

This FAQ chapter presents the views and experiences of men on the topic of violence. This includes emotional, physical and sexual violence in a relationship or from a sexual partner and experiences of childhood sexual abuse. We begin with quotes from men below, and continue to represent what we have been told in the pages that follow.

I was quite young 17 or 18. I didn't really want to have sex that particular night and I definitely felt pressured into it. I didn't really enjoy it and afterwards I felt, that was really shit and I don't want that to happen again.

(Bisexual, 16-25, HIV negative)

I was very young. I think because it was my first boyfriend, I was totally loved up it could have been anything so it took a while for me to realise what he was doing was wrong. I talked to friends who told me I needed to get away from him but I wasn't really listening.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative)

There's probably times in my relationship where we physically fought... domestic violence really. You can think it's acceptable because it's not a woman, but it's not.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative)

A long term partner who I lived with was emotionally and physically violent. You can put it down to an abusive husband kind of thing. It was a too scared to stay too scared to leave kind of thing. So one day I walked out with the clothes on my back and I believe to this day he doesn't know where I am.

(Gay, 36-45, HIV positive)

Yes. It had an impact. I find it very difficult to let people get to that point of being intimate or letting people near me.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV positive)

I did not tell my mother or father about the child sex abuse and kept that secret for many years. Eventually I told a close friend. Because I thought while I was growing up that was why I turned out gay. Which was not true but that's where my thoughts were a long time during my childhood years.

(Gay, 45+, HIV negative)

FAQ Scotland is part of a larger project that wants to prevent HIV infections in Scotland among gay and bisexual men. The larger project is called an HIV Needs Assessment, undertaken by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and NHS Lothian. For more about FAQ and other FAQ chapters go to www.faqscotland.co.uk

OVERVIEW

What we learned from men about their experiences:

- When men experience physical, emotional and sexual violence and/or childhood sexual abuse these experiences impact on the quality of their relationships and on sexual health and wellbeing.
- Men can struggle to understand that violence is unacceptable; they may not know or understand what is normal, particularly where a level of consensual aggressive or violent behaviour is established as part of sex. This is particularly true for younger men.
- Men identify exiting a violent relationship can be a difficult or protracted process.
- Problematic alcohol use features in the violence men experience. Sexual violence can happen in a relationship as well as in one-off sexual contacts; experiences often leave men feeling isolated and responsible and are rarely reported to others.
- Men working in prostitution are also vulnerable to violence.
- Men who experience childhood sexual abuse report having to cope alone, that these experiences had not been talked about with others (as a child or as an adult) or that as a child (when they told someone) they were not believed.
- Men also recognise the experience of childhood sexual abuse can be woven into the experience of coming out, causing confusion for the child's emerging understanding of their sexual identity.
- While some FAQ interviewees describe childhood sexual abuse as such, FAQ questions about childhood sexual abuse led some men to talk about sexual experiences as children which they do not necessarily frame or name as sexual abuse. A common perspective was for men to describe themselves as *curious* or *precocious* although as adults they now see these experiences as something to question.
- In discussing adult experiences of violence many men identify that they do not know who to go to for support or advice, or that they feel that reporting is not worthwhile. Seeking support can be problematic when it also requires the man to 'come out'.
- Men might not discuss experiences of violence at a sexual health service because they see clinics as a pragmatic 'test and treat service', men also highlight a need for clinical services to show an interest and open a dialogue.

What findings mean for HIV prevention and HIV/Sexual Health clinical services:

- With men reporting that experiences of violence and abuse impact on relationships and sexual health, HIV and Sexual Health Services need to respond by building individualised and person-centred relationships with men, to better understand each man's experiences, needs and risks.
- When men require more intensive services to help them address experiences of violence, they should be supported to access these. Specialist services must have the confidence and skills to address the needs of gay and bisexual men who are referred to them.
- Staff in HIV and Sexual Health Services should know where to refer gay and bisexual men who wish to report violence.
- When services engage with women they undertake routine enquiry about domestic abuse and childhood sexual abuse; this needs to be done with men.

