A guide for



#### Introduction

This guide is for **gay and bisexual men** who have been affected by sexual violence. Our aim is to provide a brief overview of the basics and to help you navigate the service who can provide support.

If you've been the victim of rape or sexual assault and are looking for support, then by picking up this booklet, you've already made the first step in your journey towards moving on. Sexual violence is an issue which is still commonly misunderstood; our **Myths and Realities** section on page 4 looks at some of the common assumptions people make about men, rape and sexual assault.

**Sexual violence** is a complex issue which impacts on the lives of victims in very different ways, but there are some common reactions, which we'll help you to get to grips with on pages 6 & 7. Whatever point you're at in your journey towards moving on, we want you to know that you're not alone; there is support out there if you'd like it, and things can get better.

If by reading this guide you decide that you would like our support, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with us on **0845 3 30 30 30** or email **counselling@lgf.org.uk**.

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### **Myths & Realities**

Myth: "Only women can be raped or sexually assaulted – it can't happen to men"

**Reality:** An estimated **3 in 20 men** have been affected by sexual violence and it is something that can and does happen to men regardless of their sexual orientation, size, strength or appearance.

Myth: "I must have done something to ask for it"

**Reality:** Absolutely **no one deserves to be victimised**, attacked or violated. No means no and if you've not consented then it's wrong.

Myth: "It's not rape/assault because I know them"

**Reality:** Many cases of rape and sexual assault involve perpetrators who are known by the victim; whatever relationship you might have with the perpetrator, **it doesn't give them the right to engage in sexual activities** you haven't consented to.

Myth: "Getting an erection/ejaculating must mean that I consented to it/enjoyed it"

**Reality:** The body will react in certain ways whether we want it to or not and **getting an erection or ejaculating certainly does not mean that you enjoyed it** or gave consent. Many perpetrators use these physiological responses to cause confusion for the victim, and to make them feel even more powerless.

# Understanding Sexual Violence

Being the victim of any form of sexual violence can be horrific and devastating. For some men, understanding what things mean can help them to make steps towards talking about what has happened. Having said this, many people find that following a trauma they are unable to remember, so please don't be alarmed if this is the case.

**Sexual Violence:** Sexual violence is a general term that includes many acts such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, sexual exploitation and sexual slavery/prostitution.

**Sexual Assault:** Sexual assault is any sexual contact that is against a person's will or without consent. This may be because of force, violence, manipulation or where the victim has been too intoxicated or too scared to give consent.

**Assault Penetration:** An assault on a male will be classed as assault penetration if a male or female penetrates the anus without their consent. The offence is committed where the penetration is by a part of the body (for example, a finger) or anything else (for example, a bottle) for sexual intent.

**Rape:** According to the Sexual Offences Act (2003), it is classed as rape (for men) when the anus or mouth is intentionally penetrated by the perpetrator's penis without consent. It is also classed as rape if the perpetrator continued to penetrate you after you withdrew consent. It is not relevant what relationship, if any, the perpetrator has or had with you, or if the perpetrator is your partner.

#### **Common reactions**

The hours, days, months and years following a sexual assault or rape will be different for each person. Sometimes how we react and how we feel in the aftermath of a trauma, have no bearing on how 'strong' we are or 'how much of a man' you may be; it is just getting by in whatever way we can.

For many men, knowing that they are not alone can be what leads them to seek support. Knowing that your reactions and thoughts are common amongst other male survivors of sexual violence can bring some comfort and help you start to make sense of how you're feeling.

**Shame:** "I feel disgusting"

"I can't get clean"

"I feel filthy"

"What will people think of me?"

**Denial:** "I must have consented to it otherwise it wouldn't

have happened"

"Maybe it wasn't as bad as I think it was"

**Anger:** "How could they do this to me?"

**Shock and numbness:** "Why can't I cry?"

"Why don't I feel anything?"

**Despair:** "I can't cope..."

"I can't live with myself knowing this has happened

to me"

**Disgust and repulsion:** "I got an erection; does that mean I enjoyed it/consented to it?"

**Guilt:** "Why didn't I fight back?"

"Did I do something to attract this?"

Feeling powerless: "They still have control over me"

"There's no way I can tell anyone..."

"They made me ejaculate and there was nothing I

could do about it"

**Fear:** "What if they've given me HIV or another STI?"

"What if I see them again?"

"What if I report it and they find out?"

**Confusion:** "I got an erection – does that mean I'm gay?"

"Was being raped what led me to question my

sexuality?"

