



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

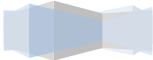
RFSL

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## 1. Definition of “community response”

In this second report within the LARS project, the main common focus is on “community response” to domestic violence. The definition used is the following:

“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 counseling.

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 and certain systems 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.



## 2. Aim of the research

The aim of the LARS project is to improve the community response to women-to-women domestic violence and to develop and implement awareness-raising actions within the L(G)BT community. There is an urgent need to overcome the taboo of naming and discussing domestic violence in same-sex relationships. The first report aimed at the L(G)BT communities and how domestic violence is discussed within the community. In this second national report we will examine coordinated community response locally in the city of Stockholm, Sweden. We want to find out about the existing activities and multi-agency cooperation referring to violence in heterosexual relationships. We also want to learn from the experiences of people working against domestic violence and to explore what is known about successful prevention – primary, secondary and tertiary. The aim is to examine to which extent activities and cooperative projects includes violence from a L(G)BT community point of view. Finally we want to discuss alternatives for developing the community response for the L(G)BT crime victims. We describe which L(G)BT specific activities that could be involved as a resource for awareness-raising actions.

We end up in a discussion about the following questions:

- Which are the similarities and differences working against men's violence to women and violence in woman-to-woman relationships?
- Which measures has to be done to fight domestic violence addressing the LGBT communities?
- Are there any existing activities and networks within the L(G)BT community in which awareness-raising strategies about domestic violence can be used? Which are they and how can we use them to optimize the protection of victims and the support the perpetrators in the future?
- How can already existing activities and mainstream networks develop to include woman-to-woman relationships? What are the obstacles and opportunities?

In the next chapter, we present the method of our research. The result is presented in three parts where we will describe and reflect on the mainstream local community response and the multi-agency networks in Stockholm. This is followed by a discussion of similarities and differences between hetero and L(G)BT networks when it comes to partner violence. We focus on critical aspects referring to the infrastructure and also which lessons we might learn about the need of evaluation and defining successful community response. In the conclusion we make proposals for L(G)BT com-



munity response strategies; bringing the experience from mainstream community response for women's peace into the Swedish L(G)BT community. We will discuss if and how multi-agency networking against men's violence against women in heterosexual relationships can be extended and developed to include violence in same-sex relationships and/or how cooperation against domestic violence can be operated within the L(G)BT communities.

### 3. Methodology

To answer the questions about the organization of mainstream activities and coordinated community response, we did short interviews by telephone with ten key actors; directors, project managers and leading administrators at different authorities and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The activities and projects all had a focus on violence in close relationships, mainly men's violence against women. Most of the interviewees were known to us, but we also used a snowball selection process where a few of them were added.

The Social Services at Stockholm's central administration is represented by one Project Manager, another one who is managing a project about cooperation within the city of Stockholm and the Executive Director at the Women's shelter called Crisis Centre for Women in Stockholm. The assistant Executive Director responsible for Women's peace in the areas of Norrmalm, Kungsholmen and Östermalm, also participated. From one of the 14 districts of Stockholm, Rinkeby Kista, we interviewed the assistant director of their local Team for Women's Peace.

The County Administrative Board is also included in the report through the interviews done with an administrator who is dealing with violence against women and another administrator with focus on of honour related violence. A Project Manager for cooperation within the health care system at the Stockholm County Council was contacted.

From the NGOs the Executive Directors for All Women's House and Ersta shelter/support were interviewed. These organizations provides a shelter, support and counselling for women who are victims of domestic violence.

The questions asked in the interviews were the following:

- Do you actively involve same-sex partner violence in your regular work with perpetrators and/or victims of partner violence?
- If yes, what methods are you using to include same sex partner violence?
- Are you included in any multi-agency networks? If yes, please describe these networks.
- What is negative and positive in today's conditions for prevention and networking?



- Can you recommend that we talk to other help-lines, institutions etc who may have more relevant information to give?
- Is there a possibility and interest to initiate cooperation with RFSL in the future (if not already existing)?

