



Spotlight 6: Episode 6

Podcast transcript

Welcome to Spotlights, the Podcast for the Domestic Abuse Sector. In this series SafeLives are shining a spotlight on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans plus people experiencing domestic abuse. Facing homelessness and temporary accommodation is a significant and common problem for victims of domestic abuse, but these challenges are often compounded for LGBT+ people, by the potential risk of homophobia and hate crime.

In this podcast, my colleague Collette Eaton-Harris meets with Leanne from Stonewall Housing, who explains how traditional housing options for victims of domestic abuse may be difficult for LGBT Plus people to access and how, in some cases, they may leave that person at risk of further abuse.

I: Interviewer – Collette Eaton-Harris

R: Respondent – Leanne, Stonewall Housing

I: So I'm with Leanne, from the organisation Stonewall Housing. Hi Leanne.

R: Hi.

I: Can you tell us about your role then, Leanne, with Stonewall Housing.

R: Yeah. So I'm the domestic abuse case worker. I sit within a partnership with Galop and an organisation called London Friend, so my role specifically is to provide...I support LGBT people, who have experienced domestic abuse and I provide support around their housing, so if they are wanting accommodation, if they have any tenancy issues that are maybe linked with the domestic abuse and if they're wanting to move or if they're, obviously, homeless or at risk of homelessness. So, yeah, I provide more of the housing advocacy and advice. So, I guess, on my day-to-day I will call clients, but I often have face-to-face appointments or I assist people to go to the local council to present and do Part 7, which is the Homeless Application, referring people to different housing agencies and refuges; and I work really closely with Galop and their domestic abuse team, as well.

I: And can you tell us a bit more about what Stonewall Housing do, as an organisation?

Yeah, so we are the specialist housing provider for LGBT people. We are a London based organisation, but we also work nationally to raise awareness and do partnership working in other cities. We provide supported accommodation to over forty young people, within London, but we also provide trans specific support accommodation and advice and advocacy for, basically, anyone who identifies as an LGBT Plus, who is looking for support and advocacy around their housing issues or if they're at risk of homelessness and/or are currently homeless.

I: So, for those that don't work in this area, could you say a bit more about why LGBT people, in particular, might have issues around housing?

R: Yeah, so there are kind of a lot of wider issues, I guess, people don't really think about, particularly within domestic abuse. Often, LGBT people don't have the family support that maybe other people may have, if they're in a violent relationship. A lot of the clients that we support are fleeing abuse from their family members, but, even if there fleeing abuse within a relationship, they maybe have had a negative relationship with their family in the past, so don't have them to fall back on. There are a lot of issues around, I guess, generally accessing housing for victims or survivors of domestic abuse, who are LGBT. It's not considered an LGBT issue, domestic abuse. I think there's still the idea that it's kind of an issue within heterosexual relationships. I think we're moving towards considering family abuse more now, but there is still, I guess, the kind of public story of domestic abuse is still the victim or survivor being a woman and the perpetrator being a man.

Obviously, kind of statistic-wise, there are more women in the world than there are LGBT people, so it's seen as a bigger problem within women's situations, but it's recognised as a considerable problem within the LGBT community. So, therefore, I guess, if the story is not recognised for them, then they're not really sure what services are also available and whether those services will support their needs.

I: Yeah, so it's that barrier of, first of all, them being able to name this as domestic abuse and then...

R: Yeah.

I: ...more than that, once they have named it, know where to take it.

R: Yeah, definitely, knowing where to go. I mean, there's a lack of services anyway, but I think, if you're in London, there are a few, but it's kind of learning about those and knowing where to go and, if you maybe go to the mainstream service and you don't get asked whether you're LGBT, which is generally a huge issue, then you're not signposted to the right places. There's, kind of, also the issue of, if they don't want to come out to services, so yes we advise services to ask the question, but not everyone's going to want to come out. Obviously, we all know that speaking about domestic abuse is telling a lot of personal details anyway and you're going to have to relive that situation over and over again, when you're accessing support, and, if a part of that is you're having to come out, then that can be an additional barrier or something that people find difficult, especially if they've kind of had experience of those services in the past and not really trusted them.

