

2018

# Beyond Abuse: LGBT accommodation- based domestic abuse services

**LONDON FINDINGS**

**June 2017 - October 2018**



“Without your support and your help I would have nothing. You are a saviour. You have given me a safe space and what you have done is beyond words.”

“I had nothing. No security, no family, nothing. I had potential but I couldn't rebuild my life without a roof over my head. I am so grateful.”

# Contents

<b>Overview</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Referrals and support</b>	<b>4</b>
Number of referrals	4
Location of referrals	4
Origin of referrals	5
Housing status	6
Support offered	5
Length of support	7
Casework outcomes	7
WMWBs scores	9
<b>Demographics</b>	<b>11</b>
Gender identity	11
Sexual orientation	11
Age	12
Ethnicity	12
Religion	13
Disability	14
Employment status	14
Relationship status	14
Other demographics	14
Tri-borough engagement	14
<b>Case studies</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Peer support review</b>	<b>20</b>
Introduction and methodology	20
Participants	21
Results	22
Testimonials	23
Findings	23

## Overview

The Beyond Abuse project was a national bid, delivered in partnership with Brighton Rise in Brighton and LGBT Foundation in Manchester. As part of the Beyond Abuse project, Stonewall Housing provided a support service within Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. Stonewall Housing recruited for three part-time roles, which included a Domestic Abuse Caseworker who offered crisis intervention, housing advice and advocacy, a Tenancy Sustainment Officer who provided floating support to settle clients into their new homes and a Peer Support Worker who delivered 1:1 emotional and therapeutic sessions to clients to help them with their journey.

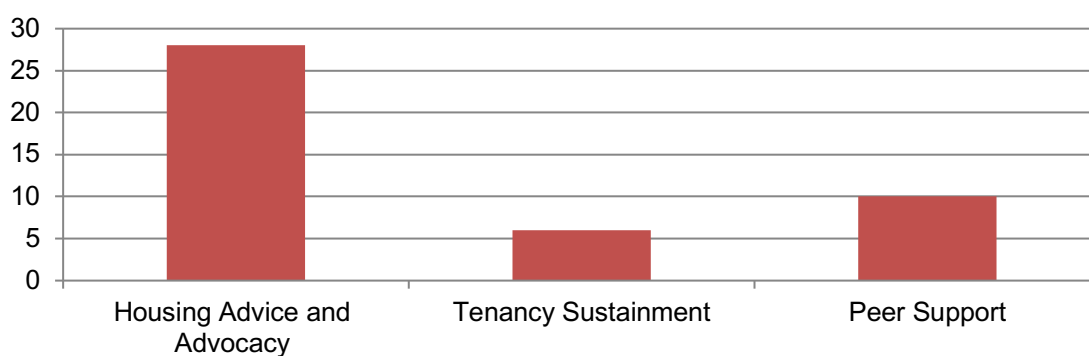
The London project delivered Domestic Abuse Casework and Tenancy Sustainment between June 2017 and October 2018 and Peer support between June 2017 and June 2018. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure accommodation in London during this time period and therefore, the London project was delivered as a domestic abuse support service.

## Referrals

### Number of referrals

Stonewall Housing chose not to advertise the project as we had concerns that the demand for the service would be too high for the capacity of the team. In total, Stonewall Housing's Beyond Abuse project received 44 referrals between June 2017 and October 2018. Ten of the referrals were for Peer Support and due to the shorter time period and differences in the nature of this service, there is a separate report which highlights the Peer Support findings (see attached). This following report is based on the 34 referrals to our Domestic Abuse Caseworker and Tenancy Sustainment Officer. Below is a breakdown of the number of people who accessed each service.

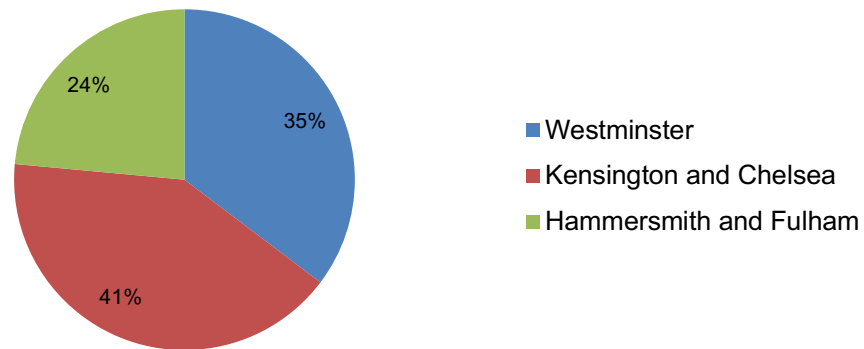
**Number of people who accessed each service**



### Location of referrals

Stonewall Housing were funded to provide a support service within Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. Below is a breakdown of the location of the clients at the point of referral. The majority of our referrals were from Hammersmith & Fulham.

## Location of referrals within the Tri-Borough



## Origin of referrals

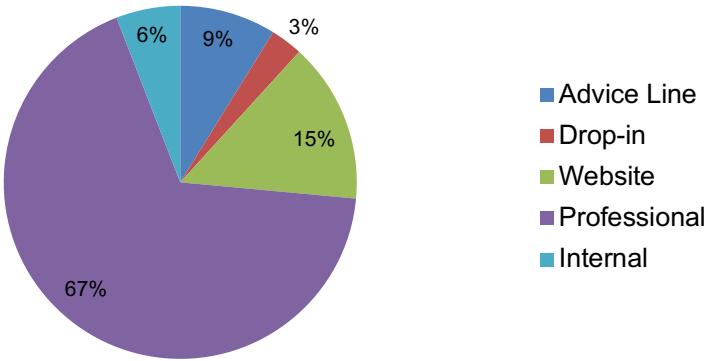
Referrals to the project came from both Stonewall Housing's internal services and external professional agencies. Stonewall Housing run an Advice Line every weekday morning, two drop-in services a week and we have an online form where clients self-refer for housing advice and support. 33% of referrals came through these internal referral routes.

Over half of our referrals came from professional agencies, which include statutory services such as local authorities, probation, police and social services and voluntary agencies, such as other homeless charities and LGBT support groups.

