



## Research report II: General approaches of community response to domestic violence and the L(G)BT community

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## Definition of “community response”

“The current movement is toward a broader and more coordinated response to domestic violence cases, referred to as coordinated community response (Pence&Shepard, 1999). The objective is to develop an even more comprehensive and certain system of intervention. Battered women’s services, for instance, might maintain contact and support for women whose partners are brought to criminal court. Civil court actions might be added to domestic violence cases to increase protection for women or help with child support. Police and court response to noncompliance might be swifter and more decisive. Specialised probation officers could better manage men in batterer programs. Men with compounding psychological and alcohol problems might be referred to other kinds of treatment as well as batterer counselling.

Much of this coordination is being achieved through domestic violence councils that include representatives from battered women’s services and batterer programs, police and probation departments, court officials and prosecution officers, and other community services. There are still challenges in breaking down “turf”, focusing on the victim’s well-being, and obtaining the time and resources for these councils to meet and act (Gondolf 1994). [...] batterer programs, rather than being singular treatments, are increasingly becoming part of a larger system of intervention.” (Gondolf 2002)

Key aspects are:

- Comprehensive system of intervention
- Networks and collaborations to improve protection of battered women

Since Gondolf (2002) the definition of “community response” has been broadened in including measures of prevention. The main aim of community response activities is to promote a societal atmosphere where domestic violence is stigmatized so that perpetrators do not feel supported by societal silence and victims will be protected.

## Aim of the research

Societal silence did protect male perpetrators of domestic violence for a long time. Politicians and the law did react quite late and only with pressure of the women’s movement on domestic violence issues. Nowadays intervention networks are established in every bigger city and in most European countries. Those networks are intersectional and members are representatives of women’s shelter movement, police, state attorneys, women’s counselling services, child care, various departments of administration (youth, women, social affairs, health etc.), policy makers, etc. So, since the problem of domestic violence is multi-facetted, it is responded to in various ways as well. Nowadays measures are categorized in a system of prevention, which are activities of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

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In LGBT communities we experience a silencing of domestic violence as well. Thus, it might be useful to build as well multi-agency networks (or to use already established ones) either within the LGBT communities or even with mainstream organisations.

We try to find answers for following questions:

- Which networks (within LGBT communities) are useful to raise awareness about domestic violence within those communities?
- Which networks are useful to optimize the protection of the lesbian victims and to support lesbian perpetrators?
- Referring to already existing intervention networks: Which collaborations need to be discussed differently than in heterosexual oriented intervention networks? (Example: collaboration with police, perpetrator programs etc.) Which might be helpful to fight domestic violence addressing the LGBT communities?
- So, how should OUR networks look like in the future? What are special aspects? Which measures

## Methodology

Research was done on the internet and by consulting the domestic violence support centres for additional information. Keywords we used (in combination with each other and in Dutch) were:

- Domestic violence
- Partner violence
- Evaluation
- Primary / secondary / tertiary prevention
- Police
- Women's shelter
- Liaison officers
- Annual report
- Intervention
- Network
- Chain approach
- Action plan
- Sexual violence
- Honour related violence
- Migrants
- Vulnerable target groups
- L(G)BT
- Same sex
- Lesbian
- Bisexual



## 4. Research results

### 4.1 Description of local community response activities (mainstream).

#### a) Measures of secondary prevention (intervention)

Domestic Violence Networks Utrecht – Arnhem - Nijmegen

The municipalities are responsible for the domestic violence networks. Coordination is in general in the hands of the SHG, the domestic violence advice and support centre for that municipality. When a case of domestic violence is reported the intake counsellor makes a report of the problems that are present in the family. Based on the report s/he will coordinate appointments and case consultation with a team of liaison officers from the relevant organizations for this family. The networks are approximately the same in each region, just with different regional organizations. Participants are:

- § Domestic violence support centres
- § Care services for specific mental or physical support
- § Counselling centres
- § Social Work
- § Alcohol & drugs counselling centres
- § Police
- § Forensic institutions
- § Children & Youths social care centre
- § Child protection centre
- § GGD (National Health Service)
- § Prosecutors office
- § Probation office
- § Crime victim help offices
- § Women's shelter\*
- § Housing agencies

\* these organizations have brochures for witnesses, batterers, victims (multi lingual) about their specific services for clients.