I: Yeah. And you said you offer a supported accommodation service to young people?

R: Yeah.

I: Are there particular issues for young LGBT people, would you say?

R: As I said before, a lot of the people come to our service who are fleeing from their families, so most of our service users in our supported accommodation, who are eighteen to twenty-five, will have reached out to our service if they potentially come out to their family and been rejected, so they've been kicked out of their home or, maybe, if they're not kicked out of their home, they're experiencing emotional abuse and, often, physical abuse, whilst they're living there. So, often, they don't really have anywhere else to turn. If they come out to their family and it's the first people they've come out to,

they maybe don't have friends to go to or the support network that others might have. So, yeah, a lot of the time that is the reason why they come to our services.

I: And difficult for young people - or any LGBT person – in that situation, if they're living with an abusive partner, very difficult then for them to think about leaving that person and, potentially, facing homelessness, if they've not got family to return to?

R: Yeah, definitely. I see it quite a lot with my clients, working as a domestic abuse case worker, a lot of the time. I tend to work with older clients, just because we have a young person's worker, so we split our caseload, but when I'm supporting people who are maybe, like, mid-thirties/forty, they may have come to London years ago, because it's seen as what we call a beacon city, so it's seen as a place where it's safe for LGBT people to be and they've connected with the community; and they may have left wherever they lived because they weren't included or were isolated from family and friends. And they've come here and fell into a relationship which then, potentially, is abusive. Often, you see that person that is their abuser is, potentially, the only link they have with the city or the only person they know that's, maybe, accepted their sexuality or their gender identity, so it kind of...obviously, we know that it always takes, on average, seven times for someone to leave, but with those additional barriers it's obviously even more difficult.

I think we're seeing a lot more clients, as well as any agency, I guess, who have not recourse to public funds or have, potentially, come from outside of the UK and they're relying on that relationship to stay in the UK and have visa and work or claim state support. And, often in those cases, we find with our clients they've fled that country for a reason; and the reason is because of their sexuality and their fear of persecution and then, if they're in a relationship where that's the only person they know, often that is used as a form of control. So I know that immigration is used as a form of control anyway, but it's more like, if you leave me, I will out you to the whole of your family back home and here, and it isolates people even more.

I: And, for some people, the potential consequence of that is that they're family would seriously harm them or, even, kill them?

R: Yeah, definitely. You know, if there is a risk that if they leave that relationship they're immigration status is not secure, then...obviously, we all know the asylum list is really long, so it's these kinds of additional issues that are within their situation, yeah, it can make it even more dangerous if they have to go home.

I: I: So, your clients, what particular issues do they have with housing?

R: So, I guess, with LGBT people who are experiencing domestic abuse, you would usually follow the same case worker role that you would do in any domestic abuse organisation, but I think there are specific issues around LGBT people accessing specialist domestic abuse services, so refuges, in particular. Obviously, a large number of my client group are male and there aren't really any male refuges at all across the whole country. There are a few and there are more male domestic violence workers, specifically, within the women's sector, within the domestic abuse organisations. They're coming about, but it's still a huge, huge shortage and, even if they are male specific, they're not LGBT specific, so it kind of narrows it down even more. We work really closely with an organisation called St Mungos, in London, and they are the only people in London that have an LGBT specific supported accommodation for gay men, so it's really, really limited. I think that six bed spaces, so in the whole of London that's the only specific spaces we have.

I: And, I guess, that could be a really important thing, for somebody who is experiencing homophobic hate crime, a real anxiety about going into a space that isn't LGBT specific?

R: Yeah, definitely. So, again, even with the women that I support, who identify as Lesbian or Bi, they may not feel comfortable going into a women-only space in a refuge. It's similar to what I was describing before, as, like, they don't recognise themselves as the victim that that organisation is supporting, then they, maybe, wouldn't think that refuge was for them. I think it's kind of still described as a service for women who are fleeing men and, obviously, that can be the case for some of our clients, but they're maybe not asked about their full story and they're maybe not getting the support that they need. I have supported women who are in refuges, who feel really safe and supported, whether they're out to their support worker or not, but I have also experienced quite a lot of my clients that I've supported who are wanting to leave refuges because they don't feel it's a safe environment. They, maybe, come out to other service users in the refuge and they're not supported and, on some occasions, it's led to homophobic and biphobic abuse within the refuges.

