

The Hidden Reality

How the Cost of Living Crisis is affecting LGBT+ victims and survivors of abuse and violence

Galop 2022

the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity



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The Cost of Living Crisis is reducing LGBT+ survivors' options to flee and access safety - leaving many with the difficult decision to either remain in unsafe, abusive living situations or face homelessness.

With added pressure and demand for support from statutory services and charities alike, the Cost of Living Crisis is increasing the many barriers that LGBT+ survivors face in accessing safety and support. There is a lack of specialised services for LGBT+ survivors outside of London and other UK cities with large LGBT+ populations,^{1,2} and specialist safe emergency accommodation for LGBT+ people is extremely limited in the UK.^{1,3} Trans and non-binary survivors face even more barriers to accessing safe services – with high numbers of trans and on-binary people telling Galop that mainstream services are not safe or accessible to them.^{4,5}

On top of these barriers to support, LGBT+ survivors are likely to have fewer economic resources⁶⁻⁹ available to safely flee abuse or to be able to afford the many costs associated with seeking safety, such as deposits and rent for private accommodation or social housing.

The Cost of Living Crisis has created further barriers to accessing support and safety

Galop surveyed its frontline staff to investigate the ways the Cost of Living Crisis is impacting LGBT+ survivors of abuse, in the period since June 2022.



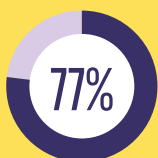
100% of frontline staff surveyed reported that the unaffordable cost of housing and the unavailability of safe emergency accommodation are placing LGBT+ survivors at *much more risk* of abuse and harm.



88% of frontline staff surveyed are *extremely or very concerned* about their clients' ability to access support and/or safety because of the cost of living crisis



50% of frontline staff surveyed said the cost of living crisis is having a *very large impact* on LGBT+ survivors' access to support because services are under increased demand.



77% of frontline staff surveyed said survivors need housing support: better access to safe emergency and temporary accommodation, more social housing, rent relief and rent freezes, and funding for housing deposits and initial costs.

Frontline staff reported LGBT+ survivors are dealing with a range of barriers to support that have worsened through the cost of living crisis, including:

- Being turned away from temporary or emergency accommodation
- Lengthy waitlists for social housing
- Long waitlists for subsidised counselling or therapy
- Not being able to afford therapeutic or legal costs associated with support
- Not being able to afford transport to attend appointments or services

Frontline staff also said survivors need:

- Increased access to mental health supports and more subsidised counselling sessions

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In one case where the survivor was working - and so not eligible for benefits - she could not afford to cover the temporary accommodation rent, service charge and her day-to-day expenses. She is faced with the prospect of leaving the temporary accommodation and sofa surfing again.

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Very hard to get decent temporary accommodation, or any accommodation.

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A huge rise in waiting lists and increasing demand on statutory services and charities to fill in the gap/void where there is a lack of services.

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The Cost of Living Crisis is making it even harder for LGBT+ survivors to flee abuse



80% of frontline staff surveyed said the cost of living crisis is making it *much harder* for LGBT+ survivors to flee abuse.

Since June 2022, Galop's service staff have seen an increase in abusers engaging in: coercive controlling behaviour, especially in relation to the control of finances; financial abuse; making the LGBT+ survivor homeless, or threatening them with homelessness; and sexual exploitation.

Frontline staff also described how the cost of living crisis is impacting LGBT+ survivors' decisions to flee, remain in, or return to unsafe housing with abusers. Survivors have faced:

- Not being able to afford rent, temporary accommodation charges, or private rental deposits
- Not being able to afford food
- Going into debt to pay for rent or rental deposits
- Homelessness and sofa-surfing



Spending from the emergency fund between June and November 2022 is 227% higher than in the same period in 2021.

Galop's emergency fund is a key resource used by advocates and caseworkers to support LGBT+ survivors facing these challenges, including through food and transport vouchers, clothing, and rent arrears.



65% of frontline staff surveyed reported that survivors need financial support for practical expenses, including general financial relief as well as grants for essentials (food, household bills), mobile phone and Wi-Fi credit, and transport vouchers.

Frontline staff also said survivors need:

- Funding for safety or escape kits – with phones, basic household items for temporary accommodation, and provisions for legal or documentation costs.

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Survivors are returning to perpetrators because they are unable to support themselves financially.

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When asked what she can do for self-care that day, after going through a traumatic court hearing, the client replied that she's 'going to put the heating on for an hour'.

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Survivors falling into rent arrears, which will impact their future prospects of finding long-term accommodation (either private rented or through the council).

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There are significant waiting times for clients to access health services, for example to receive support from local mental health teams.

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More emergency accommodation and adjustments in emergency accommodation access for those who are working in terms of some rent relief so they are not paying large rent fees for a refuge, this is a big barrier for those fleeing who work and want to continue working.

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Survivors are considering all expenses, including travel costs to appointments or meetings with police.

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There is a general theme of financial struggle after experiencing abuse ... because of things like the inability to work due to debilitating mental health issues surrounding the aftermath of abuse and/or having to completely uproot their lives to hide in a different part of the country. This kind of stuff will only get worse with increasing lack of funds because of the cost of living crisis.

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[Survivors need] Access to financial support to help with deposits and high energy costs/ bills during the winter months.

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Financial support for those who've had to flee and drop everything (so only being left with phone and the clothes on their back) so they can access a change of clothes and food etc.

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We call on governments and organisations to:

- Improve national provision of LGBT+ inclusive safe accommodation, including by creating more supported bed spaces in statutory emergency and temporary accommodation, and removing barriers to access for LGBT+ survivors fleeing abuse
- Establish a national emergency fund for survivors of abuse to be administered through specialist domestic abuse services, which includes cost of living provisions
- Provide increased dedicated national funding for LGBT+ specialist support for LGBT+ survivors, including advocacy and therapeutic support, and homelessness and housing services
- Freeze rents, provide rent and cost of living relief packages and housing deposit grants for survivors fleeing abuse
- Ensure survivors are exempt from the benefit cap
- Remove exemptions to state support for migrant survivors and LGBT+ people under the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) policy
- Remove caps on foodbank vouchers and provide travel cards for survivors and those on low incomes
- Ensure fair access to legal aid, through legal aid access for survivors
- Expand cost of living support packages for businesses to include charities and abuse support services

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