National website: [www.huiselijkgeweld.nl](http://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl)

Intersectional website for sharing information on a national level in the area of domestic violence / child abuse / FMG / forced marriages etc. For all disciplines: policy officers, counsellors, researchers, police, prosecution, probation offices, lawyers, prevention workers and educative institutions can all use this website. Both, to offer and to find information. It also contains information for the public, such as where to find support centres in the area. Reports can often be downloaded. The website is well known amongst experts and it is well used.

New focus campaigns are generally launched with more information materials such as a toolkit. The latest campaign that is concerned with (relationship) violence is a digital instrument for



professionals such as teachers, doctors, etc., to check if a situation might be classified and reported as domestic violence.

#### Local initiative in Arnhem

On request of a so called 'problem quarter' in the municipality of Arnhem a prevention & intervention network was formed consisting of people living in that quarter. These 'advocates' received training and have peer contacts once a month. They do not provide counselling or support, but work on creating awareness and trust, so people can take steps towards domestic violence centres. The project has received awards for innovative work in domestic violence prevention. The municipality of Arnhem has decided to expand the project to other 'problem quarters'.

#### b) Activities of primary prevention (e.g. information campaigns, school material etc.)

Primary preventions projects directed towards young people (relationship starters)

##### Project 1: Stay in Love

Pilot project. Movisie (formerly Transact); Trimbos instituut; Riagg - Zwolle; Parnassia - Den Haag 1<sup>st</sup> primary prevention project in the Netherlands. It aimed at developing positive relationships and thus preventing abuse. Project pilot ran in two cities in Holland from 2003-2006. Material that was developed after running 10 focus groups (from the age group for whom the campaign is intended):

- § Lessons with teachers manual
- § Training for teachers
- § Brochure
- § Poster
- § Relationship test
- § Theatre script
- § Theatre production and rap on DVD
- § Cards with tips for a healthy relationship
- § Advertisement video clip at McDonald's
- § Website [www.stayinlove.nl](http://www.stayinlove.nl) (still active) with forum

The stay in love pilot is evaluated positively (excepts for the 'McDonalds ad') and it will be implemented in more cities as "stay in love +", but for a younger age group (12-16 yrs old)

##### Project 2: Loving me Loving you

Project is coordinated by the GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond and is also aimed at developing positive relationships and through this preventing abuse. Material that was developed:

- § Interactive theatre production
- § Workshop
- § Lessons in prevention with teacher manual



- § Teacher training
- § Parents information evening (DVD available for information on DV)
- § Website [www.lovingmelovingyou.nl](http://www.lovingmelovingyou.nl) (on the GGD website)

The website is still active as part of the GGD website. Teachers can download the teacher manual and find addresses of where to book the interactive theatre production.

### Project 3: Crush!?

GGD Eindhoven, St. Humanitas Eindhoven; FIOm are initiators of this project directed towards young people up to 25 yrs. old. Intermediaries are a target group as well. They aim at learning to recognize violent behaviour in dating relationships.

Young people were invited to enrol in 1 of 7 workshops that lasted 4-7 months. During these workshops a theatre performance was prepared. The workshops were:

- Drama
- Set construction
- Costume design
- Martial arts
- Expressive movement
- Streetdance
- Rap

Workshop ended in theatre performance & DVD and accompanying teacher manual. Crush was evaluated positively, but the website is no longer active. So far no new project was announced.

### Primary prevention project directed towards adults

#### WE CAN (end all violence against women)

WE CAN originally started in Bangladesh in 2004, and was later implemented in different countries in the South Asian region. In 2007 Canada successfully started the WE CAN campaign. Gender inequality is seen as the main cause of violence against women. Basically the WE CAN program asks both individuals and organizations to support the initiative to end violence against women. Individuals are called changemakers. They receive support and information from the WE CAN organization to discuss violence and gender inequality in their own circle of friends. This is called a mini campaign. Organizations can become coalition partners. A coalition partner can take a stand against violence against women; give training for personnel or clients. WE CAN organizes network meetings on a regular basis.



c) Measures of tertiary prevention (e.g. juridical backup like laws aiming at domestic violence, ...)