Apart from the interviews we did an online search on relevant web sites referring to domestic violence, men's violence against women, violence in same-sex relationships, networks, campaigns, NGOs, women's helpline and shelter, LGBT, activities in general for the L(G)BT community and crime victims helpline. The online research included identifying local and national evaluation reports on activities and coordinated community response.



## 4. Research results

### 4.1 Description of local community response activities

#### Secondary prevention

The city of Stockholm is divided into 14 different and independent areas. Every District Council / administration provides most of the municipal services such as support and shelter for women and their children who are victims of violence. That does not mean that every district do supply this within their district, but it is possible for one district to buy this service from another. In one-third of the districts there are teams for Women's peace, where women as well as men and children can get support. Their function is to coordinate different kind of activities necessary to involve in each case. The municipalities surrounding the city of Stockholm are also offering programs for victims and perpetrators.

The Project Manager from the central administration, who runs a project for getting the districts to cooperate to a greater extent, describes external cooperation in individual cases as quite well functioning in most cases. She means that within a specific organization like the social services the cooperation is usually very poor. The fact remains that if a person exposed to violence is entitled to an administrator who happens to have appropriate knowledge, they may receive adequate support and help. It is not a guarantee that the administrators have the necessary knowledge for dealing with domestic violence.

Except for the regular local woman's shelters, the city of Stockholm is providing a shelter for women with alcohol- or drug problems called Hvilan. At a national level it is possible to get help through the NGO Terrafem that is a national help-line with focus on girls and women who have been victims of men's violence and who are of foreign origin. They give support and counselling in 43 different languages, and provide shelter. Their web site does only refer to violence in heterosexual relationships.

An example of secondary prevention where cooperation exists is the one between the Ersta shelter/support who is working with women and children and Stockholm Men's centre who offers support and therapy (Manscentrum). The idea is that they should contact and support each other in specific cases. E.g. if Ersta is contacted by a battered women, they could turn to the Men's centre in order to offer help to the male perpetrator. That should be a possibility also the other way around. If a male perpetrator is sentenced, the court can decide to send him to a treatment program for Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) and also Aggressive Replacement Training (ART). IDAP is exclusively for violence in heterosexual relationships. LBT women who have committed a crime and were sentenced cannot attend the IDAP program.



The County Administrative Board benefits Government grants to early intervention against violence, vulnerable families and projects to prevent honour-related violence and shelter activities. They distribute means for projects that can be both primary and secondary preventive. For example the NGO RFHL Stockholm has a shelter and help line called Q-jouren, which is run by project means via the city of Stockholm's administration for social services. Parts of the staff at Q-jouren are educated to meet LBT women.

The interviewee from the County Council described an ongoing project within the health care sector is focusing on getting authorities to cooperate. One of the specific goals is that every organisation should have current information such as telephone numbers to activities for women who are victims of violence, to which they can refer. The lack of this information can be an obstacle for professionals asking about violence in their clinical work with patients. If they do have the correct information they can easier meet the needs of their clientele. Otherwise they might not ask the necessary questions because they do not know where to refer their patients. To spread knowledge about the Action Plan against women who are victims of violence is another aim with the project.

Further on, she highlighted the difficulties in involving the County Council in the cooperation against violence in partner relationships. For example she described the difficulties when the local Team for Women's Peace in one of the districts of Stockholm (Västerort) produced an Action plan. In order to make professionals to act according to the plan, they wanted potential cooperative organizations to commit themselves to this plan by signing a binding contract. However, when it came to the health care sector, there were over 18 different clinics, maternity centres etc. in the area. It was not possible to get all these separate entities to sign. The clinics are independent; many of them are privatized and were not interested in spending money and other resources into these matters. This is partly because the health care clinics are paid for each single patient but not for other engagements like cooperation. It became clear that organisations publicly funded were easier to convince to cooperate, but there are few incentives when it comes to private entities. The fact that the health care in Stockholm is fragmented does decreases the probability to realise cooperation.

It seems like there are individual cases in which cooperation between different organisations do work, but they do not exist on a regular basis. The LGBT perspective is not at all integrated in the Stockholm city's social support system. The violent lesbian/bisexual/trans gender women has nowhere to turn to if she wants help with her behaviour; nor does the violent gay/bisexual/trans gender men or even the victims of domestic violence.



