

# Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Programme briefing

March 2023

## An introduction from Kate Davies CBE, National Director for Health and Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning, NHS England

Welcome to the first edition of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Programme monthly stakeholder briefing. This briefing will be circulated on a monthly basis to share key updates from the programme team and highlight good practice and opportunities for engagement.

The NHS England Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Programme has been set up to transform the way the NHS responds to domestic abuse and sexual violence for both patients and staff. Building on robust safeguarding processes for protecting patients, we can continue to improve systemic support for victims, early intervention and prevention, and address related access and health inequality issues.

NHS England will show national leadership in how to safely and effectively support staff experiencing these crimes by building on current policies and training and ensuring that best practice is available to integrated care boards (ICBs) and trusts.

The programme oversees the implementation of recent legislation, such as the [Domestic Abuse Act](#), the 'Serious Violence Duty' in the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act](#), and the duty on ICBs to set out how they are supporting victims of abuse in their joint forward plans in the [Health and Care Act](#). It also oversees implementation of relevant commitments in the [Women's Health Strategy](#), [Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#) and the [Domestic Abuse Plan](#).

It is estimated that domestic abuse costs the health care system more than [£2 billion a year](#), and [research](#) has indicated an even higher prevalence rate of domestic abuse amongst health care professionals. The impacts of domestic abuse and sexual violence are felt in every area of the health care system, from emergency departments to ambulance call outs to maternity wards.

It is vital that we work collaboratively to embed a whole system approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence, and I look forward to doing so with you in the coming year.

### Recent publications

Home Office Serious Violence Duty [Government response to serious violence consultation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

NHS England 2023/2024 Operational Planning Guidance [NHS England » NHS operational planning and contracting guidance](#)

NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework [Using the NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework](#)

NHS England [Guidance on developing the joint forward plan](#) outlines how ICBs might meet their duties to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence

The NHS England [draft 2023/24 NHS Standard Contract](#) now includes the Domestic Abuse Act.

# About the programme

The NHS has a unique opportunity to support victims a, intervene early and prevent abuse for both patients and staff. It sees 1.5 million patients a day and has 1.3 million staff. . Improving support for patients and staff could help reduce demand on frontline services and prevent a revolving door of patients and their children. The creation of integrated care systems (ICSs), integrated care partnerships (ICPs) and ICBs in 2022 provides a significant opportunity for more joined up services and to improve support for those who experience domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The programme consists of a multidisciplinary team with expertise drawn from clinicians, subject matter experts, and regional and national NHS England staff. It is led by Catherine Hinwood OBE, with Kate Davies CBE, National Director for Health and Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning, and Hilary Garratt CBE, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer for England, the joint Senior Responsible Officers.

We have spent the last few months setting the programme up, visiting hospitals, GPs, commissioners and third sector colleagues, meeting with regions and systems, and gathering evidence about issues, what works and practices and policies. We want to ensure that our work is underpinned by the expertise and experiences of those who know it best, including those with lived experience. Please do email us at [england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net](mailto:england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net) if you would like to invite the team to visit or to speak at an event about our work.

## Introduction to the National Clinical Director for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence at NHS England

Dr Peter Aitken has recently been appointed to provide clinical leadership to the transformative NHS England Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Programme.

Dr Peter Aitken, the NHS's first National Clinical Director for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, said:

“This is a unique and ground-breaking opportunity for the NHS to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. It is paramount that our staff feel supported, are able to recognise the signs of abuse and harassment and have the confidence to know when to speak out in the workplace for patients and staff.”

“I am honoured to be taking on the role of National Clinical Director in such a critical area of the NHS, which touches every corner of the healthcare system.”

Peter worked with the Rt Hon Theresa May MP on [‘Seize the Moment to End Domestic Abuse’](#) advising on the NHS. He is also Regional Clinical Adviser on pathways redesign to the NHS Southwest Provider Collaborative and an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Exeter Medical



School. During the pandemic, Peter worked on staff development and provided liaison psychiatry at the Exeter Nightingale Hospital.