I: So it's really important that refuges think about their policies, in terms of how they're going to tackle homophobia, biphobia...

R: Definitely.

I: ...within refuges?

R: Definitely. And I think a lot of the cases I've seen are refuges that...they're really well known refuges and I know they do great work and, often, it's stuff to do with the service users. The services users are going to argue, but I think it's about recognising when it's not just squabbles between residents. I've worked in refuges before, so I know what it can be like, but I think it's about recognising actually when it is abuse and when it can be seen as a hate crime, because, you know, you only go to a refuge if you need a safe space and, if that safe space isn't created, then there's really nowhere for people to go and you shouldn't have to suffer abuse all over again. So, yeah, it's about obviously asking the question about people's sexuality and gender identities, so that you're aware of who your service users are, kind of, developing a needs led response and a service and don't treat everyone the same. Like, I think, as well, because we're not expecting all services to know every single thing about how best to support people, but I think, if you know that you've got LGBT clients, then you can link in with local organisations that might be able to provide a bit more advice or training to staff. So I think that's one thing, asking the question, but we don't want it to become another paper exercise. It's great to ask that question, on one side, to find out whether even any LGBT people are accessing your service, because I think, if they're not, then that's a problem. Like, why are they not? And then it helps make you reflect. But, yeah, not just asking it just to tick a box, because I think, if you're not able to then provide the relevant support and raise awareness within the staff team, then it's something that we need to look at as well.

I: You need to feel that, when you ask that question, if the client says, well, why are you asking? That you're really confident in your reasons for asking it and that you're going to use that in a way that's going to benefit them and wider service users?

R: Yeah, definitely. It's like all the questions we ask, obviously, as a case worker – and you ask a million questions – you have long, long forms and most of the questions might seem irrelevant or, even nose to the person you're supporting, but it's always the same kind of answers for anything. Like, the more you know about that person, the better they can be supported by your service, so it's exactly the same. You know, we ask people's religion, ethnicity and there's a reason behind that. Yes, there is also the monitoring and

evaluation of your service and whether you've got gaps or training needs within staff, but, also, if you know that someone is identifying as LGBT, then you know that's something else that you need to think about and how best to support them.

I: I think a lot of LGBT people actually feel very validated by being asked, as well, because it's so much easier to answer that question than to think about when I'm going to pick my moment to correct this person and make the disclosure about my sexual orientation and my gender identity.

R: Yes, definitely. Yes, that's definitely true. I think, if you are asking that question or you show anything in your organisation that will validate an LGBT person, even if it's just that on your toilet door you have a rainbow or something like that. If you're asking that question in the initial assessment, then you know that you can answer it, like, say, if there's never that opportunity, then it's more likely than not that people aren't going to say anything. And, I think, you can't expect everyone to answer that question...like, if they don't say that they identify as LGBT in the first instance, then it is fine. Obviously, there is loads on information, I'm sure, our clients don't tell us, but I think, if you're opening that up, then, if they do feel comfortable later on, then they'll know that you are the person that asked that question and they'll feel that they've got someone to go to.

I: And you said to me that, as well as accessing refuge, there can be some other barriers to LGBT people around housing. Can you say a bit more about some of the issues with statutory housing provision?

R: Yeah, so I think anyone who is working in the domestic abuse field has issues with supporting their clients to access statutory housing. I think, there is still a need for statutory housing services and local councils to have more awareness of domestic abuse, in general. I think, training is now kind of getting better and more staff are trained on domestic abuse, but I think, from an LGBT perspective, they're getting the basic domestic abuse training, which potentially doesn't even include that it happens to LGBT people. It's still focused very much on, you know, if you have a female client come through your door in distress and that kind of image of what people class as a victim, so I think there's still a lot of work to be done there. Stonewall Housing goes and works nationally, training other housing organisations and support providers on raising the awareness of LGBT issues and accessing housing, so that's something that we can offer. But, yeah, in general I guess, when I'm supporting clients to access housing services, often...again, it's the same kind of issues...they don't ask people's sexuality or gender identity.

