

Stella * Project

Separate **Issues** Shared **Solutions**

Domestic Violence, Drugs
and Alcohol:

Good Practice Guidelines



The Stella Project is a partnership between the Greater London Domestic Violence Project and the Greater London Alcohol and Drug Alliance.

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Foreword

Many of us working in the alcohol and drug and domestic violence fields will already be aware that partner violence occurs in all relationships including those where alcohol and drug use also takes place. However, having awareness on its own hasn't been enough. What has been lacking is an accepted and consistent way of thinking and model of working, which encompasses both substance use and domestic violence. It is essential this model doesn't pathologise or minimise either issue, and enables practitioners to work with the complexities of domestic violence and substance use together rather than in isolation. The Stella Project was launched with this in mind, and this toolkit, compiled in consultation with practitioners from both fields, has developed out of a real need and a willingness in both sectors to address the gap between domestic violence and substance use services.

A change cannot happen at practitioner level alone; it has to be embedded at all levels as well as adopted by commissioners and included in national and local substance use and domestic violence strategies. Whilst there is undoubtedly a need for specific funding, training in substance use and domestic violence at all levels of organisations and appropriate supervision of practitioners is necessary and achievable.

This toolkit has been written with clients and service users in mind. Growing awareness of an overlapping client base has highlighted the barriers which need to be addressed if we are to provide effective interventions. The information in this toolkit aims to provide practitioners and service managers with the basic knowledge and skills they require to respond to service users safely and appropriately whatever agency they

may be working in. As someone who has been working with this client group for some time, I very much welcome this toolkit and hope you will find it useful.

Nicola Saunders

Drug and Alcohol Service for London

Glossary of terms:

The following terms are used throughout the text. This glossary defines their meaning within the context of this document.

Domestic violence: Domestic violence is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person, usually a man, over another, usually a woman, within the context of an intimate relationship. It can be manifested in a variety of ways, including but not restricted to, physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and the imposition of social isolation and is most commonly a combination of them all.

Problematic substance use: The use of substances (such as illegal drugs, prescription medicines or alcohol) in such a way that result in harm to the individual user or to the wider community. The range of harms include problems for physical health, psychological health, violence, financial problems, family problems or social problems.

Clients: Anyone who uses a domestic violence or a drug or alcohol service. This could include perpetrators, victims of domestic violence and drug and alcohol users. In this context they would be accessing your service in relation to issues involving substances and/or domestic violence.

Crisis Intervention: Practical strategies that help meet a client's needs during emotional and/or physical distress. Crisis may occur when a person's usual coping mechanisms don't work. A worker's response to crisis may be making clients feel safe, offering immediate support and reassurance

Abstinence: Discontinuance and avoidance of further use of a drug or alcohol. The term "abstinence" usually refers to the decision to end the use of drugs or alcohol as part of the process of addressing problematic substance use.

Drug paraphernalia: Equipment used in taking or manufacturing illicit substances. E.g. Crack pipes, syringes, tourniquets.

Routine questioning: Asking standard questions of all clients in relation to domestic violence and substance use. Designed as a non-confrontational method of obtaining pertinent information.

Drug and Alcohol Assessments: A tool used to ascertain the extent of a person's drug use, including the drugs used and the level of dependency. Asks very detailed questions about how much, where, with whom and how a person uses substances.

Risk Assessment: A tool designed to assess how a person's lifestyle, experiences and current situation could impact upon their experience of violence or drug and alcohol use. By assessing risk you and your client will know where potential problems and dangers lie, and can therefore take measures to reduce harm. Risk assessments are not foolproof but do provide guidance and assistance in making informed decisions about how best to assist clients.

Dual diagnosis: A term used to describe the co-occurrence of two complex needs. In the context of this toolkit dual diagnosis will refer to a client who may present with a drug or alcohol problem and a mental health issue.

Domestic violence victim/survivor: The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' have been used interchangeably in this document. It is sometimes (incorrectly) assumed that there is some 'journey' from being a 'victim' to becoming a 'survivor' but the latter term was originally devised to be used instead of 'victim'. You should be aware that some agencies view the term 'victim' as demeaning, feeling it implies passivity and powerlessness. Such agencies prefer to use the term 'survivor' in recognition of the strength and resourcefulness of those individuals who experience domestic violence.