Stonewall Housing have a long-term partnership with Galop, a London-based LGBT anti-violence charity. As part of this we deliver the Domestic Abuse Partnership, along with London Friend, a London-based LGBT wellbeing charity and Switchboard, the national LGBT+ helpline. This partnership meant that the majority of the professional referrals came from Galop's Domestic Abuse Casework team.

See graph on next page for a breakdown of how clients were referred to the service.

### Origin of Referral

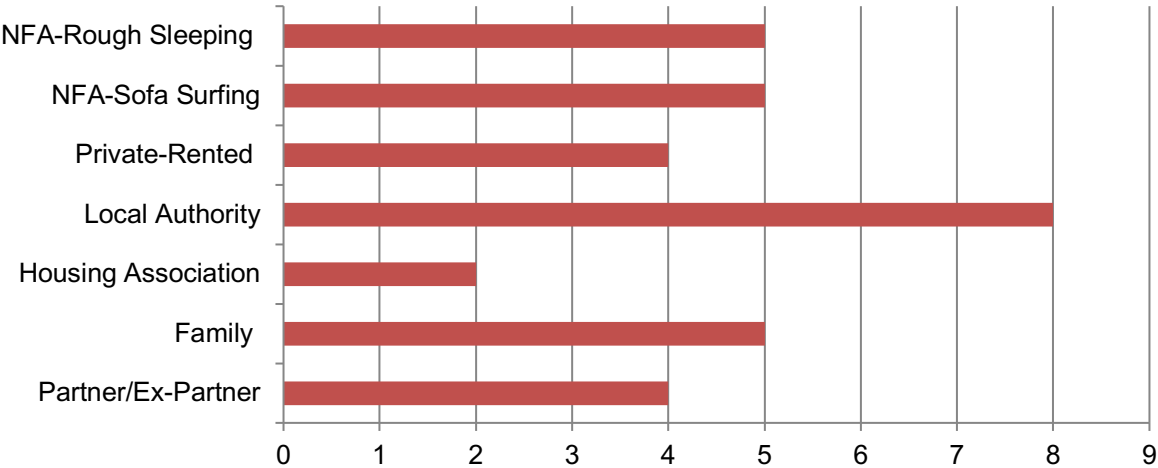


### Housing status

At the point of referral, Stonewall Housing clients are asked about their current housing status. This means we can identify the client’s level of risk and need relating to their housing and/or homelessness. We found that at the point of referral 10 out of 34 clients were homeless (sofa surfing and sleeping on the streets) due to domestic abuse, therefore in need of emergency accommodation. Of those who were homeless, it became clear that they felt unsafe sleeping on the streets and often stayed in 24 hour spaces, e.g. saunas, fast food outlets and night buses, or exchanged sex for a place to stay, as this was seen as a safer option.

Please see graph below for the breakdown of the housing status of clients at the point of referral.

### Housing status when referred to service



Of those clients who were referred to our service, 9 were fleeing domestic abuse from family member and 25 were fleeing domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner. At

the point of referral, many of our clients were still living with their perpetrator and therefore, in need of emergency housing and support.

## Housing advocacy and support provided

### Length of support

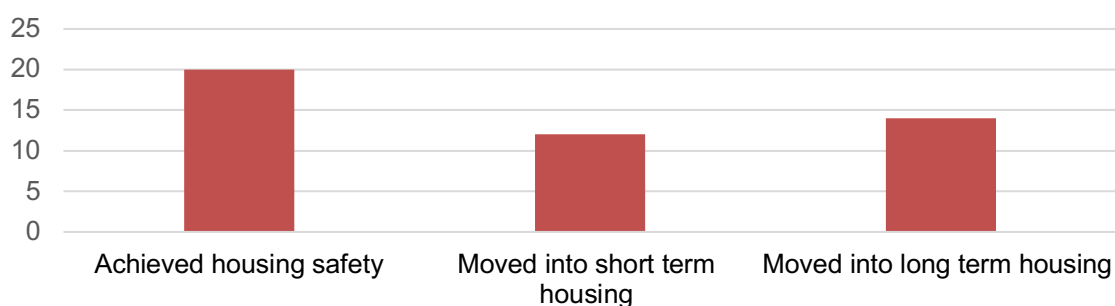
The length of support received by clients was dependent on the service they were referred to. For example, clients who were referred to the Domestic Abuse Casework service were more likely to be supported for 0-3 months as this involved crisis intervention, housing advice and advocacy to find safe and suitable accommodation. Those who were referred on to Tenancy Sustainment were supported for 3 to 6 months to ensure the clients were settled into independent living. The information below outlines how long the clients were supported for.

Timescale	Number of clients
Under 1 month	12
1-3 months	14
3-6 months	8

### Casework outcomes

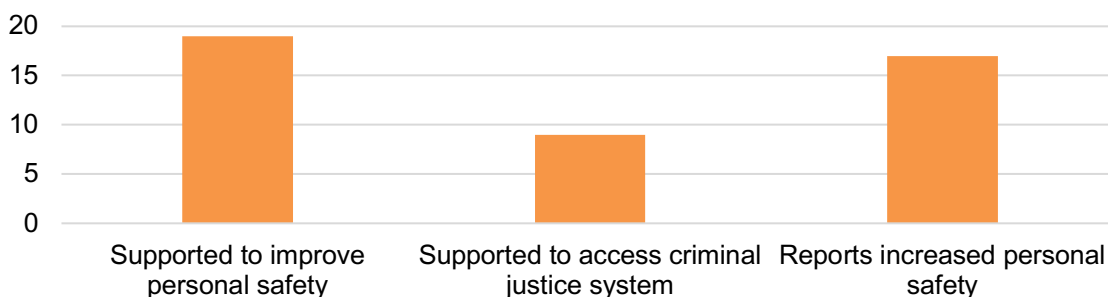
All of the clients who were referred to Stonewall Housing's Beyond Abuse casework service received specialist housing advice based on their individual needs. Housing advice, advocacy and support was offered to all clients, as well as specialist advice relating to their experience of domestic abuse, e.g. safety planning, healthy relationships. Due to the needs of the clients, many of them received additional support around welfare benefits, employment and health and wellbeing. See below for an overview of the outcomes achieved across the project.