'Nu is het genoeg'.

Public campaign with the title: Now it's enough. Help yourself. Help the other: aimed at stopping domestic violence that is occurring. The campaign is aimed at adults who experience domestic violence (victims & perpetrators & witnesses), and has the intention to create awareness of domestic violence networks and the availability of support. It encourages people to come for advice or support. The campaign 'Nu is het genoeg' has recently been repeated for the third year. Each year has a different focus. In 2008 it was on female migrant victims and last year on witnesses of domestic violence. This year's focus is on perpetrators.

- § Commercials on TV and radio
- § Posters
- § leaflets
- § website <http://shginfo.nl>

Doorbreek huiselijk geweld (break the cycle of domestic violence)

Domestic violence program of the Dutch Women's Council (Nederlandse Vrouwenraad). The Dutch Women's Council is an umbrella organization for many different women's organizations. The idea behind the program is that "if women can talk about their experiences or if they can be a 'good listener' for other women who have experienced violence, this might break the cycle of violence". They also support women's organisations by providing information on how to organize meetings on domestic violence. These meetings were organised in several provinces. The project started this year, and is not evaluated.

Geweld is niet gewoon (violence is not normal)

(Domestic) violence program directed towards refugees by Pharos. The program consists of posters, a DVD and a manual. The DVD contains 6 scenes without languages, later repeated in animation. These scenes can be discussed.

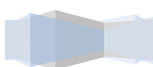


Table 1: Compilation of community response activities

Primary prevention	Secondary prevention	Tertiary prevention
<p>Institutions: Movisie (formerly Transact); Trimbos instituut; Riagg - Zwolle; Parnassia - Den Haag</p> <p>Activity: Stay in Love</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> primary prevention project in NL. Aimed at developing positive relationship and thus preventing abuse. Project pilot ran in two cities in NL from 2003-2006.</p> <p>Target group: young people. Age group 16-20 yrs</p> <p>Evaluated: yes</p> <p>Evaluation result: positive. Pilot will have nationwide follow up in 'stay in love +'.</p>	<p>Institution: DV network Utrecht</p> <p>Activity: Local Intervention Networks</p> <p>20 participating organizations from different disciplines work on the intervention of domestic violence. Organizations are in the network when needed. Case consultation is regularly.</p> <p>Target group: experts working on DV</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p> <p>Evaluation result</p>	<p>Institution: Steunpunt Huiselijk Geweld</p> <p>Activity: 'Nu is het genoeg'.</p> <p>Public campaign with the subtitle: Help yourself. Help the other: aimed at stopping domestic violence that is occurring.</p> <p>Target group: Adults who experience domestic violence (victims &amp; perpetrators &amp; witnesses)</p> <p>Evaluation: yes</p> <p>Evaluation result: positive. Campaign has recently been repeated for the third year.</p>
<p>Institution: GGD Eindhoven, St. Humanitas Eindhoven; FIOM</p> <p>Activity: Crush!?</p> <p>Aimed at learning to recognize violent behaviour in dating relationships.</p> <p>Workshops ended in theatre performance &amp; DVD.</p> <p>Target group: young people and intermediaries</p> <p>Evaluated: yes</p> <p>Evaluation result: positive.</p>	<p>Institution: Ministerie van Justitie; Movisie</p> <p>Activity: <a href="http://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl">www.huiselijkgeweld.nl</a></p> <p>Website for sharing information on a national level in the area of domestic violence / child abuse / FMG / forced marriages etc.</p> <p>Target group: experts and public</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p>	<p>Institution: Nederlandse Vrouwenraad (Dutch Women's Council)</p> <p>Activity: "Doorbreek huiselijk geweld" Regional groups of the NL Vrouwenraad organize meetings in each region</p> <p>. Target group: women (potential &amp; possible victims and comforters)</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p>



