



Backlash

Constitution for Backlash self-help group

Background and Objectives:

Backlash was founded by survivors of emotional domestic abuse. We are professional women who are offering a self-help support group for women who are picking up the pieces of their lives after experiencing emotional abuse - recognised as the criminal offence of coercive control. Emotional abuse can happen to anyone; we want to reach out to women who are experiencing the confusion and trauma of the aftermath and let them know that they are not alone.

Perpetrators of emotional abuse tend to be very clever manipulators and in many cases hold respectable positions within the community. As survivors of emotional domestic abuse ourselves, we are able to offer a sympathetic ear to others who have experienced, or are still experiencing, the same thing. Often the journey following leaving this kind of relationship is the hardest time of all.

We can signpost individuals to professionals who can support them should they need more than simply a friend to chat to. Because perpetrators present themselves as victims, and victims have been told throughout their relationship that they are the one who is at fault, there is often not only a lack of understanding of the fact that they have been 'victims' of abuse but also a reluctance to seek help. We have both accessed the support of Women's Aid, through the Freedom Course (once we finally accepted that we were recipients of emotional abuse) and found the course was invaluable, but after completing it there is very little ongoing support.

Due to our own experiences, we recognise that it is extremely beneficial to speak to other people who have had similar experiences - especially when the abuse has been emotional rather than physical. It can be therapeutic to discuss experiences with those who know firsthand of the subtleties of emotional abuse and coercive control.

Coercive control is very difficult to pinpoint as perpetrators are extremely skilled manipulators and are often able to manipulate those on the periphery to the point where they may not believe a victim when they are describing a perpetrator's behaviour.

We want to break the stereotypes: we want to reach out to those who wouldn't see themselves as being able, allowed or even worthy of seeking help from organisations such as Women's Aid. We want to raise awareness both in the community and within professional organisations, of coercive behaviours and the effects it has.

In the future, we would like to work with local, or indeed national, government to raise awareness locally to the huge issue in this area of coercive control. We know there is a need for this type of support in the local area. We are also very keen to do some work nationally to highlight the importance of equipping professionals at all levels who are working with families (school staff, NHS staff, social workers, solicitors etc) with the skills to be able to recognise the signs of coercively controlling behaviour.



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Membership:

- Our group is a women's only group, at present.
- Everyone's experience is different, and all women who have experience emotional abuse are welcome to attend meetings, whether or not they wish to leave their relationship.
- Information about us is available via our website or through joining our closed Facebook group.
- We hold meetings fortnightly.
- There is no obligation to attend; people can dip in and out as they feel necessary.
- Membership is free.

Equal Opportunities:

Backlash will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexuality, disability, religious or political belief, marital status or age.

Officers:

The co-founders of Backlash are Elaine Selby and Sarah Henry; they both do the work of the management committee, including undertaking the roles of secretary and treasurer.

Meetings:

- The support group meets fortnightly between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. This is an open discussion forum; often a topic for discussion will be provided by the management committee.
- Guest speakers such as legal professionals and counsellors may be invited to sit in on the meetings.
- The co-founders meet once a month to discuss the content of group meetings, opportunities fundraising, possible public events and ways to publicize the group further in the local community.
- The AGM is held the first Wednesday of December.

Rules of procedure for group meetings:

- The meetings are open discussion forums; often a topic for discussion will be provided by the management committee.
- The management committee will record the theme of the meeting. However, in order to protect the privacy and safety of our members no minutes of contents will be taken.
- The management committee take safeguarding very seriously and remind the group about confidentiality during the introductions stage of meeting.



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Finances:

- A bank account will be maintained on behalf of the group with Santander. There will be two signatories on the account colon Sarah Henry and Elaine Selby.
- The Backlash mobile phone will be paid for from this bank account.
- Any donations, funding or fundraising will be credited to this bank account.
- Records of income and expenditure will be maintained by the management committee.

Changes to the constitution:

- The constitution will be reviewed at the AGM on the first Wednesday of December each year.
- Any proposals to amend the constitution must be given to the secretary in writing. The proposals will be circulated at the AGM.
- The final decision will be a joint decision between Sarah Henry and Elaine Selby.

Dissolution:

Should it ever be deemed necessary to close down the group, all remaining money and other assets, once outstanding debts have been paid, will be donated to a local charitable organisation. The organisation will be agreed at the meeting which agrees the dissolution.

This constitution was agreed by the founding members of Backlash in May 2019