

Typologies of Bi-directional Domestic Abuse

As highlighted via a recent Domestic Homicide Review, partner agencies should consider when reviewing Domestic Abuse related policies, procedures and operational guidance whether they raise awareness of bi-directional abuse and “typologies” to assist services in identifying and responding safely and appropriately to mutual couple violence, and violent resistance.

The following template/suggested wording has been developed by Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership to support consistency across agencies where amendments to policies and procedures are required.

When working with individuals who are experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse, practitioners should ensure that bi-directional abuse is considered when assessing/managing risk, support needs and safety planning.

Bidirectional abuse is when both people in a relationship engage in abuse. When this happens, it can take one of two forms: (1) both partners can be equally aggressive; and (2) one partner can be more aggressive than the other, but the other partner is violent, too, primarily in self-defence or retaliation (*Hines, 2022)

Where bi-directional abuse is evident, it can be further understood by considering the 3 main types or ‘typologies’ (**Johnson, 2008))

Type of behaviour	Understanding
Situational couple violence	escalates from argument to physical aggression, occurs between couples
Coercive & Controlling Behaviours/intimate terrorism	patterns of violent coercive control, perpetrated predominantly, but not always, by men
Violent resistance	perpetrated while resisting violence, perpetrated more often by women in self-defence

If bi-directional abuse is identified, practitioners should ensure **appropriate individual referrals** for services, that recognise their **individual needs**, are made **for both parties** to provide support and reduce risk. It is important that practitioners make clear case notes that quantifies and describes the Domestic abuse between the two parties and doesn’t just say bi directional as this could be misleading.

*Hines, D. (2022) Depp-Heard Trial Shines Light on Bidirectional Intimate Partner Violence - [Depp-Heard Trial Shines Light on Bidirectional Intimate Partner Violence | George Mason University \(gmu.edu\)](https://www.gmu.edu/news/depp-heard-trial-shines-light-on-bidirectional-intimate-partner-violence)

** Johnson, Michael P. (2008) A Typology of Domestic Violence: Intimate Terrorism, Violent Resistance, and Situational Couple Violence. Hanover: Northeastern University Press