Primary prevention	Secondary prevention	Tertiary prevention
<p>Institution: GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond</p> <p>Activity: Loving me loving you Aimed at developing positive relationship and thus preventing abuse.</p> <p>Target group: young people. Age group 13-16 yrs. 2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup> grade VMBO education.</p> <p>Evaluated: yes</p> <p>Evaluation result: positive. No follow up program.</p>		<p>Institution: Pharos</p> <p>Activity: Geweld is niet gewoon. Know your rights – seek help</p> <p>Information for refugees, to be discussed in groups</p> <p>Target group: refugees</p> <p>Evaluation: no</p>
<p>Institution: Municipality of Amsterdam, Movisie (coordination)</p> <p>Activity: WE CAN (end all violence against women) Dutch version of an international campaign aiming at individual responsibility.</p> <p>Target group: public &amp; organisations</p> <p>Evaluated: no</p>		



## 4.2 Description of multi agency networks

- a) Please describe how your organization is integrated into already existing intervention networks/chains.

Taboe Kwadraat is not involved in any of the existing chains. We do meet with chain members however and provide support on activities for L(G)BT people. Specific organisations that Taboe Kwadraat is networking with are Schorer, Movisie & HERA.

- b) Please describe prevention activities (primary, secondary, tertiary) aiming at the LGBT community (in collaboration with existing network?)

1. Workshop / Discussion evening for everyone who is interested (LGBT'S, heterosexuals and professionals) as part of the Utrecht (LGBT) Midzomergracht Festival program. Approx. 20 people visited the evening.

Cooperation between Movisie (initiator) Midzomergracht / Schorer & Taboe Kwadraat (primary prevention)

2. Internet survey & information organized by Municipality of Hengelo with the intention to develop and improve domestic violence policy & support for LGBT people.

Cooperation between municipality of Hengelo (initiator) and Taboe Kwadraat. (secondary & tertiary prevention)

- c) Have there been conducted activities by the LGBT community? (please describe which ones and their effectiveness)

1. Theme evening for lesbian and bisexual women, organized by COC Nijmegen. A short documentary on domestic violence in lesbian relationships was filmed and shown this evening. A panel consisting of 4 people answered questions from the audience (approx. 100 women). Cooperation between COC Nijmegen (initiator), HERA, Kairos and Taboe Kwadraat. (primary prevention)

This evening was one in a series of successful evenings about a variety of topics. COC Nijmegen has a very active lesbian/bisexual community. The topic of relationship violence was considered to be interesting and after the theme evening it was a topic of discussion for some weeks. After a few weeks the discussion died down. It is necessary to keep the discussion going by new information.

2. Brochures for community organisations and for domestic violence professionals about domestic violence in LGBT relationships. Cooperation between Movisie and Taboe Kwadraat.

3. Theme evening for LGBT's at COC Arnhem. A lecture and two movies were intended. Unfortunately only 5 women were present, so we changed our presentation plans into a discussion evening. Cooperation between HERA ( initiator), Taboe Kwadraat and COC Arnhem (primary prevention).

This evening was not successful referring to the number of participants. Nevertheless, because of our discussions the presidents of COC Arnhem is now dedicated to support the subject of domestic violence in woman to woman relationships. But the small number of guests coming to the evening may lead to the conclusion that did not reach the community.



Several factors may be responsible for lack of success. Publicity about the evening was postponed by COC not until last week before the presentation. Then they had an interview on a regional radio station and a short message in the local paper. More money, time and attention were spent on activities around coming out day. So, public relations were not given enough time by any of the organizers. A second factor might be that this was the only activity besides a coming out day party. If more items had been on the program or if the evening was organised separately we might have been more successful.

d) Description of multi agencies:

In Utrecht, Arnhem and Nijmegen the municipalities are responsible for domestic violence networks. The setup of these networks is the same all through the Netherlands, only organisations differ, since most of them work local or regional. There are two kinds of intervention networks that partly overlap:

1. Judicial Case Network: when an incident is reported officially and the prosecutors' offices are involved. In this network the coordinating police officer documents all the necessary information and s/he starts the system oriented approach that is necessary for this specific perpetrator. Arrangements are made for perpetrator, victim and (if necessary) children. Actions are planned and time schedules are made. The following institutions meet weekly to discuss the cases that are active at that time and to report back on their own actions for specific perpetrator, victims and children.