A lot of our clients don't really feel that comfortable coming out in mainstream services and that's, maybe, why we're there to support them. A lot of our clients will be single homeless people, so the issues around accessing housing for a single homeless person, unless you can prove that you're of priority need, then you're looking at alternative accommodation. In London, I think, that's probably a bigger issue than other places, but the lack of housing everywhere is obviously a huge, huge problem. So, yeah, if you can't prove that you're of priority need or vulnerable in another way, then you're basically going to be turned away. So a lot of our clients don't flee with their children or they may not have children, so that's quite a big issue. We are always having to prove that they are of priority need.

I: And that would echo some of our findings, when we look at our data that comes from domestic abuse services, that LGBT victims of domestic abuse are presenting with some really complex additional needs such as mental health problems, for example, so we're talking about a very vulnerable group of people, often, having multiple perpetrators that they're at risk from, so not having secure housing is going to be a real concern...

R: ...definitely. I think, we find with a lot of, especially the clients that I'm supporting that are, maybe not in the eighteen to twenty-five bracket, they may be a bit older – we do find it with younger people as well – but maybe a bit older and they're fleeing domestic abuse. It might not be the first time they've been in an abusive relationship, like we've seen earlier, in terms they may not have that family connection because of them not being accepted. They may have had to move to London and leave where they're originally from, whether that's in the UK or not. And, a lot of the time, not feeling comfortable accessing services means that they've developed coping strategies. So, like you say, there are a lot of LGBT clients that we see on a daily basis, who have really high needs, high complex needs, so we've a high number of clients with mental health support needs, drug and alcohol abuse. So, when you're approaching statutory services or approaching any housing providers, these can be additional barriers to finding accommodation. You know, that's really apparent in any service, including the women's sector.

So, yeah, in one instance, if you're fleeing domestic abuse and you have additional vulnerabilities and that can be proved to the council, then you may be more likely to get support, but in terms of referring people to refuge and supported accommodation and, kind of, any housing provider that say we don't take anyone who is high risk or high needs, then it's really, really difficult.

So another area, I guess, when LGBT clients are accessing housing, if they're not seen as in priority need, then they're often told to access emergency hostels, so, like, I guess, winter night shelters that have come to an end recently, but winter night shelters and emergency hostels, which a lot of our clients don't see as a reasonable, safe space for them, particularly, our trans clients. So, within emergency hostels, there's kind of a traditional view that they're quite male centred. They're quite an aggressive space. That's obviously not always the case, but a lot of our clients have had history of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic abuse within those centres, so I think, for trans people, particularly trans women, they're at a higher risk of abuse anyway and being placed in those kinds of environments is often seen as just not suitable for them, and that's something that we hear from our clients a lot. I think trans people, also, have specific needs, so there needs to be access to certain spaces, where they can access their medication or, just to get the treatment that they need. So I think, as well, for emergency hostels, it's like with refuges, it's just not an easy space for LGBT people to access.

I: Something we're hearing through Spotlights is that a lot of LGBT people can be estranged from their family or, for some, even in fear of their family and so the networks that they build up, their friends, the LGBT services they access are hugely important. Does that cause issues for your clients, when they approach Housing, to be re-homed?