### Clients who were supported to flee accommodation

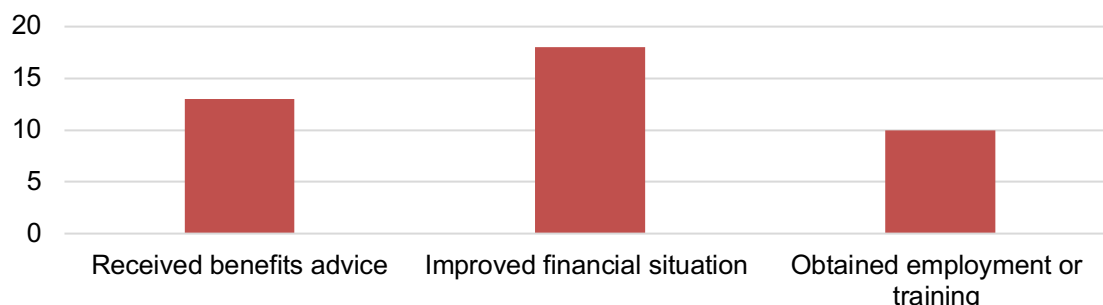




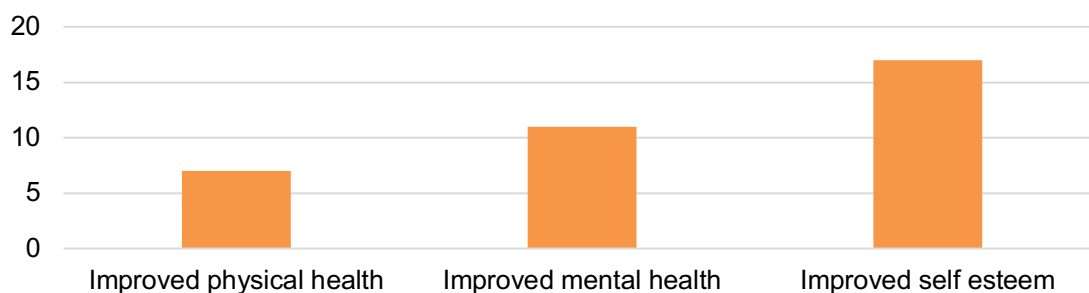
### Clients who were supported to exit abusive relationship



### Clients who were supported to achieve financial independence



### Clients supported to improve their health and wellbeing



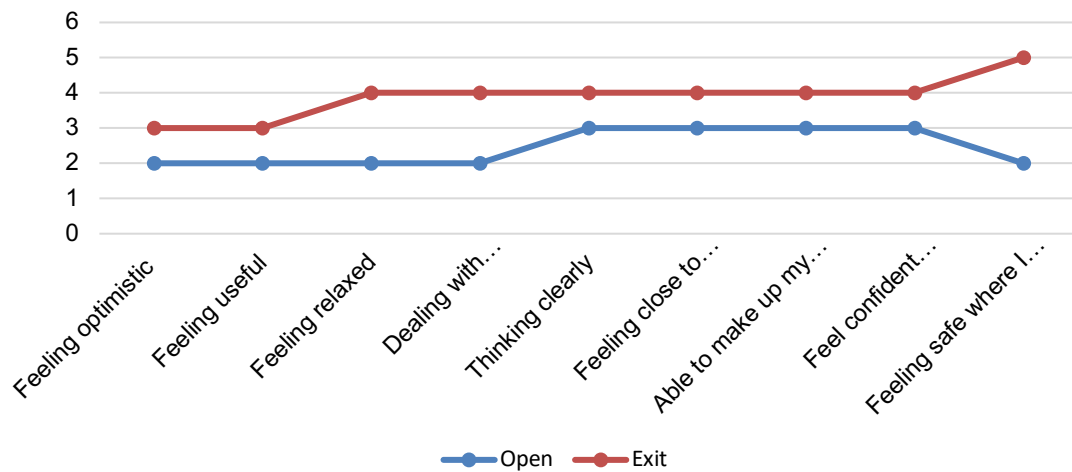
In addition to the information shown on the graphs above, 4 clients were supported to register with their GP and 2 clients were supported to obtain a mental health diagnosis.

### WEMWS Scores

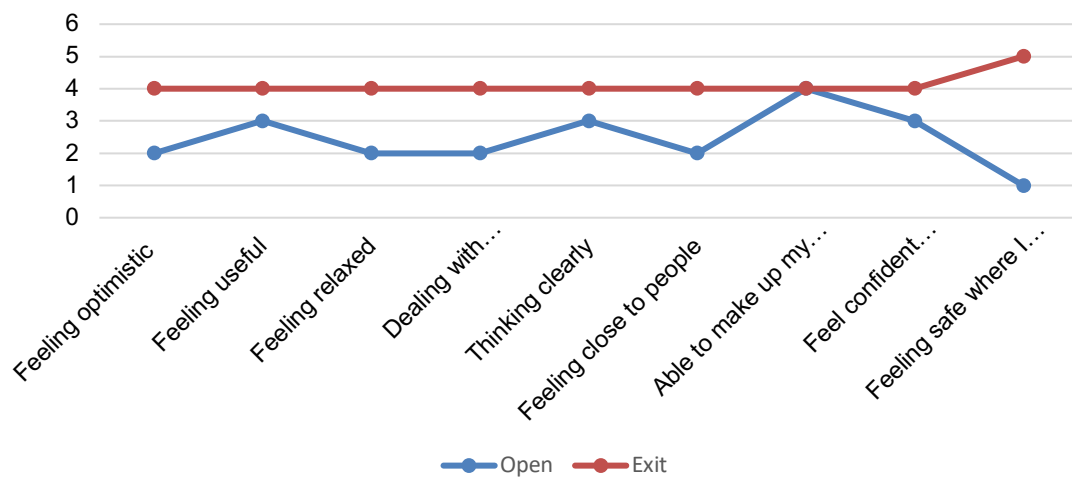
As part of the project we also measured client's improvement of mental wellbeing using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). WEMWBS scores were taken at the client's initial assessment on entry to the service and at the end of the service when the client's housing needs had been met. The time between each score depended on how long the client had been supported for. We found that the

WEMWS was more suitable for our Peer Support service (see report attached) and those clients who were supported by the casework service for 3 to 6 months. However, all clients whose mental wellbeing was measured by the WEMWBS showed an improvement in mental wellbeing by over 55% at the end of their support, with the biggest improvement being in 'feeling safe where I live'. Please see 3 examples below.