Reflective questions for practitioners

Throughout FAQ reporting, we ask individual practitioners, teams and services to read the detail of findings and then take time to reflect on important questions. Some FAQ subjects touch on the experiences of professional staff. In terms of violence, it may be the case that staff also need to reflect on the impact it has on their lives, and seek help when necessary. With this in mind we pose these reflective questions for practitioners:

- Should my service be routinely asking men about their experience – current and past – of physical, emotional and sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse?
- Am I clear in my engagement with men that my service is more than a ‘test and treat’ service, that I provide a holistic service which has a concern for all aspects of sexual health and wellbeing?
- In the consulting room, do I make space for individuals to pause, reflect and talk?
- How might I/my service work with individuals and across the LGBT community to encourage reflection and dialogue on the part violence plays in men’s relationships? How close are the associations of being a man, physicality and aggression? Can I/we help men to question violence as the norm? Or as something a man ‘deserves’?
- Specifically, how might I/my service work with young men to establish what they want from sex and relationships – with the specific intent to build resilience and refusal to accept violence?
- If men discuss childhood sexual experiences, but do not understand or frame these as abuse, how do I engage?
- What role can I and my service play in fostering a dialogue about sexual relationships between men of considerably different ages, ensuring that men understand the law as it relates to sexual activity before the age of 16? What is in the best interests of young men who engage in sexual relationships out with their peer group?
- If a man needs further information or specialist services, do I know where they can go and do I consider the support they need to get there?
- Do I know and understand how men can report violence to the Police and what they will experience as a part of these procedures?
- Do I understand the role alcohol plays in men’s lives and have I considered how men need to be and can be supported?
- Discussing physical, emotional and sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse can make me reflect on and remember my own experiences: is support in place for me should I need it?

For more about the FAQ approach and project participants go to the **About FAQ** chapter at:

www.faqscotland.co.uk

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INVOLVING PARTICIPANTS

The FAQ community engagement process is interested in the issue of violence because in the context of a broad look at HIV prevention and service improvement, we need to explore whether men who have experienced violence need specific responses from HIV and Sexual Health services.

Men responded to questions about experiences of violence in FAQ telephone interviews and online.

In the 2nd FAQ interview we asked 64 men from the original cohort of 118 men, questions about emotional, physical and sexual violence in a relationship or from a sexual partner.

- 25 men report physical violence in a relationship or from a sexual partner.
- 15 men report emotional violence in a relationship or from a sexual partner.
- 9 men report sexual violence (sexual assault or rape) in a relationship or from a sexual partner.

45 men took part in a third wave of FAQ interviews: 27 men from the 2nd round were interviewed again and 18 new men were recruited. Further questions were asked about violence and a new question about childhood sexual abuse was also asked.

- 11 of the 45 men interviewed reported experiences of childhood sexual abuse.

Of the 18 new interviewees a further:

- 4 men reported physical violence
- 4 men reported emotional violence
- 2 men reported sexual violence.

The second phase of the online work also saw 32 men respond to a themed online survey called Violence. While it might be expected that men drawn to this survey would have personal experience to share, of the 32 men who completed the survey:

- 11 men had experienced physical violence
- 16 men had experienced emotional violence
- 6 men had experienced sexual violence
- 9 had experienced sexual abuse as a child or young person.

In total, FAQ has heard from:

- 40 men with experience of physical violence in a relationship or from a sexual partner.
- 35 men with experience of emotional violence in a relationship or from a sexual partner.
- 17 men with experience of sexual violence in a relationship or from a sexual partner.
- 20 men with experience of childhood sexual abuse

These contributions form the basis for the findings now described.

FINDINGS

Physical and emotional violence

Several themes run through the reporting of physical and emotional violence in relationships.

When experienced as a young man these were difficult because men felt unable to ascertain what was acceptable, what might be the norm, or they might feel that they 'deserved it'.