R: Yeah, I think so. I think, with anyone, if you're within London and you've got support services that you're linked in with and you've got kind of a network, then being told by Housing that, yes, we can support you, but we will be moving you out of the area that you know, is really, really difficult. I mean, it's an issue with domestic abuse more generally, because obviously, as we all know, the survivor has to move and, I think, we're a long way away from that changing. So, yeah, a lot of the time people, if they've got a connection, would rather sofa surf or find that one friend or that one family member that they feel comfortable with and stay in their home. With that we find that, I think, within rough sleepers, LGBT people are maybe miscounted and, likely, ignored or not found in those big counts, because they kind of make up a high proportion of the hidden homes communities, people who are sofa surfing. Or, we also find, I guess, within the network there are issues within sofa surfing with friends, because I think maybe if you're young and you've come to London, for example, to embrace your sexuality and your gender identity, be part of the scene or the network within London, then, if you flee your

partner, maybe your partner knows the same people as you and obviously has the same connections; and finding somewhere to stay that's safe is really, really difficult, as well. So, I guess, it can work both ways. It's often not a safe option, but it's safer than sleeping on the streets for a large amount of our clients.

I: And, also, I guess, in terms of targeting, that we know perpetrators can be very adept at targeting and you can see, therefore, how young LGBT people may well be targeted, by, you can stay with me and I'll look after you and I'll give you access to this scene that you really want to have and that the power that comes with that then can be used.

R: Yeah, definitely. I think, with our young people or our younger clients, to be honest, people who just come out a lot later in life, I think, there are a few clients that we have come through our service who, if it's their first relationship, where they're open and out, then there is sometimes that power and control that could play out in that and it's, maybe, this is what it's meant to be like or you're the only person that knows. So there are risks of that and people being a bit more vulnerable and open to that power and control and abuse that comes with that, especially.

I: And, in terms of the overlap then between domestic abuse and homophobic hate crime, your clients, you know, when those two issues converge, what sort of problems does that cause?

R: Yeah. I mean, I do think, going back to them being under-represented in mainstream domestic abuse services and mainstream support services, to be honest, I think, looking at clients that I support within the domestic abuse aspect, a lot of our clients have experienced abuse for their whole lives, within different arenas and how it plays is different, but, if maybe grown up being bullied in school and then had a really negative relationship with their family – maybe, potentially, experienced abuse by their family – and then they move to a city where they think, right, I'll be myself and then they end up in an abusive relationship, it takes a long, long time for people to recognise that, actually, it's not okay and it's not right. So I think, yeah, that's kind of where other things come into play, like I was saying about developing coping strategies and surviving, really. Like, if that's all you know, then it's hard to recognise that's wrong. And I think that also plays into it, when accessing services, they're accessing services a lot later and, if those services that they are going to aren't even asking about their sexuality or gender identity, that is pretty much their whole life they're ignoring and how can you support someone if you don't know the full picture?

If they are honest and come out to the service and they don't best support them, then, if that's the first person they've told their story to and they don't really understand or they don't ask questions about multiple abuse or multiple perpetrators or the right questions about whether they've experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence and, like, different things that come about, then, I guess, they may not trust accessing services in the future, unless they are LGBT specific.

I: We know young people, in general, are very much at risk of abusive relationships, because of that experiential power that their partner potentially has, but I think what's clearly an additional factor, for young LGBT people, is that first relationship may also be very tied up with them discovering and celebrating their identity and how difficult that must be to separate out, that this is an abusive relationship and, still, kind of claim that identity that they've been really trying to fight for?

R: Yeah, definitely and, I think, particularly around relationships where there is abusive coercive control, so clients that maybe aren't experiencing physical abuse, but, if it's their first relationship within the LGBT community and the kinds of things – it might be

seem silly, but things like, oh this is how you're meant to have your hair; this is how you're meant to dress, to fit in with the community; this is how you're meant to do this; this is the bars you're meant to go to. Great, if that's a kind of equal balance in the relationship and you feel comfortable and that's what you want, but I have seen a number of times people who don't feel comfortable and they're going along with this and it kind of plays out as coercive control and it's even harder to recognise, I think, when it's something that you think that you'd wanted and that's the seen that you wanted to be in for your whole life.

I: So, some of the traditional housing options that would be offered to someone experiencing domestic abuse, are going to be inappropriate and risky for a lot of your client group, so where do you refer people? Where do people get housed, when they're facing these issues?