- police
- prosecutors' office
- probation office
- forensic psychiatric institute
- institute for alcohol and drugs
- child care centre
- crime victim support
- domestic violence support centre (presides the meetings)

2. District Case Network: for all incidents that do not belong to 1 (JCN). If the incident is reported to the police the officer documents all the necessary information and informs the victim / perpetrator that information will be sent to the support centre. The support centre contacts the people involved and starts the description and analyses of the situation. On the basis of this analysis they offer support for all people involved. These cases are discussed in the district case network. One of the participating organisations will take on the coordination of this specific case. Actions are planned and time schedules are made. The following institutions meet once every two weeks to discuss the cases that are active at that time.

- social work
- child care centre
- domestic violence support centre
- police
- MEE
- VieJa Utrecht



The case is closed when all parties are of the opinion that a client has landed at the right place for support, or if contact cannot be established with the client.

Besides the Case Networks the domestic violence support centre organises thematic meetings three times a year for the people in all organisations working on domestic violence. Participating organisations have designated people working on domestic violence networks and clients.

3. Movisie: A separate place is reserved for Movisie. Movisie does not have a role in the intervention chain. This societal development organisation plays an important role however, since they develop new knowledge based plans, and describe innovative work that has been done in the country. They also organise expert meetings, conferences and training for professionals. Movisie would play an important role if there would be something like a prevention chain. The organisation works LGBT positive, and is aware of the problems

### 4.3 Reflection of community response and multi-agency networks

The government's dedication to stop domestic violence is relatively new. In the early years of this millennium, plans were developed to start working with a multi agency approach, because families that experience domestic violence very often have more problems. There might be neglect of children, substance abuse, unemployment, housing problems, language problems, handicaps. The first few years after this decision to use a multi agency approach the infrastructure had to be built. Time, energy and money were spent in order to make the whole chain of intervention that is needed to efficiently approach domestic violence problems. The former women's shelters became domestic violence support centres. There was one evaluation on starting this multi-agency infrastructure in 2007. According to this evaluation there were some irritations and misunderstandings in the past because every organisation in the networks has its own (registration)procedure. Furthermore, there is a gap between counselling organisations and judicial organisations. When all partners are motivated, the cooperation works efficiently. In other situations there seems to be some hesitation about the cooperation.

In spite of the existence of the domestic violence support centres, most cases of domestic violence are initially reported to the police. These cases generally concern (severe) physical violence. We don't know how many people speak about violence in their relationship with counsellors of centres for alcohol and drugs and psychiatric institutions, or with general practitioners, employees of housing agencies etc.

This year (2010) the domestic violence support centres were evaluated. They were supposed to become the front office for the other network participants. Through their intervention the clients are supposed to receive high quality support that caters to their specific needs. The domestic violence support centres themselves feel they lack sufficient nationwide control, direction and vision. They have to spend much time and energy in fighting for their position. Network partners sometimes consider the domestic violence support centres as competition. They feel they can offer their own support to clients without having to consult with the



domestic violence support centres. The last, but not really least conclusion was that no one really defined 'high quality support'.

Success should include questions like "will the client benefit from the action taken", "how can we evaluate this benefit", and if the client does not benefit "how can we change this". Success for a domestic violence support centre, would also mean that (potential) clients take responsibility for their own situation by consulting the support centre.

## Discussion

### a) Similarities and Differences between hetero and LGBT networks referring to partner violence

There is no domestic violence multi agency network that includes LGBT organisations. This would also be very difficult since there are no professionalized LGBT organisations. In the Netherlands we do not have an organisation like Lesbenberatung (Berlin) or Galop (London) where LGBT people work for a salary. This would mean that people who work voluntary for the LGBT community organisations would participate in the domestic violence networks. This would not be easy to arrange. First of all, professionals and volunteers might not see each other as equals on this subject. It might also be difficult to arrange regular meetings. Volunteers very often work outside office hours, because many of them have regular jobs as well. The professionals will most likely try to meet in office hours. Creating a network that consists of both parties will be a very delicate job.

