

1 GENDERED CONTEXT: HOW INTERNALISED AND EXTERNALISED MISOGYNY AND PATRIARCHY CAN CONCEAL ABUSE	
Internalised misogyny and patriarchy • Expectations to be strong, unemotional, self-reliant, a protector and a provider can become an internal test of being a 'real man'. • When vulnerability and help-seeking are coded as feminine and devalued, fear, injury or sexual victimisation may be experienced as weakness. • This can produce shame, self-blame, minimisation, silence and guilt about self-defence or not protecting other people.	Externalised misogyny and patriarchy • A person causing harm may weaponise male identity through 'not a real man', 'fight back', attacks on sexuality, fatherhood and the provider/protector role. • Friends or family may ridicule him as 'under the thumb' or 'hen-pecked', normalise the abuse, or expect him to cope alone and keep the family together. • Others might not perceive the person causing harm as a significant risk because of their gender or physical stature. • Professionals may assume he is the aggressor, misread self-defence or counter-allegations, disbelieve risk, or offer unsuitable services.
2 ABUSIVE STRATEGIES: OVERLAPPING BEHAVIOURS USED TO SHAME, FRIGHTEN, ISOLATE, EXPLOIT OR REGULATE EVERYDAY LIFE	
Weaponising male identity • Targets masculinity through 'not a real man', 'a real man would fight back', threats to find a 'real man', or questioning sexuality. • Uses expectations about strength, emotional control, sexual willingness, fatherhood, protection and providing to shame or entrap him. • Mocks fear, injury, disclosure or self-defence; may gaslight, dehumanise, or invalidate his gender identity.	Weaponising sleep • Dictating when, where or how he sleeps; keeping him awake; or forcing the floor, car or uncomfortable positions to sleep in. • Waking him to argue, interrogate or pursue unwanted sexual acts; starting conflict at bedtime; or attacking him while asleep. • Disrupting sleep before work, interviews, family meetings, court, health appointments or other important events.
Bodily and sexual harm • Hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, scratching or biting; attacks to genitals; non-fatal strangulation; or injury after gender-affirming surgery. • Use of weapons and objects including phones, mugs, boiling water, knives or tools. • Use of coercion or forced sexual acts including penetration digitally, with an object, sharing of indecent images, sexual put downs, threatening to obtain sex elsewhere, commenting on the size of his penis or ability to satisfy his partner.	Surveillance and restriction • Monitoring time, routines, phones, apps, spyware, GPS devices, trackers and whereabouts; repeatedly invading privacy. • Controlling food, clothing, movement, contacts, health care, work or interests; isolating him from friends, family and colleagues.
Threats and reputational harm • Threats to harm him, self, children, other people or pets, including self-harm or suicide threats used to force contact or a return to the relationship. • Threats involving police or counter-allegations; exposing private identity; or damaging career, credibility, faith or community standing.	Parenting and relational control • Threatening to take children or restrict contact; using concern for children's welfare and fear of family loss to keep him in the relationship. • Using children as leverage, recruiting hostility or undermining parenting; manipulating family, friends, care roles or dependency.
Economic and financial control • Controlling income, spending, accounts, bills or debt; stealing or damaging property; sabotaging work, education or independence. • Restricting housing, food, clothing, transport or technology; hiding information, documents or medication. • He might be forced to work multiple jobs or longer hours to bring in extra income, resulting in access to services operating in 'office hours' difficult, if not impossible to engage with.	Interlocking patterns • Strategies rarely occur alone and may change over time or continue after separation. • Individual incidents can appear minor when explored as singular incidents, however the cumulation of these incidents is substantial; the pattern may produce fear, dependence, exhaustion and reduced autonomy. • Assess context, pattern, intent, fear, impact and primary victimisation rather than relying on gendered assumptions.

