

Executive summary- We Matter Too

The work of several organisations including SafeLives and Women's Aid has highlighted that domestic abuse services are less effective in reaching some sections of the population. The SafeLives Spotlights report, 'Safe Young Lives' highlights that of all those experiencing domestic abuse, young people aged 16-20 and 21-24 years face the highest risks¹. Disabled people also face far higher risks of domestic abuse compared to nondisabled people^{2,3}. The Nottinghamshire Independent Domestic Abuse Service found that there were very high levels of family members with a disability within the families they supported⁴. In addition, Galop in their 2018 study, 'LGBT+ people's experiences of domestic abuse', found that 55% of participants self-identified as having a disability⁵.

This research project, 'We Matter Too', specifically explores the experiences and needs of those who are both young and disabled experiencing domestic abuse in order to address the gap in our understanding of the specific needs of this group.

Funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales, the 'We Matter Too' project has undertaken; indepth interviews and discussion groups with disabled young people aged 17-30, and interviewed 37 practitioners, including managers and those in leadership roles in national organisations and from a range of statutory and voluntary services across children's and adult's social care, health, education and criminal justice. This includes services that address domestic abuse and those working with disabled children and young people.

The project aimed to:

- Understand more about disabled young people's experience of support and intervention
- Explore what disabled young people want from domestic abuse services and support agencies
- Understand from professionals what works to support disabled children, young people and their

families and what the barriers to delivering this support are.

The overall objective of the project was to develop the evidence base and shine a light on the needs of a group of young people less likely to be noticed, asked, heard or able to tell about abuse that goes on often behind closed doors. It aims to support practice development, inform service design and delivery at management levels and seek the development of policy and guidance at strategic levels.

An additional outcome of the project was to develop and pilot training materials in order to directly improve understanding and practice responses by professionals.

References

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<http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe%20Young%20Lives%20web.pdf>
- 2- Thiara. R., Hague. G., and Mullender. A (2011) Losing out on both counts: disabled women and domestic violence. *Disability and Society*, 26, 6, pp757-771.
- 3- Public Health England (2015) Disability and Domestic Abuse: Risks, Impacts and Response. Public Health England. London.
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- 4- Nottingham Independent Domestic Abuse Services (2017) Together: Research into the Awareness and Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse amongst Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. NIDAS, Mansfield.
- 5- Magic, J. & Kelley, P. (2018). LGBT+ people's experiences of domestic abuse: a report on Galop's domestic abuse advocacy service. Galop, London.
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