### b) Which aspects need to be discussed critically?

The domestic violence infrastructure is created for heterosexuals. It is important to look at the availability of the multi agency approach for LBT women. This is not just a matter of the domestic violence support centres (the front office), but also the network and counselling organisations (the back office).

For most people in the intervention network it is evident that LBT women would be received and treated exactly the same as heterosexual men and women. The general conception at this moment is, that by using a systemic approach, most important specifics of the situation of clients will be defined. This should include awareness of female perpetrators and influences of minority stress. The notion that women are always victims, and men are always batterers is said to be outdated. In the 'modern' vision domestic violence is not that simple. In the systemic approach each person's role in the violence and background will be more closely analysed.

The content of domestic violence support centres websites and the language that is used on those websites do not confirm this attitude. Generally speaking there is for instance hardly any shelter available for male victims of domestic violence. Most victim programs cater to women and most perpetrator programs cater to men. Recently initiatives to change this are being developed. But for the person who consults the websites of domestic violence support centres these developments are not really visible. The evaluation also mentioned that the systemic approach is not really used that often.

### c) Lessons learned

When people seek help for violence in their relationship it is important that they are heard, that their specific needs are supported, and that they can be in charge of their own lives (again). We can learn from the experiences of the development of the multi agency approach which elements are important to reach this goal. A local initiative in Arnhem also shows us that people from the community are essential as a first contact. Not for counselling purposes, but to support the client in opening up to support centre, police or any other kind of organisation. The necessary elements are:

- People must know a support program or centre exists
- Preferably such a program or centre is available for contact at all times (24/7)
- Information and prevention are important tasks. When people experience a heavy workload this is often forgotten.
- The aim of the support program is to help people to end the violence in their relationship. It is important that a good estimation of the support that is needed is made in the early stages of seeking help. This empowers the women who seek support and it motivates them to stay in the program.
- The support program/centre should listen to the needs of the clients and their family members (partner and maybe child(ren))
- The centre must refer to the correct organisations for help. And preferably make the appointments for the clients / partners. These appointments should be clear and followed up by the people working on the support program
- To be able to do this, the centre needs to have good relations with the networking partners
- If referrals are made the network organisation should be open and supportive
- Both partners should receive adequate help for their specific roles
- There should be adequate knowledge available of judicial consequences

## 6. Conclusions

From the experiences with the multi agency approach for heterosexuals we may conclude that relationship violence remains a very difficult and taboo subject - also for heterosexual people. Much time and energy is spent on creating infrastructures, networks, negotiations and defending positions. This makes it difficult to provide the support that people need and to make sure that this support is given correctly and efficiently. People can receive one kind of support in one region and quite a different treatment in another region (depending on how far developed the various networks are and the type of organisation that initiated the support centre).

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We found several awareness raising initiatives. It is interesting that for young people drama or theatre was the main awareness raising instrument. This was possible because these young people were confronted with the performances in their schools. For adults creating awareness is done mainly by media attention like radio commercials, newspaper articles, websites and internet fora. By



now there are a few websites available for young people (primary prevention) and for adults there is the “now it’s enough” campaign that is continued for the third year (tertiary prevention). The website ‘www.huiselijkgeweld.nl’ provides information for professionals and public. Intersectional exchange of ideas is quite well arranged through this website (secondary prevention).

One good activity would be to develop multimedia attention for lesbian women. This could be used for creating awareness and explanations about relationship violence and where to go for help. Using new media was also one of the advice topics of the experts we spoke to for the previous report. The “we can” campaign also uses new media (including video blogs, you tube films) explicitly to create awareness. This campaign shows us that it can be very helpful to have icons from certain communities (such as the lesbian and transgender communities) showing their concern and involvement in the topic. The internet can also be used for starting discussion strands on fora and in groups like facebook, hyves, etc.

For our project it will be very important to have people from community organisations working with us. Because of the heterosexual image of the domestic violence centres we need the input of these community organisations. We cannot do it without the support centres however, because once you create awareness there has to be an organisation to go to when people need support. In the Netherlands this support is not available through the L(G)BT networks. If we want this infrastructure to be available for LBT women, we have to spend time on awareness raising activities for domestic violence support centres and police as well.