UNDERSTANDING IMPACT, BARRIERS AND RESPONSE

Expanded practice context for cumulative harm, disclosure and effective support

Impact | barriers | response

3 CUMULATIVE IMPACT AND ENTRAPMENT

How harm accumulates

- Repeated and overlapping strategies make ordinary life conditional, unpredictable and organised around avoiding consequences.
- He might feel that it is easier to choose not to do something, than to deal with the consequences, however when these choices are made out of fear of repercussions autonomy is removed.
- Incidents that appear minor in isolation can form a serious pattern of coercion, fear, dependence and reduced autonomy.
- After separation, control may shift into stalking, finances, allegations, court processes, communication or child-contact arrangements.

Effects on body, mind and daily life

- Fear, hypervigilance, injury and disrupted sleep can affect memory, concentration, judgement, health and the capacity to forward plan safely.
- Trauma, depression, anxiety, substance use or suicidality may develop or worsen; work, education, parenting and relationships can be disrupted.
- Debt, housing insecurity, isolation and loss of practical resources can continue long after individual incidents have ended.

Identity, resistance and entrapment

- Weaponising male identity can deepen shame and self-blame, particularly where he believes he should cope, fight back or protect others.
- Fear of disbelief, arrest, losing children or being identified as the aggressor may narrow his choices and delay help-seeking.
- Placating, apparent compliance, escape attempts, self-defence or violent resistance may be survival responses and are not evidence of equal or mutual abuse.

4 BARRIERS TO RECOGNITION AND DISCLOSURE

Naming and self-recognition

- He may describe stress, conflict, relationship problems or a partner's behaviour without recognising a pattern of domestic abuse.
- Messages that men should be strong, cope alone or physically stop abuse can make fear, injury and vulnerability difficult to name.
- Sexual harm may be minimised because of myths that men always want sex, should be able to resist, or cannot be forced by a partner.

Fear and possible consequences

- He may expect ridicule, disbelief, blame or questions about why he stayed, did not fight back or used force in self-defence.
- Counter-allegations and fear of arrest or professional misidentification may be used deliberately to prevent disclosure.
- He may fear losing children, housing, immigration status, employment, community standing, privacy or important relationships.

Access and professional response

- Services may appear designed for women, offer unsuitable accommodation, or feel inaccessible to disabled or older men.
- Professionals may focus on injuries or isolated incidents and miss coercive control, cumulative impact and the primary victim.
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- Professionals may be less professionally curious due to unconscious bias or lack of understanding of men's experiences of abuse.
- Previous poor responses, confidentiality or outing concerns, language or access needs, and not knowing where to seek help can reinforce silence.

5 WHAT AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE REQUIRES

RECOGNISE

- Take his account seriously, validate that men can be victims and avoid assumptions based on gender, size, sexuality or presentation.
- Identify the pattern, context, intent, fear, impact and primary victim rather than treating each incident as mutual conflict.
- Explore what happens when he disagrees, resists, leaves or seeks help, and how his daily life has narrowed.

ASK AND ASSESS

- Ask broad questions about worry, routines, sleep, money, sex, technology, children and disagreement.
- Build a timeline covering first, last, worst and typical incidents, escalation, separation and what happens between incidents.
- Assess weapons, strangulation, sexual harm, stalking, suicide, children, housing and economic risk at every change point.

SAFEGUARD

- Develop a survivor-led safety plan covering safe contact, technology, accounts, documents, medication, transport, children and housing.
- Avoid action that could increase danger; agree safe communication and information-sharing, including confidentiality or outing concerns.
- Review risk after separation, police action, court hearings, changes to housing or finances, and child-contact decisions.

CONNECT AND FOLLOW THROUGH

- Offer warm referrals to male specialist/IDVA, health, sexual harm, legal, housing, debt, immigration, LGBT+ and mental-health support.
- Explain options, respect informed choice and address interpreter, disability, communication, cultural and practical access needs.
- Record clearly, share information proportionately, coordinate with relevant agencies and follow up rather than relying on a single referral.