Looking at evaluations on prevention, three measures of the district in Stockholm were included in the national enforcement, which The County Administrative Board and The Swedish board for welfare and health did on the municipality response to domestic violence from the municipalities. We do not have access to the specific results from the municipalities in Stockholm. Same-sex relationships were not included in the mission from the government, but it is partly included in the investigation. The results presented were that municipal activities for LGBT people did almost not exist at all in Sweden. The report does not mention support for LBT perpetrators. This report also confirms that cooperation is done at in individual cases but is lacking in structure for overall coordination response. In general, there is a lack of evaluation reports when it comes to prevention and community response locally in Stockholm.

Lena Berg has written a report on more specific prevention against violence. In this study (2007: Nordisk forskning om prevention mot våld bland unga. "En betraktelse från en genusorienterad horisont" FoU-rapport nr 10. Stockholms stad. [www.stockholm.se/FoU](http://www.stockholm.se/FoU)) Berg investigates if and how gender studies have affected the field of prevention research in the Nordic countries, asking the question if there is any gender perspective on prevention programs for young people. Berg did not find any formative evaluations on prevention on violence in the literature. She then does a critical analysis on four prevention programs Olweus measure program, Prevention in School (PS), Social Emotional Training (SET) and Aggressive Replacement Training (ART). Berg discusses different measures to evaluate a program. In some evaluations the question asked for is if the program has reduced the actual violent behaviour. However, although such an effect can be found, it does not tell us anything about the method. Bergs critical view on the programs is that the programmes are meant to be universal and therefore are not comprise specifics on e.g. sexuality and gender. In other words they fail in paying attention to the different grounds for discrimination, such as sexuality and gender identity. Therefore Berg stressed the need for awareness about the complexity of young peoples living conditions. That is totally necessary for preventing violence among adolescents and that makes it possible to gain more equality and non-violent relations.<sup>1</sup>

## Primary prevention

Public campaigns have been done within the network Operation Woman's Peace (Operation kvinnofrid) in Stockholm. The County Administrative Board, the County Council, the police and the

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<sup>1</sup> Nordisk forskning om prevention mot våld bland unga – En betraktelse från en genusorienterad horisont FoU-Rapport 2007:10 Forskning- och Utvecklingsenheten, Stockholms Stad



city of Stockholm were involved. The last campaign called Okejsex.nu was in 2007. The focus was on sexual violence and rape. Raise awareness about the problem and its different forms. The target group was people between the ages of 15 – 30 years in Stockholm. The information was spread by Internet, newspapers, out side advertisements and cooperation with other organizations. Since then, there has not been any large-scale activity. Operation Women's Peace is now set to give priority to honour related violence.

There are some national authorities, NGOs like Amnesty, political parties, The National Centre for Knowledge About Men's Violence Against Women and the Governmental Action Plan against violence mentions violence in same-sex relationships. The two National Associations who organize the local women's shelters in Sweden, ROKS and SKR, SKR, both have web sites with information about violence, where to turn for shelter and support and links to other organizations. In most of the information they address heterosexual women who are victims of violence from men. SKR mentions that both the perpetrator and the victim seeking support can be a LBT woman and ROKS has a link to RFSL'S help-line. ROKS and SKR have published two reports on same-sex violence. In 2010 a web site called Tjejjouren.se was launched by ROKS and SKR and their local Young Women's Empowerment Centre. The site provides information that includes LBT girls when it comes to general descriptions of sexuality and gender. The L(G)BT perspective is also mentioned when it comes to parts of the material that refers to actual violence in relationships. But, although they choose to mention that violence in a girl-to-girl relationship is expressed in the same way as in a heterosexual relation, the "normal" case referred to is men who are violent to women. The local division's help-line for young women in Stockholm works primary preventive by visiting school classes talking about e.g. domestic violence and sexuality and also organizes groups for girls. Their web site is heterosexual oriented. ([www.stockholmstjejour.nu](http://www.stockholmstjejour.nu)).

