



## **NEWS RELEASE: Opening of the UK's first LGBTIQ+ Domestic Abuse Refuge**

### **Announcement**

At a time when LGBTIQ+ identities are under attack, we are proud to announce a new partnership between The Outside Project and Star Support, commissioned by the Mayor's Office and funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The new partnership will provide the UK's first dedicated refuge for LGBTIQ+ survivors of domestic abuse. As well as the refuge service, the funding allows us to provide community-based support at The Outside Project LGBTIQ+ community centre. The refuge service is being led by a new organisation called Star Support.

### **Background**

The need for LGBTIQ+ survivors has traditionally not been well-resourced, particularly when it comes to accommodation-related support. Up to this point, there have been no permanent by-and-for<sup>1</sup> refuges for LGBTIQ+ survivors. This is despite the fact that the experiences of LGBTIQ+ survivors have been relatively well documented.

For example, research has found:

- More than half of all LGBTIQ+ respondents reported having experienced over 20 incidents of domestic abuse<sup>2</sup>
- The most common perpetrators of abuse against LGBTIQ+ survivors were parents – mothers (45%) and fathers (41%).<sup>3</sup>
- 80% of trans people had experienced domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner.<sup>4</sup>
- One in four lesbian and bi women have experienced domestic abuse in a relationship.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> By-and-for services are those which are designed and run by members of the community they serve. We use the Mayors definition, which stipulates at least 80% of staff hold the specified characteristic.

<sup>2</sup> Stonewall Housing. (2014). ROAR: Because silence is deadly. London: Stonewall Housing.

<sup>3</sup> Galop (2022). *LGBT+ Experiences of Abuse from Family Members*. Galop.

<sup>4</sup> Roch, A., Ritchie, G., & Morton, J. (2010). Out of sight, out of mind? Transgender People's Experiences of Domestic Abuse. LGBT Youth Scotland, Equality Network, Scottish Transgender Alliance.

<sup>5</sup> Fish, J., & Hunt, R. (2008). Prescription for change: Lesbian and bisexual women's health check. London: Stonewall UK

In a recent study, Galop found that LGBTIQ+ survivors often do not seek support from services or receive informal support from family and friends, following domestic abuse. The Drive Partnership, found the majority of LGBTIQ+ survivors reported that they 'were more likely to feel comfortable accessing an LGBTIQ+ specialist domestic abuse service, and more likely to feel uncomfortable accessing a mainstream victim support service' (Galop 2022). Despite the best intentions, mainstream services lack the knowledge, skills and experiences to cater for the needs of minoritised communities.

In addition to the above, it has been well established that LGBTIQ+ people face high rates of homelessness. Stonewall has found that 'almost one in five LGBTIQ+ people (18%) have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives<sup>[6]</sup>, compared with one in ten (7.7%) within the general population<sup>[7]</sup>. With higher rates of homelessness and significant rates of domestic abuse, it is clear that accommodation for LGBTIQ+ survivors of domestic abuse is needed now, more than ever.

We believe it is essential that domestic abuse services are designed by the communities they intend to serve. This ensures specialist understanding and awareness of the nuances and needs of the community, resulting in safe and effective interventions where people are accepted, without exception.

**Dwaine (pseudonym), our first resident, says:**

*'LGBTIQ+ people need somewhere they can come and be safe in order to rebuild their lives. Living in this project enables me to open up, deal with trauma and past experience while moving forward and creating a safer future for myself.'*

**Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for London, said:**

*'Domestic abuse is a devastating crime that can affect anyone. Having a safe place of refuge to escape from abuse, together with specialist support services, can make a huge difference for the safety and wellbeing of victims and survivors. I'm delighted that we have been able to help Outside Project and Star Support to deliver a dedicated refuge and community support for LGBTIQ+ Londoners, as we build a safer London for all.'*

**Carla Ecola, Managing Director of The Outside Project, says:**

*'As a survivor, developing STAR Refuge from a COVID emergency response into a permanent, independent organisation is the achievement of my lifetime - this wouldn't have been possible without Maari Nastari leading the project to create Star Support, and every person who joined the MAKE SPACE FOR HOMELESS QUEERS campaign from April 2020 onwards. Thank you all so much.'*

**Maari Nastari, CEO of Star Support, says:**

*'Star Support is proud to continue the legacy of supporting survivors of domestic abuse, continuing the work started by The Outside Project. For too long, LGBTIQ+ survivors have been underserved by mainstream services. I am proud to lead this new organisation, which will centre the voices of LGBTIQ+ survivors. We are grateful for the support from MOPAC and funding from DLUHC to assist us in creating this new service run by the LGBTIQ+ community, for the LGBTIQ+ community.'*

### **Fundraising:**

We are currently raising money for our residents move-in costs as well as making our therapeutic space warm and welcoming. Please find our fundraising page here:

<https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/star-support>

### **Supplementary information:**

***The Drive Partnership (2023) - LGBT+ victim-survivor views on interventions for those who cause harm in their relationships:***

<https://drivepartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/LGBT-victim-survivor-views-on-interventions-for-those-who-cause-harm-in-their-relationships.pdf>

- 'The majority of respondents reported that they were more likely to feel comfortable accessing an LGBT+ specialist domestic abuse service, and more likely to feel uncomfortable accessing a mainstream victim support service'
- 'When asked what was important to be included within a domestic abuse support service specifically for LGBT+ victim-survivors, respondents emphasised the importance of services having LGBT+ specialist knowledge and understanding.'

**Galop 2023 - "An isolated place": LGBT+ domestic abuse survivors' access to support:**

<https://galop.org.uk/resource/an-isolated-place-lgbt-domestic-abuse-survivors-access-to-support/>

- Around 6 in 10 (61%) LGBT+ survivors did not seek support from services following a particular instance of abuse by a family member or a partner/ex-partner.
- Close to 4 in 10 (38%) LGBT+ survivors went without support from friends, family or other informal support following an instance of abuse by a family member or a partner/ex-partner.
- Of those who sought support (n=619), fewer than 20 LGBT+ support seekers received advocacy services (3%) after a particular experience of abuse by a family member or partner/ex-partner. However, nearly 9 times as many LGBT+ survivors reported wanting advocacy after the abuse.
- Trans, non-binary and gender-diverse+, and pan/queer survivors reported high levels of concern about being mistreated by services or that services may not understand their identities.

**Galop 2022: LGBT+ Experiences of Abuse from Family members:**

<https://galop.org.uk/resource/lgbt-experiences-of-abuse-from-family-members/>

- 43% Trans and non-binary people surveyed had experienced higher levels of abuse from a family member or members.
- 60% of respondents who had experienced abuse from their family felt that their LGBT+ identity was either the main reason or part of the reason.
- A significant number of victims who experienced abuse from their families think support would have been helpful, but did not, or were not able to access it. This includes advocacy (42%), practical assistance (40%), formal advice and information (38%) and therapeutic services (24%).
- The impact of familial abuse is substantial – 92% of respondents told us that it had a negative impact on them.
- A significant number of victims who experienced abuse from their families think support would have been helpful, but did not, or were not able to access it. This includes advocacy (42%), practical assistance (40%), formal advice and information (38%) and therapeutic services (24%).

**A freshly prepared room in Star Refuge**



**Maari Nastari, CEO of Star Support**



**Our new therapeutic space at Star Refuge**