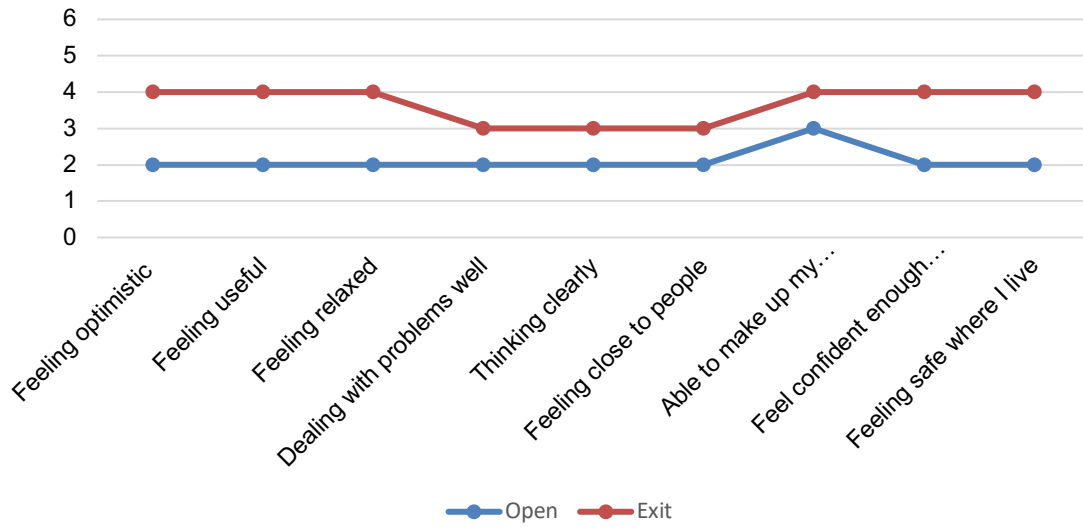
**Client One - Outcome**



**Client Two - Outcome Score**



### Client Three - Outcome Scores



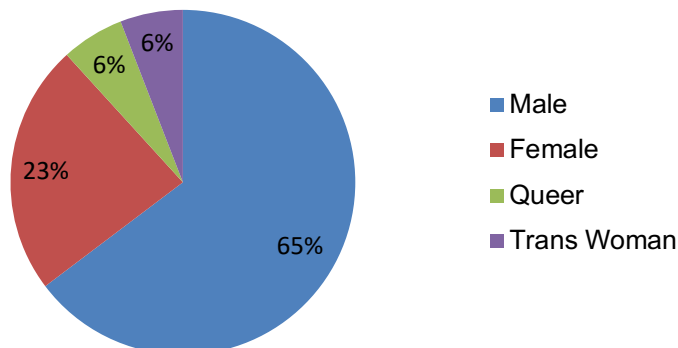
## Demographics

Across all services at Stonewall Housing we collect demographic information at the first point of contact. This not only helps us best support the clients, but also means we can monitor who is and who is not accessing our services. By identifying trends we are able to invest time and resources to develop services, to ensure we are meeting the needs of our users.

### Gender identity

When collecting information about gender identity we ask people to self-identify, ie. 'How would you describe your gender identity?', 'Would you describe yourself as a trans person or someone with a trans history?' We found that all clients felt comfortable answering both questions. Over half of our clients identified as male and those who said they would describe themselves as a trans person identified as queer or trans women. The project did not receive any referrals for people who identify as trans men or non-binary. See below for the breakdown of the gender identity of clients who accessed our service.

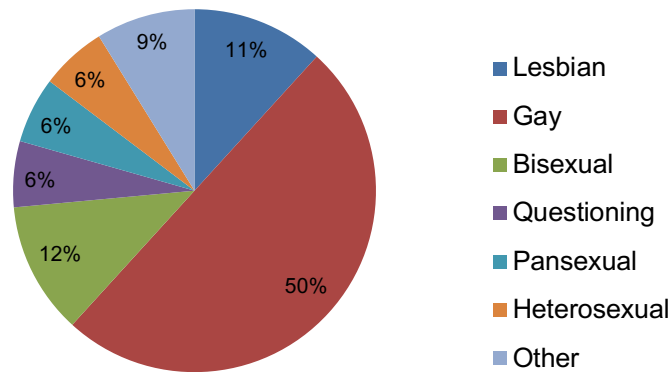
#### Gender Identity



### Sexuality

When collecting information about sexuality we also ask people to self-identify, ie. 'How would describe your sexuality?' We found that all clients felt comfortable answering this question and it was often the reason they had been referred to our service for specialist LGBT advice and support. Half of our clients identified as gay and the majority of these clients also identified as male, therefore the largest client group we worked with throughout the project were gay men. Those clients who identified as heterosexual also identified as trans women. See below for the breakdown of the sexuality of the clients who were supported by our casework service.