This was a 3 year relationship, my second, and the partner should have been written off as a mess. I was 18 to 21 in that relationship. It was a 2-way thing and we weren't suited for each other. We kind of pushed each other's buttons and sometimes when we argued we started hitting each other. I tried to walk away and he followed and I felt like I had to hit back to make my way through. There was never a time I felt victimised or abused... He got arrested a couple of times and once for hitting a police officer... I've really learned from it. I never felt depressed from it; I just recognised that I needed to move on.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/076)

It was my first boyfriend when I first moved to Glasgow... We argued after that a lot and he was a lot bigger than me and he would get violent and really drunk. At the time it was really horrible but I was just letting it happen... That was 9 or 10 years ago. I was very young. I think because it was my first boyfriend, I was totally loved up it could have been anything so it took a while for me to realise what he was doing was wrong. I talked to friends who told me I needed to get away from him but I wasn't really listening.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative I3/123)

Yes, aggression from a partner. We were together for 7 years, looking back I didn't know any different, I was quite naïve. Did you ask for or get help or support? No nothing. I didn't think it was wrong, that it was normal. It was only when he went away that I met new people I realised it wasn't right.

(Gay, 45+, HIV positive, I2/083)

Yes. Last relationship I had. It was 4 years of violence, physical and mental. That was 3 years ago. Did you ask for or get help or support? No, just getting that now, through a counselling service now I'm HIV. I mentioned it and they're helping. Didn't ask for help then because I didn't feel it was wrong, I felt like I deserved it.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV positive, I2/016)

For some men there appears to be a lack of boundaries as to what level of physicality can be appropriate between men, particularly where a level of consensual aggressive or violent behaviour is established as part of sex. Across experiences, it is only when men identify and accept their unease or they become fearful that they realise this is not something that they want.

One partner I was with I'd say it was like experimental, some slapping my face, a kind of game, partly I enjoyed it, almost an extension of him being active. So emotional abuse was sort of present as well, perhaps not intended. I felt new to it, perhaps I became quite obsessed, I wanted a long term partner but I felt inexperienced. It felt imbalanced. Got to the stage where we had threesomes when I would have preferred not to.

(Gay, 45+, HIV negative, I2/112)

Yes with my previous boyfriend. It was really mild, one of those things where I started googling domestic violence in relationships. I wasn't sure but it was things like his ex asking did my ex ever hit me. I said yeah once or twice. One time I tucked the tag on his shorts inside his shorts and he hit me. Interestingly enough it was like master slave stuff mind games but the whole thing I was concerned with was the physical.

(Gay, 36-45, HIV negative, I2/104)

In a relationship I have experienced emotional violence. It happened a few years ago. It was just a lot of pressure about things He could be very violent about sex. Very aggressive but it was part of the enjoyment but sometimes it could be mind games so you didn't enjoy it that way.

(Gay, 45+, HIV negative, I2/097)

There's probably times in my relationship where we physically fought. We've talked, domestic violence really. You can think it's acceptable because it's not a woman, but it's not.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I3/023)

Alcohol also features in the experiences of violence men report.

Yes. I was in a relationship with a man for a year. We broke up just about a year ago. He was drinking and would get violent. One time he really flew into me jumped on me punched me kept doing it and said he was going to murder me... After that we tried to make things work but two weeks later, I was just like I don't want to be in a relationship with you. He had been violent before with me and with other people. Alcohol was the main trigger but he just wasn't right I don't think. It was only one or two times before this but not serious but it was getting worse and worse.

(Gay, 16-25, HIV negative, I2/035)

It was with my current partner and to be honest with you it's always been as a result of bad communication in conjunction with alcohol where things have been blown out of proportion. It doesn't happen often anymore and it probably was something that happened in the lead up to us sitting down and discussing that we need an open relationship. It was a time of frustration because we both had a desire to go with other men but we didn't know how to talk about it.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I3/038)

Men also reflect that exiting a violent relationship can be a difficult or protracted process.