R: Yeah. I mean, obviously, it's really difficult in terms of domestic abuse and violence anyway. It's really, really difficult. Unless changes are had to see that as being you should be in priority need, if you're experiencing domestic abuse – like they do in Wales – it's going to always be difficult. So, yeah, we released a Finding Safe Spaces report a few years back and it was found that around 40% of those LGBT people whom we interviewed, who were rough sleeping, were rough sleeping because they'd fled domestic abuse and they had nowhere else to go, so it's quite a high proportion. So, yeah, I guess, LGBT survivors, often, they maybe don't reach our service or hear about our service, until they are sleeping rough. It's not necessarily seen as a safe option for anyone, but for LGBT people, like I said before, they take quite a lot of the proportion of the hidden homeless. So, trying to find somewhere to stay, whether it's a friend or family to sofa surf, but a high number of our clients, particularly the men, find it safer actually to spend their night in an all night club, in an all night café, in a sauna, than sleeping rough on the streets or sofa surfing with someone who, potentially, the perpetrator may know.

I: Which doesn't sound safe at all and it sounds like they're choosing between several dangerous options; which is the least dangerous?

R: Definitely. And I think, you know, we've always got to kind of go from, like...we support people from a client led response and, actually, they've survived up until this point, so they know best, really. They know that spending a night in a sauna or spending a night in an all night club, rather than sleeping on the streets. An element has to accept that is the safer option for them, so we obviously do, kind of, intensive case work to try and search out their other options, even if it's trying to get people into private rented, trying to help them approach the local council, referring them to supported accommodation and, I think, particularly for certain groups of people, if they are at risk of sleeping on the street that night, they also might find that...they, also, often say that it's safer to find somewhere to sleep, in exchange for sex, so this is becoming increasingly easier with apps, like, Grindr. Grindr is an app for gay and bi men, so exchanging sex for accommodation is really...it's just becoming more of an issue.

When asked, clients don't tend to see it as they're actually sex working or that they're exchanging sex for something, but when you kind of discuss, okay, have you slept somewhere last night and has anything happened or did you go there purposely, so that you weren't on the streets? Then it is a conversation that comes up quite a lot. So, yeah, there's kind of a lot of new things that are happening that, I guess, within the community, are seen as the safer option or it's just a possible option.

I: And the risks there around sexual violence, especially for young people and that blurring then of consent and what free consent really means and just real added complexities.

R: Yeah. And it's, like anyone, if you're in that kind of vulnerable situation where you're having to choose between a night on the streets or a night in a stranger's house, then yeah, you know, what you're going to go through with in terms of issues of consent, it really, really does get complicated and a lot of our clients may not want to even talk about it. And those kinds of things are stuff that, if they're then maybe a week later approaching a local council, like, if the council aren't asking about someone's sexuality or gender identity or any housing provider, if they're not asking those questions, then there maybe a lot of someone's situation that isn't being disclosed and they're not getting support with.

I: So, following on from that, you mentioned that Stonewall Housing offer training, could you give us an idea of some of the kinds of topics you cover when your training other providers?

R: Yeah, so a lot of our training...one of my managers, Tina, she's the national engagement manager, so, basically, we do work nationally, in terms of our consultations and our campaigning and approaching our training, so we work with housing providers and organisations and support services, who, potentially, will have LGBT clients and we can train them, really, in the issues that, I guess, I've talked about. It's not all related to domestic abuse. We do deliver some training on LGBT domestic abuse, more housing generally and homelessness issues and, also, we have projects working on how best to support older LGBT people, as well, who are in care homes or support accommodation. So it's quite broad. A lot of our training is based on our Finding Safe Spaces report, which kind of plays into a lot of the issues around the reasons why LGBT specific services are important; the different experiences of homelessness and accessing housing for LGBT people. And then it plays into how services can create a more LGBT inclusive space.

I: We did a previous Spotlight focusing on older people and their experiences of domestic abuse and it feels to me like there's a whole group that's often overlooked there around older LGBT people, who we know that the monitoring is great as it is, but my guess would be that older LGBT people are even less likely to be asked about their sexuality and gender identity?