## Sexuality



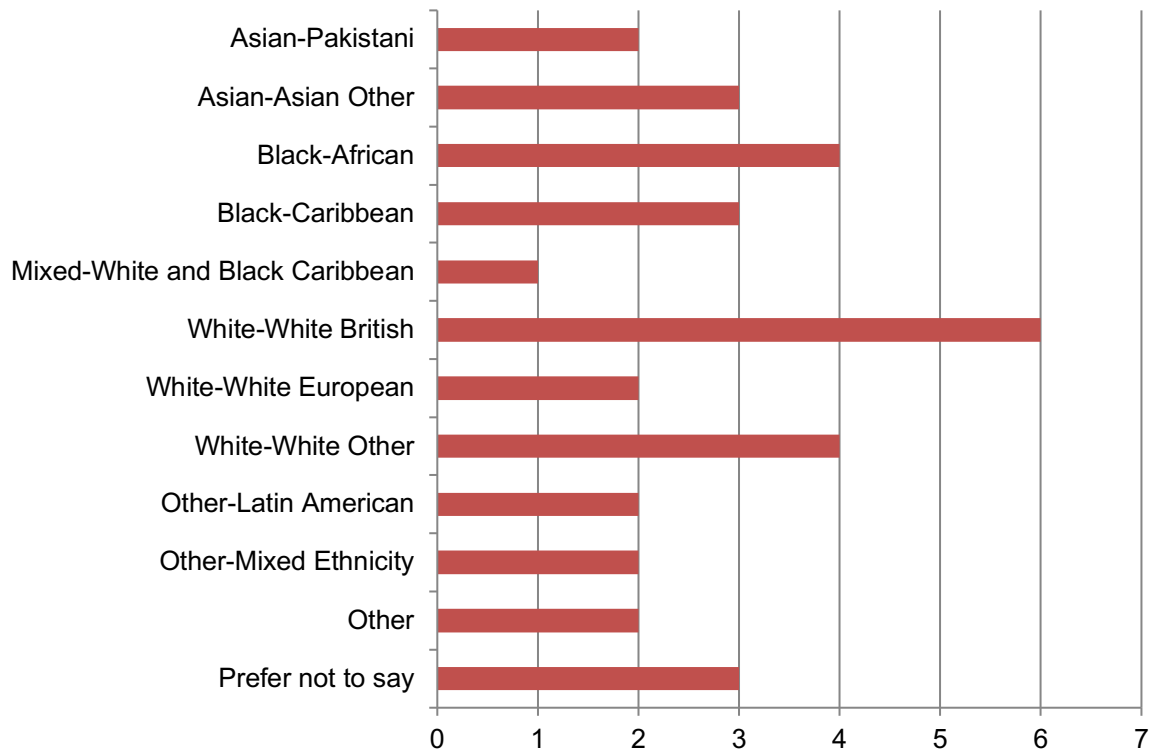
## Age

Stonewall Housing delivers a pan-London project called LGBT Jigsaw, which works specifically with young people aged 16-25. Therefore, the Beyond Abuse project worked with clients aged 25 and above. We found that the majority of the clients we worked with were aged between 25 and 35.

## Ethnicity

When collecting information about ethnicity we, again, ask clients to self-identify. Throughout the project we supported clients from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with over 50 % of our clients identifying as BAME. See graph on next page for information on the ethnicity of the clients who accessed our service.

## Ethnicity



## Religion

Religion is another demographic we monitor at Stonewall Housing. When looking at the data from the Beyond Abuse project, we established that over 50% of our clients said they had no religion. We also found that this was the only demographic question where people answered 'prefer not to say'. The table below shows the breakdown of client's religion.

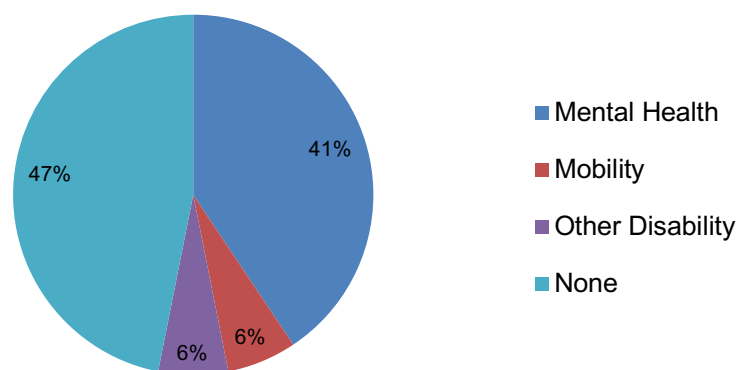
Religion	Number of clients
Catholic	3
Buddhist	3
None	19
Muslim	2
Christian	2
Agnostic	2
Prefer not to say	3

## Disability

Across all Stonewall Housing services we ask clients whether they have a mental health or physical health need. Often health needs can support a client to access accommodation, particularly when presenting as homeless to a local authority. Looking at the data we collected, we found that over 50% of clients said they had a disability. Many of our clients disclosed physical and mental health conditions, but they did not classify them as a disability. For example, the 2 clients who said they had 'Other Disability' asked to select this as they were HIV+.

However, three other service users who disclosed that they were HIV+ did not consider this to be a disability but did want it to be recorded under health and wellbeing. Nearly 50% of clients had mental health needs. Some of these clients had a mental health diagnosis, some were undiagnosed, but the majority of our clients (19 in total) had anxiety and depression. The details of client's health needs are discussed during their initial assessment and outlined clearly on their case notes to ensure the support offered is meeting their individual needs. See below for the breakdown of disability.

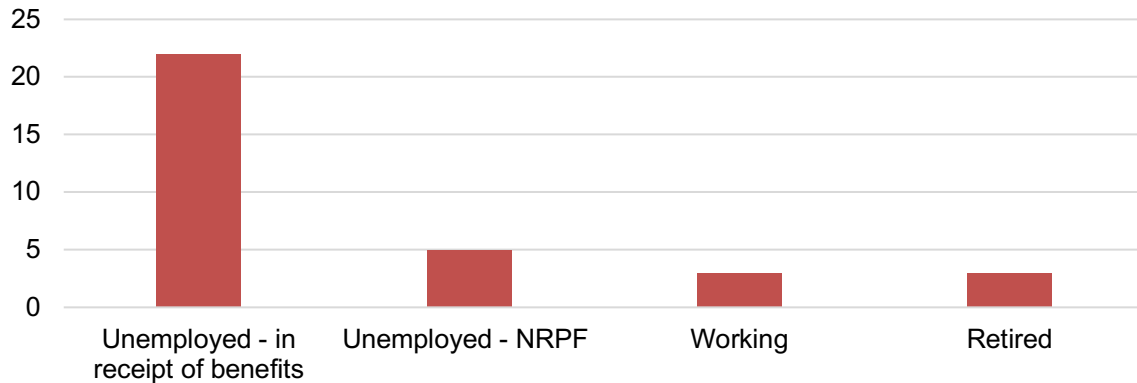
### Disability



### Employment status

All clients referred to the Beyond Abuse project were asked about their employment status. Employment status and eligibility for benefits has a huge impact on client's housing options, particularly around the right to access homelessness assistance from a local authority. We found that 67% of clients were unemployed and in receipt of benefits. We worked with 5 clients who were unemployed and had no recourse to public funds (NRPF). See below for the breakdown of employment status of the clients who accessed the casework service.