**Disorientation:** "I keep forgetting things"

"I don't even know what day it is"

**Anxiety/Panic:** Shaking, shortness, feeling overwhelmed, breathlessness, light headedness, churning stomach

**Flashbacks:** Can be triggered by smells, sights, sounds, feelings

**Physical reactions:** Change in appetite, problems with sleeping, physical pain such as headaches, feeling jittery

### Reporting Sexual Violence

Reporting to the Police is your decision that no-one should force you in to making and there is no time-limit on when you can do it if this is what you want. If you do decide to report an incident, then you don't have to do it alone – our list of organisations and useful contacts on page 11 of this guide will help you to find the right people to support you through the process. Many people believe that if they disclose that they have been the victim of sexual violence to a counsellor, helpline operator or to someone in a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) that they will tell the Police. This should never be the case and if someone does need to pass on information you've given them, it should only be if there is a risk that you or a child or vulnerable adult may be seriously harmed.

If you make a report to the Police, it is likely that it will be taken by a specially trained Police Officer. If you call, they may ask if they can meet with you face to face to talk about what has happened and take down some information. They will advise you on the support available and are likely to refer you to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) where they can assess any medical needs, such as sexual health screening and gather forensic medical evidence (if the incident is recent) that could be used in an investigation. Some Centres also have Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, who can support you through this process, and if not, then the Centre will help you to find some alternative support. Both men and women can access a Sexual Assault Referral Centre and you don't have to have reported the incident to the Police to use their services

For more in-depth information about the reporting process, visit the St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre website:

www.stmaryscentre.org

#### **Seeking Support**

Being the victim of rape or sexual assault can leave you feeling isolated and alone. When you are ready to talk, there are lots of people out there who can help you to find where to start, including a number of services who specialise in supporting men. Here are three things to help you on your way:

- If you decide to seek support through counselling or another support service, then you should never be pushed into disclosing what happened in any detail. Trauma needs to be treated very delicately, and re-living what happened can actually have an adverse effect therapy should be at a slow and safe pace that you feel comfortable with.
- **It's never too late to ask for support**; even if the rape or assault is historical. For some men, it can take decades for them to talk about sexual violence, but this doesn't mean that their need for support is any less.
- Shop around for the support that suits you (see page 11) deciding which services you want to access, can help you to feel empowered and more in control of your own healing journey.

#### How we can help

Here at The Lesbian & Gay Foundation, we have been supporting gay and bisexual men who have been victims of sexual violence through our services for over 10 years. We are able to offer:



Immediate support through our daily Pop-In Service 10am-8pm Monday-Friday (no appointment needed)



A listening and non-judgemental ear through our Helpline 0845 3 30 30 10am-10pm daily



A safe and accepting space to explore your feelings through our Face-to-Face Counselling Service (free to gay and bisexual men who are survivors of sexual violence and abuse). For more information and to request an application form, email counselling@lgf.org.uk, call us on 0845 3 30 30 30 or visit www.lgf.org.uk/counselling



The opportunity to speak to a Police Offer in our weekly Police Advice Surgery.

Every Thursday evening 6pm-8pm (no appointment needed)



HIV Testing Clinics & Information for sexual health Call us on 0845 3 30 30 30 or email sexualhealth@lgf.org.uk

All of the above services (with the exception of some sexual health clinics) are delivered from the LGF's Community Resource Centre at Number 5 Richmond Street, Manchester M1 3HF.

We work closely with Survivors Manchester who make regular referrals into our Counselling Service and provide us with specialist training around working with male survivors of sexual violence and abuse. We can also help you to navigate other support options from specialist services, or just be here to listen if that's what you need - just let us know how we can help.

## Other Organisations &Useful Contacts

**Survivors Manchester:** A survivor-led/survivor-run voluntary organisation supporting male survivors of sexual abuse and rape.

Web: www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk

Email: support@survivorsmanchester.org.uk

Tel: 07919 246 267

#### St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre

(Manchester): Offer forensic, medical and counselling services to men and women who have experienced rape or sexual assault.

Web: www.stmaryscentre.org

Helpline: 0161 276 6515

Email: stmarys.sarc@cmft.nhs.uk

**Survivors UK:** National helpline for male survivors of rape

Web: www.survivorsuk.org

Helpline: 0845 122 1201 (Mon & Tues 7-9.30pm, Thurs 12-2.30pm)

Email: info@survivorsuk.org

**The Survivors' Trust:** A national umbrella organisation for over 120 voluntary rape and sexual abuse specialist support services

Web: www.thesurvivorstrust.org.uk

**Tel:** 01788 550 554 (Please note that this is not a helpline)

**Men's Advice Line:** A confidential helpline for all men experiencing domestic violence by a current or ex-partner.

Web: www.mensadvice.org.uk

Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 801 0327

## We believe in a fair and equal society where all lesbian, gay and bisexual people can achieve their full potential.

This guide is available in large print by calling **0845** 3 **30** 30 **30** or email **info@lgf.org.uk** 



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