A long term partner who I lived with was emotionally and physically violent. You can put it down to an abusive husband kind of thing. It was a too scared to stay too scared to leave kind of thing. So one day I walked out with the clothes on my back and I believe to this day he doesn't know where I am.

(Gay, 36-45, HIV positive, I2/067)

Sexual violence

As well as physical or emotional violence in a relationship, men report sexual violence. Again, issues of isolation and a lack of support have been consistent across reports.

Yes. It was a turmoil relationship with my ex-boyfriend and he was very rough and took advantage of me. At the time, I said you shouldn't have done that and I did mention the word rape... He told me that it legally was not rape because it was our place but it was in his name. This was actual rape anal sex... It was ugly. It took 2 months to get things over with. I lived there during the 2 months because I was paying for it and I was the guarantor for the flat so I couldn't leave because of legal issues with the flat... I didn't talk to a lawyer or counsellor... I only told the truth to my friends and they sorted me out. I do not have contact with this guy.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/072)

Other than with a known/long-term partner an issue for men is the possibility or experience of violence in a one-off sexual encounter. In making arrangements to meet someone men give thought to risk.

There were times when I refused the anal sex, so I was kind of expecting that he might grab me and try to hurt me but those never happened. I have just met nice guys so far.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/057)

Several men report sexual violence in one-off encounters. We return to the issue of reporting or seeking advice shortly, it seems many men do not consider reporting sexual violence as an option; some men blame themselves for putting themselves in a situation of risk.

I was quite young 17 or 18. I didn't really want to have sex that particular night and I definitely felt pressured into it. I didn't really enjoy it and afterwards I felt, that was really shit and I don't want that to happen again.

(Bisexual, 16-25, HIV negative, I3/136)

One time I went with a guy and it got nasty. I was 19. He was an older guy, I met him online and I went to his place first time was fun but second time he wanted to fuck me and I didn't want to do it. I was nervous about it. I'd never done that only oral and hand jobs. He pinned me down and I struggled and got away from him.

(Bisexual, 26-35, HIV negative, I3/123)

Yes, several years ago. I was with someone, part of the attraction was his muscular, dominant physique and I wasn't entirely comfortable with myself. Maybe he just got caught up, but he didn't stop when I asked him to. I let him continue, and then got out as quick as I could.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/022)

Yes, not a regular, once at the sauna I'd consider I was raped. I was in a private room. I'd ejaculated, next thing I knew he had my legs up and penetrated me without protection. I told him to stop, tried to force him off, but he didn't stop. I said after 'I hope you're clean'. He just left quickly. It was just done. I couldn't get him off. It was a shock at the time. I told myself you did go with him; he just took it as license to do what he wanted.

(Gay, 45+, HIV negative, I2/048)

Once when I was 18 before I lived in Glasgow. I went back to this guy's house. I was really all top at that time. He tried to fuck me I was out of it from drink and tried to stop him but he put a condom on and then and then he took it off. I woke the next morning and he was fucking me again. I don't know if he came inside me. He wasn't forceful in that sense but I never really clicked on what happened until I was back home... It took about a day for me to realise what actually happened. I went to a local drop in centre and they said I needed to go get tested.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/046)

Yes, a few years ago I'd gone back to a party and had been drinking, taken GHB and E. I woke up the next morning and there was blood on the walls and I was bleeding out of my arse. I remember I was in bed with this guy, then next thing I wake up bleeding... I was really upset, felt such an idiot for getting myself in that situation. After 3 months I went to ROAM to get tested, they were very good, they told me about a remote anonymous reporting to the Police, they encouraged me but I didn't want to go down that route. I'd got to the stage where I'd made my peace with it. Because I wasn't clear what had happened I'd make accusations when I didn't really know what had happened.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/023)

Two men discuss acquiring HIV infection in context of a violent relationship. Again, support and help from the perspective of these men has been inadequate.