A national campaign called The Safety Pin Campaign - Rally against men's violence had the aim to raise awareness of men's violence and to involve men and boys in gender policies and interventions to prevent and end violence. The NGO "Men for Gender Equality – Sweden" initiated this campaign. Also the Swedish Police came out with a big campaign in 2009 with the aim to get more victims of domestic violence to report to the police. This was done by advertisements in newspapers, and Internet, both nationally and locally. Media and press was contacted and a special web site was launched ([www.polisen.se/komtilloss](http://www.polisen.se/komtilloss)). The campaign does not refer to specifically heterosexual violence and there is a link to RFSL'S help-line.



The only direct prevention activity aiming at L(G)BT people, is the campaign RFSL has done in cooperation with ROKS, SKR, Tjejjouren.se (mentioned earlier) and two other organizations working for crime victims. BOJ and Hopp. This is a national cooperation financed by project means. The campaign therefore is national in one way, but the advertisement occurred in Stockholm only. Therefore it can informally be said to have a local preventive effect. The period for this action was during the Stockholm Pride, where also many LGBT people from around Sweden visits Stockholm. In 2009 RFSL's help-line noticed a higher amount of calls after the campaign, but a regular evaluation on it has not been done.

### Tertiary prevention

When it comes to tertiary prevention, the Swedish Social Services Act stresses that victims of crime and especially women and their children may need support and help. In this paragraph L(G)BT women are not pointed out, but bisexual and lesbian women can however be included.

According to The Swedish Penal Code Chapter 4, Section 4a "A person who commits criminal acts as defined in Chapters 3, 4 or 6 against another person having, or have had, a close relationship to the perpetrator shall, if the acts form a part of an element in a repeated violation of that person's integrity and suited to severely damage that person's self-confidence, be sentenced for gross violation of integrity to imprisonment for at least six months and at most six years." Formally this might include same-sex relationships. It is not yet possible to deduce any statistics on the matter, according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. Further on, violence in heterosexual relationships in which a man has been violent to a woman is specially defined as gross violation of a woman's integrity.



## 4.2 Description of multi agency networks

Earlier on, a multi agency network existed at a central level in Stockholm, including people at leading positions working within the police, the health care system, the social services and different NGOs. In 2006 the right wing alliance took over the local political power in Stockholm. At that stage, the responsible politician suggested that the network against partner violence should not be a priority any longer. This politician also meant that it was too difficult to bring the many different organizations together. From that point, it was decided that all available resources should be put into the work against honour related violence. The official political view in on the main problem concerning violence within the family therefore has been changed.

The non-profit Women's shelters in Stockholm have been working together in a cooperative team for a couple of years. However, the means allocated is not in the ordinary budget, but in the form of a temporary project. The cooperation network will dissolve when the project ends, which will happen in a short while.

Our results show that the Social Services are cooperating to some extent. There is an overall network for the 14 districts of the city that meets twice a year has now been funded to develop local resource groups where the police, the church, the health care, the preschool and the local crime victim helpline are included. However, NGOs are poorly represented.

RFSL'S help-line is partly integrated at a national level, but not at a local level so far. As a result of the interviews made for this report, RFSL'S help-line got invited to attend a cooperation team in the city of Stockholm. We were asked to hold two seminars about violence in same-sex relationships and also to be involved to be a regular member of a reference group working against honour related violence. One of the central districts wants RFSL'S help-line to visit one of their network meetings.

RFSL and the Crisis Centre for Women and the NGOs local women's shelters have been cooperating at an individual basis in a few cases. When it comes to hate crimes RFSL is integrated with the specialised local police unit for hate crimes in Stockholm. The members of this group have also a function giving advice nationally in these matters. There is no correspondent cooperation when it comes to domestic violence.

Very recently RFSL'S help-line has been invited commenting officially on new guidelines about domestic violence created by the Swedish board for welfare and health.



