

# Helpline Volunteer Meeting 15th November 2022

## Minutes

Present: Chris Baker, Astrid Palmer, Anna, Michele, Ellie, Tatyana, and online, Fen, Becca, Frances

Chris opened with general greetings and thanked everyone for attending. Then directly into the Domestic Abuse presentation/training.

### DOMESTIC ABUSE PRESENTATION AND TRAINING

Domestic Abuse team: Raf Galdeano & Astrid Palmer (IDVAs - Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) Raf was sadly unable to join us and sent apologies.

Astrid gave us a jam packed hour long presentation on Domestic Abuse. Briefly we covered:

1. What is DA
2. What DA looks like
3. Handling DA calls
4. Support & Signposting

(See the accompanying slides for details)

We learned that there is an official definition of DA based on the 2021 DA Act. Interestingly some of the definitions and inclusions of economic abuse and coercive/controlling behaviour are only recent additions. We looked at the types of DA and went into a little more detail on what economic abuse is.

It was useful to learn who “personally connected” included and didn’t and who is or isn’t in an ‘intimate relationship’. Ultimately, Astrid said, if it feels a partner or ex-partner then it counts. The authorities will follow the same guides when making this determination.

We talked about Gaslighting and watched a short clip from “All too well” that highlighted several examples.

We talked about coercive control and also watched a brief video (Maid) showing an example. In a following discussion Astrid talked about how over time a physical threat can develop into actual physical harm. On the helpline we’d hope that by this point we’d be able to pass the service user on to the DA team.

We talked about Honour-Based Violence and Familial abuse. Learning that when someone escapes that kind of environment there is also a significant down side in the loss of cultural connection and tradition. We talked about specific things to listen out for on helpline calls, including people being afraid to go home, or having limited freedoms keeping in mind also that often, for the helpline, just affirming and believing is valuable. We are not there to solve their DA experience.

We covered do’s and don’ts with regard to DA calls. Reassuringly, this fit well with our existing guidelines when dealing with service users. As always, follow safeguarding procedures and escalate either to Switchboard staff or to the police if necessary.

Using the language of the caller is always important. We discussed options instead of calling a situation Domestic Abuse. One included using language like healthy/unhealthy relationships.

See the slide on when to refer to the DA service, but in general, err on the side of caution. The team would much rather be referred to a caller who turned out not to be in a DA situation than the other way round.

Part of the services DA provides includes care packages. These include basic toiletries as well as more pampering/luxury items. Although funded by the DA project, these are available to anyone who needs them.

Consider this when talking to other service users and contact Raf (or any staff member) if your service user needs one. This can be sent out if we have an address or they could collect it from the office.

## REST OF MEETING

**Call notes sheet** – Chris shared a sheet he created allowing you to jot down notes as you take a call. It's important, in order to maintain our service, that we collect demographic data, sexuality, gender identity, age, ethnicity, religion, etc. However, we are definitely NOT asking volunteers to request this information. Please just note it down as it comes up in conversation. Then, at the end of the call, take a few minutes, on CharityLog, to enter the call details into the referral and the demographics into the "Personal details" tab on the service user record. Generally agreed the sheet was useful. Chris will ensure there is a supply of them in the office with pens. Also Chris has moved the shredder into the helpline office so these details can be safely destroyed afterwards.

**AGM** – We already have a third of our volunteers say they can make the meeting (which is required for a quorum), so thank you for your quick responses. We discussed and decided to have a volunteer social immediately after the AGM (please send suggestions – possibly Franco Manco Pizza?). Also this will be our only meeting in December.

## AOB

There are new volunteers coming. Training is 27th Nov and 4th Dec All agreed being in the office us really beneficial. It enables you to immediately debrief with your fellow listeners, share questions and concerns and also to take breaks.

Chris will investigate adding consent information to the online chat tool.

Chris will explore formalising a mental health process if you need to speak to someone hours or days after a shift Chris will share his CharityLog Training videos. Please take a look and let him know if there is more you need. He is always happy to be on a shift to help go through CharityLog with you. Chris will explore additional ways to enable a refresher.

If it doesn't already exist Chris will create a video showing how to review calls that came in on a specific previous shift to help with the "I spoke to someone last week" calls.

Helpline notice board – Please let Chris know what information would be useful to have on the board to access during a shift.

Finally, Chris reminded everyone that it is important to give yourself time between calls to decompress. Getting into the habit of spending 5 mins on CharityLog recording everything you remember from the call will help, but also get up, have a stretch and a breather. It's perfectly fine to not take a call if the phone rings immediately. They can leave a message or call back. Do monitor the email if someone leaves a voicemail during a shift and it appears there.