I had an ex-partner who was very controlling and domineering. Very possessive and quite volatile. We had a relationship which had quite a few instances of violence and emotional and psychological violence. I wasn't in a very good place. I met him and he was the first man I had had unprotected sex with since the 80s. He managed to persuade me that he had no risk whatsoever. I insisted a couple of weeks into it that we needed to make sure that both of our statuses. He got tested and he came back with an unequivocal result. I got tested and got the same. And two unequivocals became positive. They had probably been very recent exposures. That was the beginning of our relationship. A real shock not something I had anticipated whatsoever. I can't apportion any blame to him. It was just one of those things that happened. Pretty quickly into the relationship I realised we weren't compatible but we stayed together mainly because of our status. Being single and positive was a scary thought.

(Gay, 45+, HIV positive, I2/044)

Yes. It was my ex that infected me. He beat me up. It happened once or twice, a couple of times. The first time was when I split up with him because he was getting aggressive and threatening to do things, so I couldn't stand that so I left. After the first time I left him he beat me up again when we were no longer in a relationship and after I found out he infected me with HIV. I wanted to talk to him without confronting him about what happened. Which was stupid. I wanted an explanation of why he never told me. He turned around and said he wanted to make our relationship stronger. I started screaming at him and threatened to call the police. He started hitting me. We called the police. They treated it as an assault, that's it. I wanted them to help me bring him to justice. I wanted them to treat it as more of a sexual assault but they just done him with GBH and gave him community service... It was hard. I did talk to people and get help at the end. It was help but more could have been done... I would have liked more insight into the law. I wish they would have tried to put me in contact with someone who's been in my situation. In the NHS they weren't overly helpful. I find the NHS is not trained for it. It was a psychologist. The HIV sent me there. And the psychologist wasn't trained in what's happened to me. It was more that they sent me to a general psychologist rather than someone with experience of dealing with sexual assault because it doesn't happen that often.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV positive, I2/026)

Two men have shared experience of violence from men paying them for sex. One of these had a positive experience reporting to the Police, the other felt reluctance to report. For more on related issues, go to the FAQ chapter **Payment for Sex**.

I was just starting to get into escorting and the man wanted me to do something and I thought I called the shots and he basically had me in the hotel room and he tied me up and he basically done what he wanted. He tied me up through the sex play. He hit me. And whipped me and fucked me very aggressively, spoke to me like I was shite. I jailed him. I got the police involved. The police treated me well. They took a report and they said if it happened again I was to phone them.

(Heterosexual, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/080)

When I was working down in Kelvingrove Park, I picked a guy up and we went to an industrial estate and we were in the car and he pulled out an iron bar and hit me over the head with an iron bar. But my friend stayed just up the hill so I went up to his place and he took me to hospital. It was scary. No report to the police. When I went to hospital I just said that I had fell. It's happened a few times inside Kelvingrove Park itself. I used to go inside the park at night and when it got to be 6 o'clock, I'd just sit at the benches and watch the cars go by. You could get students walking by so they could actually see what was happening. So I felt safer that way. It was the violence that stopped me going into the park.

(Bisexual, 36-45, HIV negative, I2/078)

Childhood sexual abuse

As reported earlier 20 FAQ contributors have shared experience of childhood sexual abuse. A common theme across FAQ interviews was of coping alone, that these experiences had not been talked about with others (as a child or as an adult) or that as a child (when they told someone) they were not believed.

Have you experienced sexual abuse as a child or young person? *Yes. I'm going to leave it at that and I'm not going to talk about that ever.* Have you ever discussed your experience of violence or abuse with anyone, professional or friend or family member? *My experiences? Being young, no. Never with anybody ever.*

(Bisexual, 16-25, HIV negative, I3/136)

My uncle used to abuse me sexually. He would pick me up from primary school and he would drive along laybys and he would rub his hand between my legs and it would be him and one of his mates by the time I was in high school. Have you ever discussed your experience of violence or abuse with anyone, professional or friend or family member? *Yes, I have with professionals. I did discuss it with family members but most refused to believe me because he was quite a respectable gentleman.*

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I3/047)

I got counselling [for the rape] when I was 18. I basically broke down when I was 18 because someone touched me the wrong way in my job and it all came flooding back in one fell swoop. I ended up going to the doctors and they put me on anti-depressants and because I tried to kill myself I was put into counselling and psychotherapy. But nobody knew because I got up every morning and pretended to go to work... I still don't understand why he did it. But I've got over it so I don't need to drink to get over it. Now I'm older and just drink because I drink.