According to the information we get from the web site [www.stockholm.se](http://www.stockholm.se) there is no activity (counselling, support or shelter) run by neither municipal nor non-profit organization, which enunciate victims of domestic violence belonging to the group of LBT women. This is true also for perpetrators. When we contacted the ones who are responsible for this web site, we offered them to add information about RFSL's help line. The administrator was very hesitant and argued that the municipality had chosen only to refer to activities which are financed by them. Even if RFSL's help-line is national most of the victims and perpetrators live in Stockholm. Due to the fact that authorities in Stockholm not provide support and shelter for LBT-women should be a strong argument for the City of Stockholm to link to RFSL's homepage.

In practice, there are examples of RFSL'S help-line contacting different organisations in Stockholm who then are welcoming LBT women although their main focus is on heterosexual relationships. LBT women have also contacted Mansjouren on their own initiative, asking for help with their violent behaviour. Victims within the L(G)BT community have as well ensured themselves getting support and shelter by their local Women's shelter.

The Director of a shelter called All Women's House means that the police forces have a naive attitude towards violence in relationships, and even more when it comes to violence in LGBT relationships. Women who are victims of violence by other women are not addressed in the documents although they do welcome LGBT women seeking help. It is always hard to know where to go. The Director of All Women's House stresses that they include LBT women, even though they not specifically address this group. They did shelter some lesbian women even though they are few, and have also given support to a gay man who had been a victim of violence. They also actively include the children's perspective.

The representative for the municipal shelter called The Crisis Centre for Women in Stockholm says that they have discussed the question of meeting the LBT women's needs. They had come to the conclusion that there are some differences in the context of the violence rather than in its expression. Violence in woman-to-woman relationships is not as rooted in society as men's violence to women. The consequence is that it is harder to reveal. The Crisis Centre is welcoming support to LBT women, but they do not address them directly. It is unknown whether the LBT women can stay in collective accommodation. During 2010 five LBT women in need of help have contacted the Crisis Centre.



The Team for Women's Peace at one of the districts in Stockholm says that they do accept LBT women, even if they do not mention this on their website. They use the term violence in intimate relationships. After the interview, they will raise a discussion about if and how it can be included at their website and in other information documents.

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

Little has been done to evaluate the success of multi-agency networks at a local level in Stockholm. SALAR, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, has accomplished a national inquiry handed out to all municipalities and County Councils in Sweden.<sup>2</sup> We do not have access to the specific results from the city of Stockholm or the County Council, but we might learn something from this survey in general. This survey shows that the respondents, directors from local municipalities mainly those representing the social services and county councils, consider the following factors as the most important when it comes to gain success in fighting and preventing violence against women:

- That local municipalities and county councils cooperate with other authorities and organizations
- That prevention work is to be done within permanent activities
- That the activity has an action plan for the work for women's peace

Compared to the SALAR study referred to, the results in this is the same as in this report; the need for a coordinated community response and the need for more permanent solutions than as in the present situation where the cooperation is allotted to project means.

The fact that most of the multi-agency networks in Stockholm are based on temporary project means that a guarantee for continuity and lasting cooperative relations does not exist. The consequences on the lack of resources for multi-agency networks fighting violence in intimate partnerships in general are that the resources for violence in same-sex relationships is very hard to obtain.

In the SALAR survey, women who have been victims of violence in a same-sex relationship are defined as one of the groups that are particularly vulnerable. The survey reveals a major deficiency of specialized activities for the L(G)BT people and a lack of knowledge and education among employees about violence in same-sex relationships. However, a few of the county councils who participated,

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<sup>2</sup> Utveckling pågår. En kartläggning av kvinnofridsarbetet i kommuner, landsting och regioner (SALAR 2009)



did mention that one of the most important intentions for the years coming is to develop their work for women who are victims of violence in same-sex relationships. Consistently, in this report and in general, the lesbian or bisexual women as a perpetrator and the gay man as a victim of domestic violence is almost not mentioned at all.

The Inquiry on Social Services' Support for Women Subjected to Violence (SOU 2006:65) states that important factors for a cooperation to work are that the aim and roles are clear and that the need for cooperation is seen as legitimate. The circumstance that the aim of the cooperation against violence totally changed to honour-related crimes, gives a signal that violence in intimate partnerships is not viewed as being a matter of importance at the moment in Stockholm. This of course hinders the chance to establish cooperation, even though it is still done in individual cases.