## Employment status



## Relationship status

As a domestic abuse service, relationship status can be vital in providing appropriate advice and support. Across the Beyond Abuse project, we found that 5 out of 34 clients (14.7%) were married or in a civil partnership, 12 (35%) clients were partnered and 17 (50%) were single at the point of referral.

## Other demographics

Other demographics we collected included whether people had children or childcare responsibilities, of which 3 clients had children under the age of 10. We also ask clients if they have any alcohol or substance use needs, of which 4 clients disclosed they did and throughout their journey with Stonewall Housing they were supported to access appropriate services.

## Tri-borough engagement

Stonewall Housing delivered the Beyond Abuse project within Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. Throughout the project we worked with all 3 local authorities regarding housing and other statutory agencies such as police, social services and health services. We attended several MARAC meetings and liaised with housing associations, including Shepherd's Bush Housing and L&Q to address client's housing needs. We also other voluntary organisations with the tri-borough, providing multi-agency support to our clients.

As outlined earlier in the report, we received a high number of referrals from Galop who also deliver services within the tri-borough, as part of the Angelou partnership. Stonewall Housing built a strong working relationship with St Mungo's Starlight, the only supported accommodation in London for gay and bisexual men fleeing violence. This was important due to the high number of male referrals we received.



We referred clients directly to their accommodation and offered Peer Support and Tenancy Sustainment to their residents to support them with their move-on into independent living. We also provided professional support to the Starlight project to help them advertise their service and develop referral routes.

As well as working with statutory and non-statutory agencies within the tri-borough to provide frontline services to our clients, our Domestic Abuse Caseworker attended several multi-agency meetings and working groups. This included the Women's Safety Planning group and the Housing First Operational meeting both led by Standing Together, and the LGBT consultation group delivered by West London Collaborative. Our Domestic Abuse Caseworker did not only attend these groups as the LGBT service representative, but also delivered training presentations on LGBT+ Domestic Abuse and Homelessness.

Within the project year, Stonewall Housing has also provided guidance and consultation on the national Spotlight delivered by Safe Lives, which looked into LGBT+ people and domestic abuse. Our Domestic Abuse Caseworker recorded a podcast interview, talking about the housing issues for LGBT+ survivors, attended a MARAC+ scrutiny panel at the Home Office which addressed the lack of LGBT+ cases being referred to and discussed at MARAC across the UK and provided consultation and feedback on the national Spotlight report.

## Case studies

### Amina's story

#### Case background

Amina\*, who is a 47 year old bisexual woman, was referred to Stonewall Housing by Galop. Amina was experiencing emotional and financial abuse from her partner of 22 years. She was living in a flat owned by her partner, with her two children. Amina was originally from Morocco and came to the UK 14 years ago to live with her partner. Since living in the UK she was isolated from family and friends, had no access to any of her own finances and as a result she was prevented from learning basic life skills to live in the UK, e.g. using public transport, using a cash machine, and how to read or write English. All benefits, including child benefit and child tax credit were applied for under her partner's name. Amina's partner had a 'sitting tenancy' and Amina had no knowledge of her housing options or rights.

Amina's health had deteriorated over the last few years and she was diagnosed with depression, anxiety and insomnia. She also suffered from an eating disorder and alopecia as a result of the ongoing domestic abuse.

#### Housing advocacy and support provided

Amina attended an initial assessment with Stonewall Housing's Domestic Abuse Caseworker, accompanied by her Family Practitioner from her local authority. Amina did not want to stay in the property. Stonewall Housing provided housing advice and discussed the options of searching for a refuge space or making a homeless application on the basis of DV. Due to the possible difficulties of finding a refuge space to accommodate her 11 year old son, Amina decided that making a homeless application was the best option for her and her children. Stonewall Housing agreed to accompany Amina to make a homeless application to her local authority and advocate on her behalf, with the additional support of her Family Practitioner.

Stonewall Housing accompanied Amina to her local authority the next day. The housing department completed a full homelessness assessment and placed Amina in emergency accommodation with her two children. During the assessment, the Senior Social Worker questioned the validity of Amina's situation and Stonewall Housing provided advocacy regarding LGBT and elder domestic abuse.

Once Amina and her children were placed in temporary accommodation, the case was referred to our Tenancy Sustainment Officer. We ensured Amina's social services case was referred to her new borough for ongoing support. Before the referral was accepted, Stonewall Housing provided advice, support and advocacy to Amina and

her children. We supported her to open a new bank account, apply for JSA, change the name on child benefit and child tax credits, follow up her Housing Benefit claim and gain free travel cards for children to attend school on the other side of London. Once Social Services had accepted duty, Stonewall Housing closed Amina's case.

## Seth's story

### Case background

Seth\*, who is a 33 year old gay man, was referred to Stonewall Housing by an LGBT Liaison Officer within the local police. He was referred to Galop and Stonewall Housing as he was experiencing domestic abuse from his husband. Seth had recently moved to the UK from Egypt to be with his husband. When Seth arrived in the UK, his husband became verbally and physically abusive. He was experiencing coercive control in the form of identity abuse as his husband constantly threatened to out him to his family in Egypt. Seth did not feel safe to return to Egypt and he was at risk of further violence and abuse in his new home in the UK.

### Housing advocacy and support provided

At the time of the referral, Seth had reported the domestic abuse to the police and his husband was in custody. Seth was homeless and could not return to his husband's property due to fear of further violence and abuse. Due to the urgent nature of this referral, Stonewall Housing's Domestic Abuse Caseworker made immediate phone contact with Seth to provide housing advice and support. At the time of the referral, Stonewall Housing was working in partnership with a new organisation called The Outside Project. They had opened the first LGBT+ winter night shelter in London and Stonewall Housing were a direct referral agency. Stonewall Housing made an emergency referral to the shelter and Seth was accepted on the same day. This allowed time to establish Seth's long term housing options.