(Gay, 36-45, HIV negative, I2/095)

Men also recognise that experience of abuse can be woven into the experience of coming out, causing confusion for the child's emerging understanding of their sexual identity; again support to reflect on these issues may not have been considered or available.

I did discuss the violence with my former partner with my counsellor. I talked to some gay friends. I did not tell my mother or father about the child sex abuse and kept that secret for many years. Eventually I told a close friend. Because I thought while I was growing up that was why I turned out gay. Which was not true but that's where my thoughts were a long time during my childhood years.

(Gay, 45+, HIV negative, I3/126)

Some FAQ interviewees clearly describe childhood sexual abuse as such, but questions about childhood sexual abuse led some men to talk about sexual experiences as children which they do not frame or name as sexual abuse (and we have not counted as such). A common perspective was for men to describe themselves as *curious* or *precocious* - although as adults they now see these experiences as something to question.

I was promiscuous at a younger age but I wouldn't say it was abuse. I recently had a chat with a female friend who was also having sex, like me, at 14. You don't see it. I'm 30 now and I think good god, those 35 year olds I had sex with then are my age now. I find it bizarre now, if a friend said he was seeing a 15 year old I'd be horrified.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I3/018)

No experiences of abuse, not as I'd see it. I was quite precocious, I was having sex with adults from age of 14 but it was consensual, I don't see that as abuse.

(Gay, 36-45, HIV negative, I3/108)

I wouldn't call it abuse, however from the age of 10 to about the age of 16 I was having regular sex with another teenager who was 4 or 5 years older.

(Gay, 36-45, HIV positive, I2/068)

Probably once when I was curious and trawling the station toilets in Falkirk, a guy pretended to be a police officer and took me into the toilet and made me suck him off. I was probably about second year at high school, probably about 13 or 14 maybe. Obviously I was curious myself then... have not discussed it. It wasn't really difficult to deal with. It probably convinced me that I was gay and that was okay.

(Gay, 45+, HIV negative, I3/032)

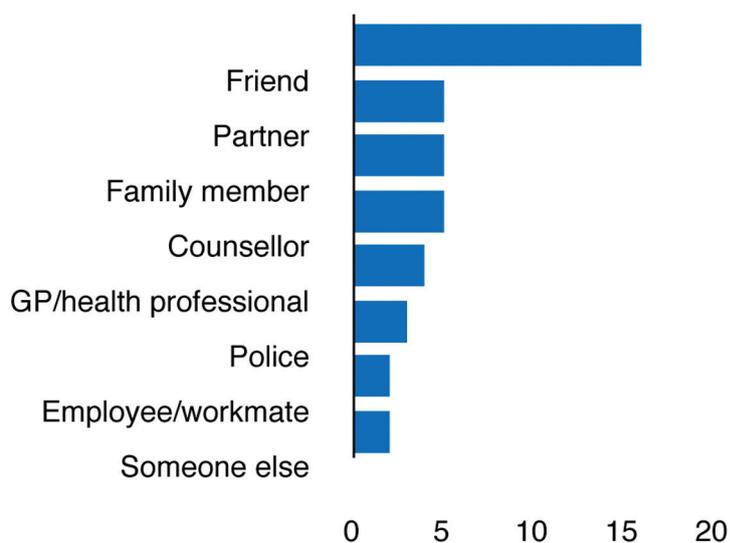
I was 13 on holiday... I didn't know anything. There was an old guy, in his 60s. He offered me some money, he tried to fuck me but it was sore and I ran away. Another time he offered me more money. I was scared so I told my mum who reported it to the Police but they wouldn't do anything about it. He apologised to my mum. That was it.