R: Yeah, I imagine that is true, yeah. I have a few clients that are kind of over fifty, over sixty – I mean, over fifty, I wouldn't class that as old, but, as well as the issue that different services have different categorisations of what is classed as an older person in their client group – yeah, I imagine that it's even harder for those people to access support. I know that the client I work with, that are around sixty or above, are even more isolated than any of my other clients, so they've, potentially, moved countries several times, lost several family members, never, ever been out to anyone, you know, had experienced abuse for their whole lives; and, sometimes, that's not the case, but I see it more in older LGBT people, definitely, kind of the increased isolation and not knowing where to go. Because I think a lot of funded LGBT services now, probably, didn't exist when they initially needed them. So that's the thing as well, they're often quite surprised with what's out there.

I: Yeah, and whether it's okay for them to pick up the phone and talk about something. I think there can be a pressure for people to feel like, it happened a long time ago, it shouldn't be affecting me now and, of course, we know that's not how trauma works.

R: Definitely. And I think, again, it's that kind of...do you see yourself as that person in that story or in that news report or those people that are accessing those services? So, for older LGBT people, even some of the services that are maybe seen as like, come to our queer, friendly space, even the use of that word queer may be seen as really negative for them and they maybe like, oh, that's something that I'd love to get involved in, but it's

not really me and it's not how I see myself...or they maybe like, oh, what's this? They see quite a negative view of it. So, again, it's just narrowing down those services that they can access completely.

I: So you've talked about the importance of asking people about their sexual orientation and their gender identity and understanding why you're asking that question. And this is difficult, but, in a kind of a nut shell, could you summarise some other good practice points that people should be aiming for, to make it a really inclusive space?

R: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, highlighting, definitely, about monitoring, so don't just ask the question for a tick box, but making sure that you're asking and all your staff know why it's important to ask. So, I guess, making sure that the whole staff team is aware. And, on top of that, if you are starting to ask these questions, then make sure staff are not only aware of why, but also how best to support those clients. So, yeah, we deliver training, but I'm sure you can link in with other local LGBT services. Whether it's not a front line service – because they are very few and far between – but maybe, like, a local LGBT support group or a youth group, just an organisation in your community that may know more about it, because we do not expect everyone to know everything. Yeah, so knowing your local services and signposting. Checking language, is one thing. Like, the terminology is getting...there are more and more words that are being used within the LGBT community. Some of those words are fine to use if you're in the community, some of those, from an outside perspective, are not great, but I think we'll never expect everyone to know everything and all those terms, but, just to kind of take a bit of time to reflect on you organisation and seeing...and checking the LGBT terminology.

Again, really, it's just leading from the client. Whether you have an LGBT client or not sat in front of you, it's just asking them how they would like to be referred, their name and, potentially, asking their pronoun, so whether they would be referred to as he or she or they and just forever asking and not making assumptions. So don't make an assumption on who is in front of you, really, and that's the case I'd like to think for a lot of things. I think, particularly, around supporting survivors of domestic abuse, within the women's sector and LB women approaching services. Never assume that, if they're ringing your service, the perpetrator is a male and, even if the perpetrator is a male, do not assume that the woman identifies as straight or heterosexual, because I think everyone's done that before, everyone's busy on help-lines and busy in their casework, to just miss a few questions out, because it's easier to just tick a few boxes, than have to keep a client on the phone for longer. But it is really, really important to ask those questions.

I think, involve LGBT people, so if you do start monitoring and you realise you do have LGBT clients, then get them involved and ask and try and create some sort of, I guess, service user group that can be like, right, how can we best support you and how can we advertise our services somewhere that is LGBT friendly? How can we celebrate this? And, if you are doing great things, do celebrate it, so linking in with services, go to Pride, or put in a rainbow flag or wear rainbow lanyards. I think, just making visible statements, so that you are attracting those people that need help, because LGBT people do experience domestic abuse and those kinds are out there and those people are out there that need services and there aren't enough services that are specific, so it would be great if everyone could be more inclusive.

I: Thank you so much. I have learnt absolutely loads speaking with you this afternoon, so thank you for coming in and doing this Podcast with us.

R: Thanks.