Stonewall Housing recognised that Seth was eligible for the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) and through MARAC, were able to advise the local authority to support him to apply. Within 3 days, Seth had received the DDVC and he was granted recourse to public funds for 3 months. Seth was assessed by the local authority and it was established that although he was homeless and eligible for assistance, he was not priority need.

Stonewall Housing contacted St Mungo's Starlight. They had a space available and the option was discussed with Seth. He agreed to a referral and this was processed the same day. Seth was invited for an interview and accepted into St Mungo's

Starlight within 48 hours. Once Seth had moved in to Starlight, his case was closed with Stonewall Housing's Domestic Abuse Caseworker. He continued receiving advice and advocacy from Galop with his police case and Starlight provided ongoing practical support within the refuge. Stonewall Housing's Peer Support programme was offered to all Starlight residents and it was agreed that Seth could be referred to Stonewall Housing's Tenancy Sustainment Officer when he was ready to move on.

\*The name and location of the clients have been changed or to protect the privacy of the individuals we work with.

## Peer support review

### Introduction

The peer support report that follows documents the peer support activities that ran at Stonewall Housing from June 2017 to June 2018 as part of the DCLG 'Beyond Abuse' project. This was a nation-wide project to address the needs of LGBT+ people with experiences of domestic abuse and family violence by finding refuge accommodation and providing DV advocacy, tenancy and peer support.

Given that in London it didn't prove possible to find suitable refuge accommodation in the timescale that the project ran for, the peer support activities targeted LGBT+ people with experiences of DA who were already Stonewall Housing clients and people referred through the Domestic Abuse Partnership.

### Methodology – Group vs one to one

Both the group and individual peer support formats were explored.

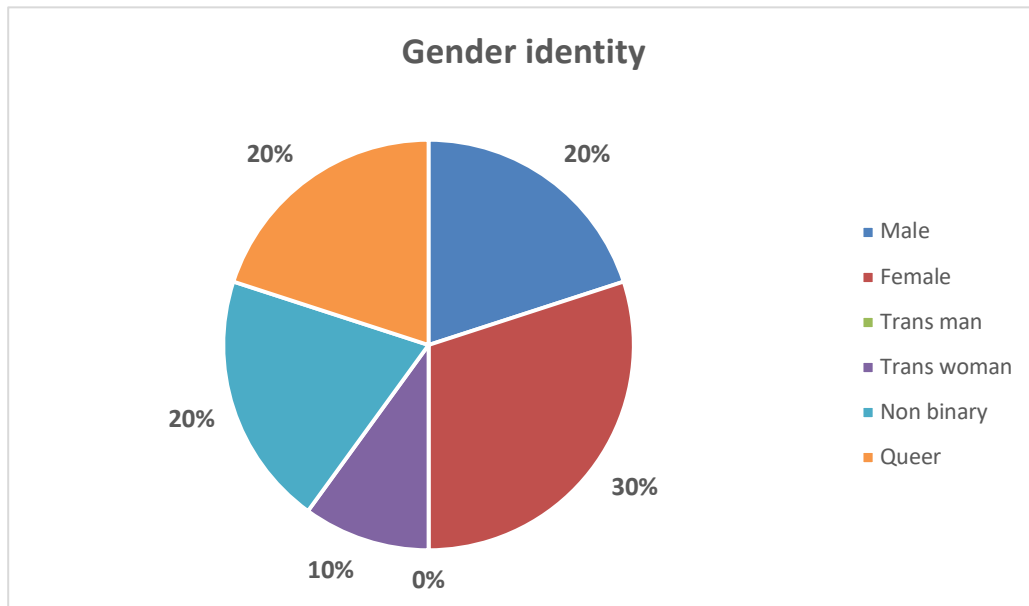
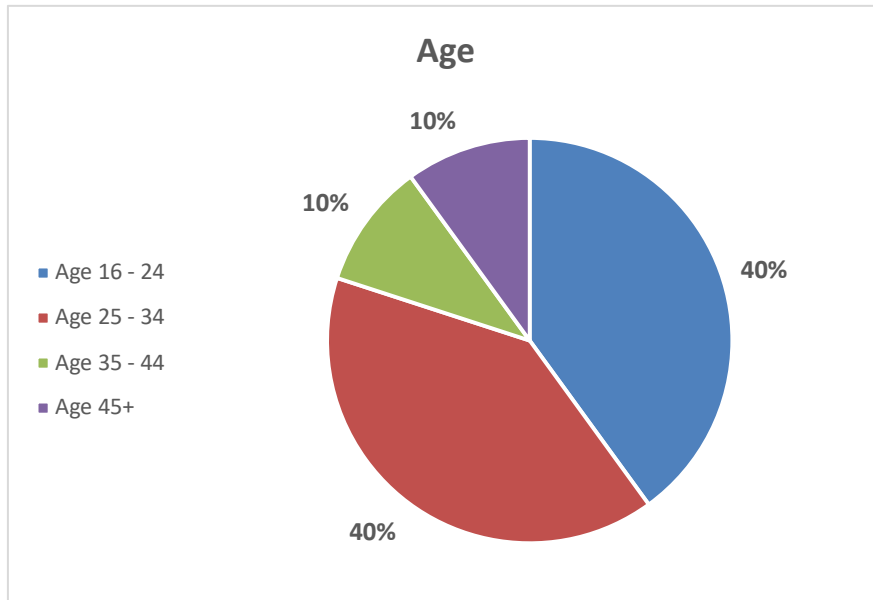
Due to the lack of refuge accommodation the group format proved less popular. We looked for alternative environments to run peer support groups using our current client base, this included some trial groups in our supported housing schemes for young people to encourage peer support. One peer support group was held in one of our schemes in Archway which was attended by two services users, however this was discontinued soon after for lack of demand from clients.

We also explored opportunities to run a peer support group in our trans scheme in Newham and the possibility to partner externally with the Starlight Project. These opportunity, however didn't come to fruition.