Looking at the existing activities and networks within the L(G)BT community in which awareness-raising strategies about domestic violence can be used, there are some organizations, activities and clinics in Stockholm that specifically addresses the L(G)BT community. Those are utterly important to involve in the development of local awareness rising strategies. The most important are as follows:

Stockholm South General Hospital ([www.sodersjukhuset.se](http://www.sodersjukhuset.se)) provides

- an Emergency Clinic for Rape Victims. The clinic addresses women who are victims of sexual crime. On their web site they define that the perpetrators can be both men and women, both known or unknown to the victim. They offer crisis counseling and medical examination.
- A gynecological clinic for lesbian and bisexual women. The clinic is integrated to the regular activity but has a separate phone number and the staff is educated in the L(G)BT matters.
- Also at the South General Hospital, there is a clinic for gay and bisexual men with HIV called Venhälsan.

MamaMia Health Care is a clinic that works specifically with women in same-sex relationships and single LBT women. They offer a possibility to meet and get to know other people becoming parents within the L(G)BT community and work preventative. MamaMia organizes classes for this specific target group in order to discuss different themes preparing for the child and parenthood. ([www.mamamia.se](http://www.mamamia.se))

RFSL Stockholm has two therapists. The web site informs of the possibility to talk about sexual abuse. Usually they connect victims of violence to RFSL'S help-line. ([www.rfsl.se/stockholm](http://www.rfsl.se/stockholm))

Finally we want to emphasize young LBT woman in the need for incorporating awareness and mainly primary prevention about violence in same-sex relationships.



Järva youth clinic in Stockholm has special qualifications working with LGBT young people. According to their web site, they offer counselling also including violence. ([www.stockholm.se/jarvaungdomsmottagning](http://www.stockholm.se/jarvaungdomsmottagning)). RFSL has an independent youth federation, which has a division in Stockholm. Both RFSL Stockholm and its youth division are situated in the same building as RFSL'S help-line. ([www.rfslungdom.se](http://www.rfslungdom.se))

In the future, we see a great possibility to work with awareness-raising strategies in cooperation with these activities. It can be used as in spreading information about same-sex domestic violence in different ways and examine if we might visit support groups and have a talk about domestic violence in same-sex relationships. This might help to break the taboo and to get more LGBT people to seek help.



## 5. Discussion

There are similarities and differences working against men's violence to women and violence in woman-to-woman relationships. Meeting in cooperation networks for fighting domestic violence, doing common campaigns and keeping administrators and others updated on information on current activities and research on domestic violence is very important in both cases. A clear aim and a sound support for the importance of the coordinated community response would be common for working against violence in relationships. There is a lot to be done to make this happen.

The need for shelter and support for the LGBT community is urgent. Nowadays the situation for subjected woman in heterosexual relationships is better and they are supplied with shelters and support both municipal and in NGOs. Teams for Woman's peace exist in some districts.

The interviews show that it is uncertain for a woman who seeks for help if she will meet an administrator with sound knowledge about domestic violence. If that is the case, the probability for a LBT woman to meet a professional with more specific knowledge is very low. It seems that LBT women in Stockholm are forced to put much effort in finding help with domestic violence. They can get support and shelter, but the activities only address heterosexual relationships. It takes a big effort of them seeking help in such a situation; this is aggravated by both the management of the relevant organisations and not naming violence in same-sex relationships in information leaflets.

Approaches of working against violence from a gender perspective seem to be poorly evaluated. Individual support and support groups for women subjected to men's violence do exist. LBT woman can get individual support as a victim and as a perpetrator at some municipalities and NGOs, but it is not according to at certain method or done regularly. An interesting project to examine is the possibility to start supportive groups for LBT women victims in woman-to-woman relationships. A further research can be done if there are any programs in other countries that we can learn from meeting this specific group.

17 Like most of the coordinated community response in Stockholm, RFSL's help-line is the only help-line for lhbt-people in Sweden. The help-line depends on temporarily confined project means. It is hard to establish sustainable networks when not backed by constant funding and this also affects the work with spreading information about the help provided.