(Bisexual, 16-25, HIV negative, I3/014)

Support and reporting

From the violence themed online survey, 20 men responded to the question: *Have you ever discussed your experience of violence or abuse with any of these people?* From these responses (men could identify more than one person) we can see the importance of friends and family, with less engagement with professionals:

Have you ever discussed your experience of violence or abuse with any of these people? (n=20)



In discussing adult experiences of violence in FAQ interviews, many men identify that they do not know who to go to for support or advice, or that they feel that reporting is not worthwhile. For men in some relationships the *need* for the relationship set against the negative experience of an abusive partner is an on-going negotiation with themselves about the violence and what they might lose. Men identify that friends play a key role in providing support, but that family support can depend on whether they know and are supportive of the individual’s sexuality – so that seeking support means ‘coming out’.

Yes, emotional abuse a few times, verbal abuse from a boyfriend and a one-off meet. I told friends but I didn’t tell anyone else because at times the relationship was abusive but otherwise the best. I guess I didn’t want to jeopardise it.

(Gay, 16-25, HIV negative, I2/087)

I didn’t get any support really. I had friends to talk to. It was the end of the relationship.

(Gay, 36-45, HIV negative, I2/110)

Some friends were there to support but they were more just trying to calm the situation. I never got any professional help because I didn’t realise it was a problem... Afterwards, I mentioned it to my family after I told them I was gay.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/076)

For the small number of men who reported violence to the Police, experiences vary. We identified positive experiences earlier, but for this man (reporting about experiences in 2000) reporting was not helpful:

Violence, not sexual, but physical from my partner. The relationship ended in 2000. I got the Police involved, I didn't feel supported at all. They just came out, did their job, I felt embarrassed, like I was wasting their time.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I2/018)

In terms of reporting and seeking support, and focussing specifically on the actual or possible role of a sexual health service, we asked men online and in FAQ interviews: *Have you ever discussed your experience of violence or abuse with someone at a sexual health clinic? And: Would you ever discuss your experience of violence or abuse with someone at a sexual health clinic?*

From 25 online responses only 4 men responded yes they had discussed this. However when asked *would you ever discuss your experience at a sexual health clinic* respondents indicate the *possibility* of discussions about such matters in a clinic setting with 3 men (12.5%) reporting they would definitely discuss it, 5 (20.8%) might do so and 9 men (37.5%) responding 'not sure'.

These contributions from FAQ interviewees also highlight what might influence men's use of the clinic setting as a place to talk about their experiences of violence. One block to engagement on the issue may be a view of clinics as a pragmatic 'test and treat service'. Men also highlight a need for clinical services to show an interest and open a dialogue.

Would you ever discuss your experience of violence or abuse with someone at a sexual health clinic? I don't think it would be relevant because it's in the past. I'm quite proactive and when I go to the clinic it's about what I want to be tested for. I wouldn't want to take up too much of their time either.

(Bisexual, 45+, HIV negative, I3/128)

Have you ever discussed your experience of violence or abuse with anyone, professional or friend or family member? Never discussed with a professional about emotional violence but at the time I did talk with a friend but nothing anymore... Have you ever discussed your experience of violence or abuse with someone at a sexual health clinic? I'm not sure. Should I? I don't think so. Maybe if the sexual health clinic asked I would just open up because it's been quite a long time ago. I don't think it's important anymore. That's what it is in society and I just go with it and I'm fine... So, would you ever discuss your experience of violence or abuse with someone at a sexual health clinic? Maybe. Yeah I think so because it prevents me from letting people come into my life, like I create a lot of shields as well and I have hardly any friends. When people try to get close to me it reminds me of what happened before. I just stay inside for a week maybe and then I go out again.