Given the initial difficulties with the group format, we focused on providing peer support through a series of one to one sessions with a peer support worker. We initially offered eight sessions with a possibility to extend. Objectives were decided by the client and focused on improving wellbeing and reducing symptoms of trauma.

## Participants

During the time the project ran for we managed to provide peer support to 10 clients from a diverse background in terms of age and gender identity as shown in the graphs below.

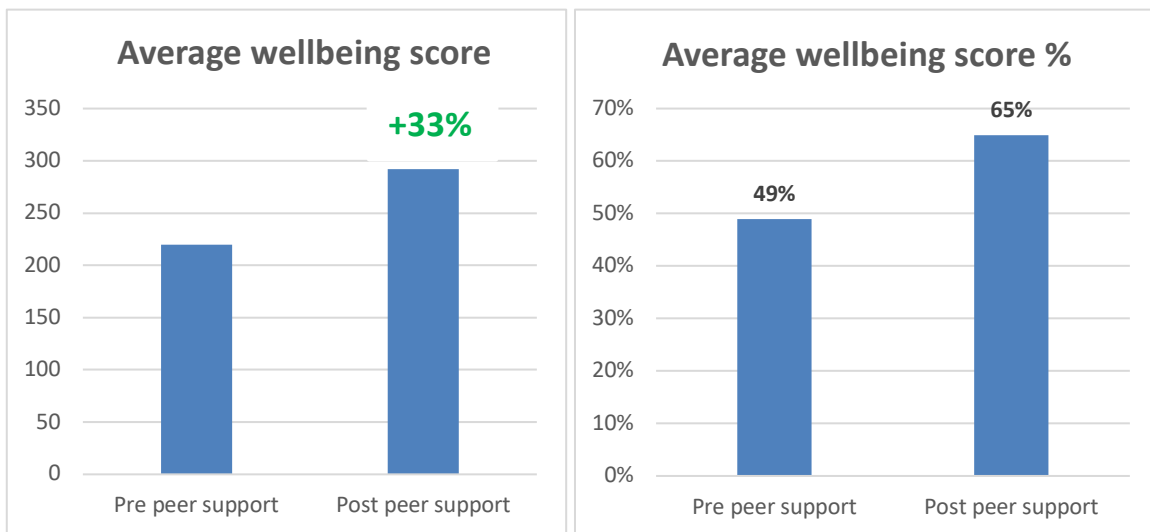


The length of the service provided to each client ranged from 4 sessions to 33 sessions and we delivered a total of 124 one-hour peer support sessions.

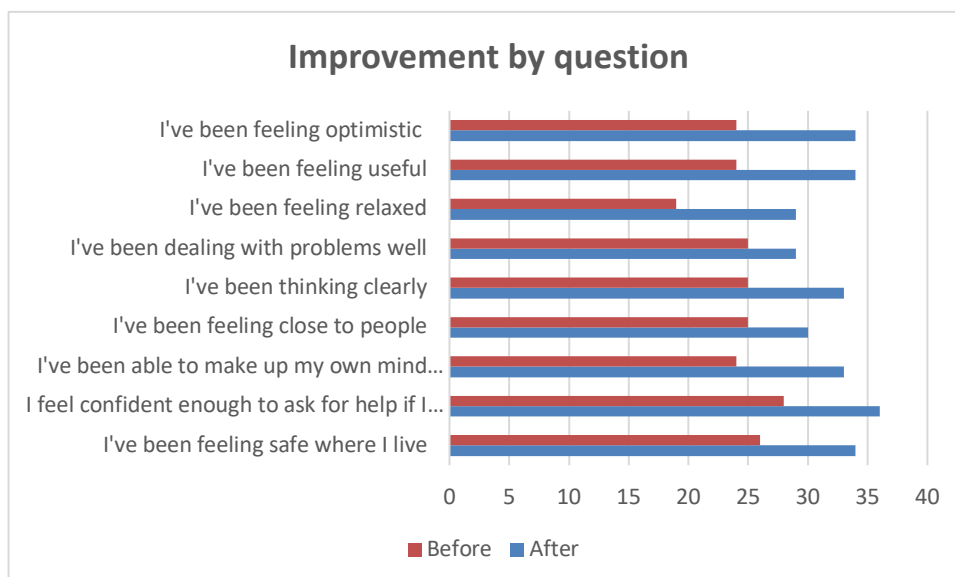
## Results

Results of the one to one peer support have been collated using a modified version of the WEMWBS – Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. The short 7-questions questionnaire was used and to these two additional questions were added regarding confidence and safety.

The questionnaires were completed by participants at the start and end of the peer support. Average wellbeing score before starting peer support was 49%. Average wellbeing score after the peer support was 65% corresponding to a 33% improvement.



All individual questions in the evaluation questionnaire showed an improvement as shown in the table below. The statement that saw the biggest improvement was 'I have been feeling relaxed' with a 53% improvement whilst the statement that improved the least was 'I've been dealing with problems well' with a 16% improvement.



## Testimonials

“Thanks for talking to me, it really helped I learn a lot about myself.”

Fran – 16 years old – lesbian woman

“I would like to thank you for the help and the support you provided to me in order to keep my legs on earth during the time I needed someone to be there for me while most didn't care about my broken young soul.”

Safiya – 23 years old – migrant trans woman

“Thank you for your time and our sessions, I did enjoy them and I will miss them. You were very helpful and nice to me, I will not forget that. Sending a bunch of positive thoughts your way!”

Lena – 34 years old – trans woman

## Findings

- One on one peer support proved an effective intervention to increase wellbeing in a population of LGBT+ people recovering from domestic abuse.
- The group format proved a more challenging peer support intervention to organise as people at different stages of their recovery from domestic abuse had very different needs and proved to be reluctant to talk about these in a group.
- In particular this difficulty was compounded by the absence of the accommodation part of the project. We tried to make up for this by trying to find other suitable environments in which to run a peer support group such as a supported housing project for young people and a trans specific supported housing project. In these context residents proved to be either not interested in the group format or they had higher and more pressing mental health needs and house conflicts to make them suitable for peer support.





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