RFSL's helpline and most of the work done so far against violence in same-sex relationships is on a national level. RFSL's help-line is a national resource financed by means from The Swedish board for welfare and health. Thus, starting and developing activities, methods, education and cooperation against violence in same-sex relationships are so far mostly on a national level. Nevertheless, there is a strong need for developing local measures on the matter. An extra local engagement in the city of Stockholm can be motivated by the fact that the biggest part of the L(G)BT community does live in the capital of Sweden. Still, every other municipality in Sweden needs to be included within the work at a national level. RFSL'S help-line provides a shelter in Stockholm for LGBT victims of violence in their relationship, motivated by hate or honour-related violence. This is has primary been used by citizens in Stockholm, but also people from other parts of the country.

The results in this report show that there is no infrastructure for LBT woman in need of help. Most of the activities are heterosexual coded. In an already vulnerable situation, it is a very big step for a victim or a perpetrator belonging to the LGBT community to seek help and to report the crime to the police. The overall aim should be to end violence. Early prevention focusing on equality in relationships, gender and sexuality is a crucial point. We need to put a great effort into having a look on how schools and youth organizations can be engaged in this matter. That means a lot of work and need for resources. In a close future, RFSL in cooperation with its Youth Association and the police will launch a web site for young LGBT victims of crime. The focus is on hate crimes but nevertheless domestic violence should be addressed as well.



## 6. Conclusions

There are many measures that could be done to fight domestic violence addressing the LGBT communities. Since the multi-agency networks are not permanent or even existing in Stockholm, the lack of cooperation against violence in same-sex relationships is obvious. Preventive measures need to be backed up by proper economic resources. Further, the need for coordinated community response is obvious. RFSL's help-line has a good relationship to the local hate crimes unit within the police. The family violence section of the police is the one who deals with partner violence, both in heterosexual and in lesbian/gay relationships. This section is very important for us to include into cooperation in the future.

Conclusions drawn from the interviews show that there is consent when it comes to the following:

- There is no need for special methods referring to violence in same-sex relationships;
- The context for violence in heterosexual is different from the violence in L(G)BT relationships but not its expressions;
- Women who are victims of domestic violence are not rejected;
- None of the organisations in Stockholm is addressing L(G)BT community;
- There is no collaboration between the various districts of Stockholm regarding domestic violence;
- Politics of the city of Stockholm focus now on honour related violence, which also confines the allocation of financial resources to this working field;
- The authorities do cooperate but only with other authorities and only very rarely with NGOs;
- NGOs build collaborations mainly with other NGOs; networks with authorities are only established when there are funded and in case they are invited to do so.

The consequences of lacking resources for multi-agency networks aiming to fight violence between partners in general is that funding for developing a comprehensive approach for overcoming violence in same-sex relationships is very hard to obtain. Social services, other authorities in general and organisations addressing the L(G)BT community should get relevant education about violence in same-sex relationships, which of course has to be financed. The municipality of Stockholm is obliged to offer support and shelter for women who are victims of violence, according to the Swedish Social



Services Act. They should finance the education of their employees in order to do the work they are supposed to according to the law. In general, in order to break the taboo within the LGBT community, the authorities must be very clear with defining and talking about the problem, and also provide sufficient support.

To develop activities aiming at fighting domestic violence in woman-to-woman relationships, activities and mainstream networks have to extend focus more on education. Information about support for LET woman has to be spread continuously in Stockholm, so the actual offers for support are known to both professionals and those seeking help. Obstacles to overcome are financial resources and that the problem might not be seen as being relevant. Therefore awareness raising actions have to be done both in the LGBT community and within municipalities, other authorities like the police and also other NGOs. Today RFSL cooperate mostly with five other NGOs, among those ROKS and SKR as mentioned before. The municipality should be far more active in spreading information, at their web site e.g., and put resources into the subject. Otherwise the risk for keeping the problem in secret is high. What we learn from the work with men's violence against woman, it is to work hard with prevention at all levels to get a result of e.g. a higher rate of reported cases. The police are of course an important partner in the work. They are part of the campaign driven by RFSL and the other NGOs in the project.

