In recent years, our understanding of what constitutes an abusive relationship has expanded to include studies that explore the experience of intimate partner abuse (IPA) for those who are LGBT*, male and heterosexual, and individuals with a disability. Compared to what is known about heterosexual women’s experience of male perpetrated IPA, the empirical knowledge base considering the aforementioned populations could be described at best as emergent and growing, and at worst, limited and scant. However partial our knowledge and understanding of IPA is outside of heteronormative relationship contexts, the existing literature indicates that understanding the context in which the abuse occurs is pivotal to the conduct of such studies. This presentation will discuss the significance of context in understanding the experience of intimate partner abuse, primarily within female to female same sex relationships, while also providing examples from the literature focused on individuals with a disability and male victim experiences.

Despite an increased risk of domestic violence and abuse among mental health service users, it is consistently under detected in practice and both service users and professionals report systemic barriers to its recognition in mental health settings. This presentation will discuss the findings of a qualitative study of Irish mental health professionals’ experiences of identifying and responding to
domestic violence in practice with a specific focus on the role of language and professional discourse. Study findings indicate that issues of domestic violence and abuse were found to be inappropriately named or reframed leading to problems in its detection and poor care planning for victims of domestic violence. This problematic construction of domestic violence was influenced by several factors including training and education, fear, professional roles, and team working in a dominant medical model. Study findings indicate that professionals in this setting required systemic support to address how domestic violence is recognised and understood. Moreover, the study illustrated a limited focus on service user led care planning and a critical need for a more inclusive and collaborative understanding of domestic violence in mental health services.

Professor Cathy Humphreys

The STACY Safe and Together: Addressing Complexity project is a workforce capacity building project focusing on improving collaborative working with families living with family violence and where there are intersecting parental issues of mental health and substance misuse impacting on children’s safety and wellbeing. This presentation will describe the design used to shift practice in child protection and domestic violence organisations to more effectively keep the perpetrator in view. An Action Research, Community of Practice methodology is used to explore an ethical and safe exemplar (the Safe & Together™ Model) of how to work with all family members, including child and adult victim/survivors and perpetrators of family violence, and other complex circumstances. This presentation explains why the research team chose to work with the DV-informed, Safe & Together approach to child protection and the Community of Practice method to embed organisational practice improvement when working with intersecting complexities. Train last suggests that the systems need to be in place to support workers with changes prior to sending them on skills based training.