
- Informs and advises local people
- Acts as a cooperation and network partner for public agencies, organisations and institutions –both regional and supraregional
- Aims to combat injustice, discrimination and human degradation

Metropolitan Police Service, London

The Metropolitan Police Service has its headquarters in New Scotland Yard in London. It is by far the largest of the police services that operate in greater London.

The Metropolitan Police Service employs approximately 31,000 officers, 13,500 police staff, 400 traffic wardens and 2,000 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and, since the realignment of police boundaries in April 2000, it covers an area of 620 square miles and a population of 7.2million.

It covers the 32 boroughs in the greater London area, but does not cover the City of London (as this is covered by the City of London Police, a separate police organisation).

For further information: <http://www.met.police.uk/>

The Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate

The purpose of the Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate is to:

Drive improvements in the quality of policing for all Londoners by

- responding to and meeting the needs of all colleagues and communities
- promoting diversity to improve performance
- building the trust, confidence and satisfaction of those we serve and those with whom we work.

It exists to support the transformation of the MPS into a citizen focused service. The six strands of diversity that the Directorate focuses on in particular are:

- age
- disability
- faith/ belief
- gender
- race
- sexual orientation

Citizen focus policing is a way of working in which an in-depth understanding of the needs, experience and expectations of individuals and local communities is routinely reflected in decision-making, service delivery and practice.

For further information: <http://www.met.police.uk/dcf/index.htm>

Performance, Development and Monitoring Unit (PDMU)

The PDMU is the central point for gathering, co-ordinating, monitoring, developing and analysing diversity and citizen focus related information (on both service delivery and employment practices) to identify emerging issues and good practice. It combines social research skills with performance and crime analytical skills.

It is responsible for presenting an overview of this information at quarterly Diversity Board meetings. In addition, the PDMU is responsible for developing links with internal and external partners/stakeholders in performance, employment and service-delivery areas that overlap with the strategic direction of the Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate. A further responsibility of the PDMU is to conduct longer-term social research projects.

For further information: <http://www.met.police.uk/dcf/pdmu.htm>