There are some initiatives, mostly on national level, starting to put the subject of violence in same-sex relationships into the light. Recently, RFSL's help-line has been invited to some local groups working against violence within the municipality. Since before there has been a national cooperation with some other NGOs. But to conclude, this report confirms some of the earlier done statements done within the LARS project:

- Mainstream organizations have too little knowledge when it comes to domestic violence in women-to-women relationships, to be able to meet the need of help and support in an adequate way.
- Although a lot of similarities, the context of violence differs due to heteronormativity and homophobic structures in society.
- The majority society has not lifted the question of domestic violence in women-to-women relationships.



## 7. Case Study (by Carin Holmberg)

From the snap shot and the interviews with key informants in the LGBT community it, was rather clear that the situation for the perpetrator can't be neglected if one wants to break the taboo about women to women domestic violence. The situation for the perpetrator will therefore be discussed in this case study.

The situation came to my knowledge when I was an assistant professor teaching "Women Studies" at the University. One of my students stopped coming to class and I didn't understand why. After some time I learned what has been going on.

Some years ago Doris had been in a relation with Eve. Eve claimed that Doris had raped her and had beaten her. The class had no problem with taking side. There was a difference in social class between Doris and Eve and the rest of the group. Doris did come from working class and had a problem with alcohol at the time of her relationship with Eve. Doris was rather big compared to the physically more fragile appearing Eve. Eve had a history of sexual abuse and she was more of middle class as the rest of the group. If her class mates didn't come from the middle class they had definitively made some class traveling and were now having an intellectual capital and good theoretical knowledge about societal power. It was easy to see that Doris didn't fit in. For the group it wasn't enough that Doris left the classroom. They started hunting her and made her life miserable in different ways. At first Doris tried to protect herself but then got angry and maybe depressed and started to drink after years of abstinence and acted back. The group didn't stop so after some time Doris moved from the city to another city far away. She wasn't able to stay because the group or one or two of their class-mates addressed and talked to every woman Doris had contact with or met at a gay bar or dancing place. They told the woman that Doris is a perpetrator and that she had to be aware.

Since it had been almost three years ago since the (sexual) violence happened, and since Eve did not report to the police the class mates' reaction definitely was excessive and forced Doris to leave town. I was talking to some of the members of the group and asked them if the crime that they thought Doris committed was unforgiveable or not. They said that this was not something they could forget. And they didn't lie. If Doris was out on Internet as herself or with an alias, and some in the group was on the same page and could recognize her, they started to say to the others on the list that Doris was an abuser. If they met at a bar at the PRIDE festival were people from all over Sweden were coming, they also told all the others that everyone should be aware of Doris. As far as I know they hunted her for at least ten years after they meet in my classroom.

The domestic violence occurring in the relationship between Doris and Eve is relevant in such a way that it somehow legitimated the chivvy of Eve's class mates. As for all years I spent on doing research



about men's violence against women I never heard a story like this, that a heterosexual woman's network should chase her aggressor for years and years. Maybe the anger from the group could be interpreted in terms of minority stress and the unwillingness to accept that violence also happens in women to women relations.

I do think that this story, although rare because it's extreme, puts a light on why many LBT-victims take responsibility for the abuser by not telling about the violence they experience. They don't want this to happen even if they themselves have been abused severely. This kind of situation only has to happen once because the story about the chased abuser is spread in the community. The worst result is that the victim and the abuser together keep the abuse a secret and that the relationship and the violence can continue.

This example also shows how someone in a minority community who is pointed out as an abuser can get stigmatized for years and years with small possibilities to make a change.

The most important thing when it comes to domestic violence in general and in woman-to-woman relations specifically is to encourage the victim to speak out. So if the taboo should be broken there is a need to try to prevent this kind of stigmatization of the perpetrator, at least raise the question of why this kind of action is taken within a minority group. As we could show in our research in the LARS project the victims and part of the LGBT community tends to take responsibility for the abuser. Therefore we maybe also have to break the taboo of the perpetrator and offer some help and advice in order to make it easier for the victim to speak out about the violence and be able to really break the taboo.

