



Respect toolkit

2nd edition January 2013

**Work with
male victims of
domestic violence**

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Foreword – Jo Todd, Respect CEO

Work with male victims has increased rapidly over the last three years since we published the first edition of this toolkit. There are now more male victims' workers in local domestic violence projects, including some specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). Research has also developed, as has the depth of information our Helpline workers record about each caller to the Men's Advice Line. As a result, we are able to update this toolkit with the latest information and lessons about how to work most effectively with male victims.

Our training course on male victims continues to be our most popular course for a range of reasons. Some people come on the course because they are expanding an existing domestic violence service, some because they work in frontline services (such as housing workers, police officers, health professionals and social workers) who want to be able to respond most effectively to male victims. Feedback from the training course participants has informed both the training course and this second edition of the toolkit.

One of the most common questions we are asked is why we provide separate services, resources and training courses on male victims – some people initially assume that the needs and ways of presenting to agencies are the same for male as for female victims. There are also persistent ideas that men won't want to talk about violence they are experiencing, or that they won't seek help. We believe we have learnt a great deal about male victims and about other men who commonly present to helplines and projects for male victims – and one of the lessons we have learnt is that it isn't all the same. Men seem to have different experiences from women, gay men seem to have different experiences from heterosexual men. Yes, some things are the same – and the law is both available to and used by male victims as well as female. But it would be unfair on male victims if we ignore the key differences in both their experiences and needs.

We recommend the use of assessment processes for male victims and also for female victims. This allows practitioners to identify what is going on, to provide the most appropriate help and to make best use of scarce resources in projects. These assessment processes are sometimes referred to as screening procedures. We prefer to use the descriptive term 'assessment process' as it is clearer. The term 'screening procedure' is also sometimes taken to mean a way of marking out solely whether an individual is a victim or not a victim, rather than assessing what can sometimes be a complex situation with multiple needs.

We also know, from our work with perpetrators of domestic violence, that many, perhaps most, sometimes identify themselves as a victim. In some cases they describe themselves as a victim of their partner's retaliatory or defensive violence, which can indeed be dangerous for both adults and children and needs to be addressed with victims to find alternative strategies, without providing perpetrators with an excuse or justification for their own use of violence. Others identify themselves as a victim of their partner's refusal to meet their

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expectations and demands. That's another key reason why we recommend assessment – because perpetrators often present to male victims' services and we want to make sure we are giving them the most appropriate advice, for the sake of everyone's safety.

We are very proud that we have helped several thousand male victims on the Men's Advice Line and to be able to share what we have learnt with readers of this toolkit and those who come on our training course. Please do share the resources and let us know what you think – feedback is always welcome.

Jo Todd, Respect CEO

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Staff working with male and female victims across the UK have contributed through their participation in training, their feedback on the first edition of the toolkit and their contact with us.

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1. Introduction

This is the second edition of the Respect toolkit for work with male victims of domestic violence.

Why develop a toolkit for work with male victims?

The purpose of this toolkit is primarily to support and inform work with male victims of domestic violence, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. This work may be delivered via a helpline, in a service dedicated to male victims of domestic violence or in any other setting where men might present as domestic violence victims looking for information, advice and support.

In order to do this as effectively as possible, the toolkit has also included information from research, policy and practice experience with a wide range of men presenting as male victims at specialist and non-specialist services and men who have not sought help from anyone. It therefore includes guidance for how to work with any man presenting in this way, including genuine male victims, those in unhappy but not abusive relationships and those who are actually perpetrators of domestic violence.

The first edition was developed from the work of the Respect Male Victims' Development Worker in 2007-8 in two London Boroughs, from the work of the helpline workers on the Men's Advice Line particularly from the expertise and analysis of calls taken by the helpline in 2008-9. It was also informed by the developing body of research about male victims of domestic violence and about how gender and intimate partner violence are connected.

Development of the second edition of the toolkit

Since the publication of first edition, Respect trainers and staff have delivered training on work with male victims of domestic violence across the country to hundreds of frontline workers – and the toolkit has formed the basis of this work. We have gathered feedback from people who attended those training courses and are working with male victims. This has helped us to improve and develop this second edition.

The second edition of the toolkit features new case studies that illustrate the different client categories; an updated analysis of calls to the Men's Advice Line based on 5,214 callers in 2010 and 2011; and a new section looking at quantitative and qualitative differences between heterosexual and gay men in their reports of sexual abuse experiences. We have also incorporated the screening and assessment forms in the main body of the text (it was in an appendix in the first edition) following the brief assessment process section, hoping that frontline workers and organisations supporting male victims will use and adapt whatever is relevant to their particular service. The idea of 'Identify-Assess-Respond' in relation to work with male victim runs throughout the toolkit and it aims to provide a step-by-step approach to supporting male victims. Finally, the Research chapter has also been updated to include research and findings after 2009.