(Gay, 16-25, HIV negative, I3/012)

A powerful message from some interviewees is that they have survived sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse; men understand that they are not responsible for it. While these stories exemplify resilience and a positive view of adult sexuality, men may still have a need for support but may not know how or where to find it. This from one FAQ interviewee:

Would you ever discuss your experience of violence or abuse with someone at a sexual health clinic? It's down to this. I was very young. The specific recall I have difficulty with... I haven't felt the need to disclose it to people because what are they going to do? I've had a very successful career and never labelled myself the victim. There's a lot more of that stuff that goes on than people will ever know. There's a lot about this country, society moving on to a better place. It's a great thing that youngsters can be believed and speak up and the situation will be dealt with... I don't associate my sexuality to what happened then. It's something I enjoy, not something that is made because I've been abused sort of thing. In a way, constantly being conditioned and told what I am, what I am not, what I can do. I've always held onto my sexuality as me, something I chose. I almost hold onto it as something special because he doesn't know and doesn't deserve to know. If I had a loving caring father that I felt differently about and respected I might feel differently. Has your experience of violence or abuse affected your relationships or the sex you have? It hasn't at all. Because I was pre-puberty when it happened so I had no concept of sexuality at that stage. I had no ability to even think about sex or that it wasn't something your dad should be doing to you. I don't connect the two at all. It was just about pain and control, what sexual abuse is all about. I do feel like I need to talk more and sometimes I feel a need to offload but it's just me crying my eyes out in a car park. I would consider talking to someone considering if it was at a time that was suitable. My fear is what's the starting point, why am I there?

(Bisexual, 45+, HIV negative, I3/122)

The impact of violence

Within FAQ telephone interviews and the online 'violence' themed survey, men took the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the experiences of violence described in this chapter. We asked men *has your experience of violence or abuse affected your relationships or the sex you have?* This chapter already draws on many of the reflections from men contributing to FAQ, and this final section summarises key issues which services might usefully understand and consider further in their support for men.

In their responses to the violence survey, 11 men identify consequences from their experience of violence including being much more cautious, suffering from depression, a lack of confidence and being unable to trust partners. These quotes are examples:

More cautious, reluctant to meet initially and then scared the person will change.

(Online respondent)

Much more shy.

(Online respondent)

No but I ensure that I never put myself in the position for it to happen again.

(Online respondent)

Yes, it's why I believe I fail to trust.

(Online respondent)

Yes, very distrusting of partners.

(Online respondent)

My ex used to beat me. He was my first relationship and it makes me anxious about other relationships.

(Online respondent)

It was possible to gather more detail from men in interviews. These final contributions highlight how violence impacts on adult life; here men focus on trust, anxiety, intimacy and the impact on some physical aspects of having sex.

I would say it's a factor, not 100% but a factor. I put it down to trust, because I don't trust people.

(Bisexual, 36-45, HIV negative, I3/039)

Yes. It had an impact. I find it very difficult to let people get to that point of being intimate or letting people near me.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV positive, I3/016)

I still have nightmares and flashbacks about it. And thank you for the opportunity to speak about it because it's good to let it go. A lot of guys on the gay scene have experienced much worse. That's just part of the gay scene. That's part of life.

(Gay, 45+, HIV negative, I2/040)

I reported to the police but he was not found guilty I had post-traumatic stress. It's not a big deal now but for a number of years it was a big issue... I really struggled to have sex for a couple of years.

(Bisexual, 26-35, HIV negative, I3/127)

Those experiences shaped me as a person and made me quite a difficult person... It has affected the sex that I have. If you're a person who believes you experiences shape who you are. Some people would say that the S&M I get into in sex is linked to that but who's to say. I'm not into anything cheesy nothing too extreme. And interestingly it's only in my relationships with men.

(Bisexual, 16-25, HIV negative, I3/136)

I think it did for a while. For quite some time I was not being penetrated at all.

(Bisexual, 45+, HIV negative, I3/128)

It's affected the way I was with my partner now. At the beginning I was standoffish and I didn't want to let him in. I really liked my partner but I was scared to get emotionally attached so I kept finishing with him and then getting back together. But I finally realised that I couldn't keep doing that so I finally opened up to him. Since then it hasn't affected me in relationships or sex.

(Gay, 26-35, HIV negative, I3/125)