It might be a good idea to organise a few information meetings in various community organisations to introduce the subject in the communities. This can be supported through articles on the websites of these organisations and in *Zij aan Zij* (the Dutch magazine for lesbian women). All members of these organisations work unpaid however, so there is a limit to what can be asked and expected from them. Furthermore, these people will also be hindered by the same taboo we are trying to combat. It might take time and effort to convince them to participate in our project.

In the Netherlands we would also like to come in contact with the LGBT advisory boards of the municipalities. Various LGBT organisations participate in these advisory boards, and since they are politically active they might be open for a domestic violence initiative for lesbian women.

One thing that is really necessary for creating awareness about domestic violence in women-to-women relationships is imaging material. Posters and brochures with photos. Something that gives a clear picture of the topic we are talking about: Lesbians/transgenders and domestic violence. There is plenty of imaging material available for heterosexual situations, with women and children as victims, and men as perpetrators. The question is how we can develop images that lesbian women can identify with. Sometimes we see a woman alone with a black eye. But even then it is most easily associated with heterosexual domestic violence. It is very difficult however to find something “attractive” to use for lesbian women. And that is exactly what we need, since we want to mobilise and motivate women to think about a topic that most prefer to deny.



Eva is involved in a lesbian relationship and she has two children with her partner. The relationship and her day to day life bore her. Then she meets Becky. Becky is exiting, beautiful and young, everything Eva feels she is not. The two women start an affair. Becky is convinced that she and Eva are destined to be together. She dislikes the fact that part of their life was spent apart. Becky convinces Eva to leave the relationship she is in and to leave everything except for her two children behind. Becky's behaviour touches a part of Eva that is hidden deep inside her. Her need to feel deeply and intensely loved. She leaves the relationship, with her children, but takes nothing personal that was used in her "former" life. From the start the couple was involved in a very intense relationship in which there was no room for autonomy. There was only "we", no "I". They were on the phone or sending messages most of the time they were apart from each other.

Friends did not get involved in this stage. No one commented on this drastic separation. After a few weeks Becky started to get fits of anger. In the early stages the anger was mainly directed at objects. Kicking a door. Throwing something against the wall. Quarrels were discussed with friends. One of Becky's friends asked Eva if Becky was ever hitting her, because this had happened in one of Becky's former relationships. Eva said this had not happened, and the friend said probably because Becky loved her more than she had ever loved someone before. Eva exchanged experiences with her mother, who herself had been involved in a violent relationships with Eva's father. Eva's mother was present at the first escalation of physically violent behaviour, when Becky tried to strangle her. The mother tried to help by pulling at Becky and by talking to her, asking her to let go.

After this incident Eva started to realise how she felt at the mercy of Becky. She had left everything behind; she had nothing that belonged to herself. Becky felt guilty of her behaviour and she really wanted Eva to stay in the relationship and forgive her. Therefore she decided to put everything they had together officially in Eva's name. This would make her feel more secure. They also moved to get away from the bad memories. And Becky decided to go to therapy. The violence continued however. And after every incident they decided that the experience had made them stronger, and that it would not happen again.

A year later there was another bad escalation of physical violence. The couple had been out and they had drunk too much alcohol. Becky attacked Eva at a bus stop physically. There were many people waiting for the bus, but no one reacted. The couple was on the street fighting. Eva went into a bar. She asked the barkeeper to call the police because her partner was out of control and dangerous, but he said he did not want to get involved. The couple continued on their way home and Becky tried to strangle Eva once more. A young man passing by tried to help. He started talking to Becky trying to convince her to let go. After a while Becky said she would stop as soon as the young man would walk away. After this incident Eva told Becky to leave. Becky, again feeling guilty about her behaviour, stayed with friends. After a few weeks the anger returned. For a while threats to harm people in Eva's family and demands about returning objects that Becky considered to be hers were sent by mail. Becky brought a group of friends to the house to forcibly take what she considered to be hers. She also hired a lawyer and tried to get the rest of what she considered to be hers through the courts. She called the police. They did not want to fill out a complaint, but offered to intervene and be present at a certain time if goods needed to be retrieved from the home. Eva found support for her own behaviour at a Norwood self-help group.