## Recent work

### Preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence - implementation of the Serious Violence Duty

The '[Serious Violence Duty](#)' came into force on 31 January 2023, requiring specified organisations, one of which is ICBs, to collaborate locally to prevent and reduce 'serious violence', which includes domestic abuse and sexual offences. We have been working with systems, regions and national and local partners to help with the implementation of the Duty. There is some fantastic local practice across England, but for many areas, this will be the first time that the NHS is focused on the prevention of domestic abuse and sexual violence. We have been running a series of webinars about the prevention of domestic abuse in a healthcare context, as well as implementation of the Duty more generally. Please do email us at [england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net](mailto:england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net) if you would like to be more involved in this work.

### Domestic Abuse Act included in the NHS standard contract for 2023-24

Health care providers are now required to comply with the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act and its accompanying statutory guidance. This is a significant step forward in ensuring that domestic abuse is seen as 'everybody's business'.

The [Domestic Abuse Act](#) places a positive duty on public bodies and employers to tackle domestic abuse. Other key changes include recognising children as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse, ensuring that crimes such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and honour based crimes are recognised as domestic abuse, and introducing a new offence of non-fatal strangulation. Please do email [england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net](mailto:england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net) if you would like more information on how to implement this new requirement.

### Joint forward plan guidance on domestic abuse and sexual violence

ICBs have a statutory obligation to set out how they are supporting victims of abuse in their joint forward plans. We have contributed to the [Joint forward planning guidance](#) produced by NHS England, which highlights the steps ICBs are required to take to address the particular needs of victims of abuse, as well as suggestions on how they might do this. They must have due regard to the provisions of the [Domestic Abuse Act](#) and accompanying statutory guidance, as well as relevant safeguarding provisions. NHS England also advises that the plan should also cover the needs of staff who are victims of abuse. The guidance recommends that the plan is based on data and lived experience and sets out steps for the delivery of longer-term priorities and ambitions for supporting victims, tackling perpetrators and the prevention of abuse, including through the commissioning of services. Further guidance will be issued later this year, building on good practice identified across the country.

### Audit of current domestic abuse support models in healthcare settings

On 1 March 2023, NHS England's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Programme, in

partnership with [Transformation Partners in Health and Care](#), launched a commissioning audit of domestic abuse support services delivered in healthcare settings. The audit concludes in May 2023 and aims to identify the support that is available, where it is delivered, and how it is funded. The audit is intended to help systems to improve and create consistency in their support offer and provide ICBs with useful information for their Joint Forward Plans. This builds on the excellent mapping work of the [Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office](#) and will give the NHS for the first time a national picture of its work relating to domestic abuse.

Please get in touch with [england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net](mailto:england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net) to share your views on the support models in healthcare settings.

## NHS England joins the Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA)

In response to NHS England's commitment to supporting and empowering colleagues who are victims and survivors of domestic abuse, we are proud to announce that NHS England has joined the [Employer's Initiative on Domestic Abuse \(EIDA\)](#) as a 'Beacon' member. We are committed to being an exemplar of good practice and showing national leadership on this issue, which our Beacon membership of EIDA helps to reflect. NHS England will be undertaking a review of policies relating to domestic abuse and sexual violence, and accompanying support and training throughout 2023, and as a new integrated organisation, meeting its commitment in the Women's Health Strategy to better support staff who experience these crimes.

## Spotlight on best practice



### **Blackpool Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Serious Violence Services**

Blackpool Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was the first hospital to employ a hospital based independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) to support patients and staff who are victims of domestic abuse. The IDVA works alongside police to respond to domestic abuse calls at the time of the incident, supporting the victim and putting an immediate safety plan in place including onward support and referrals.

The evaluation of the service was undertaken by Liverpool John Moores University, highlighting the following key findings:

- Engagement with safeguarding support / advice increased from 21.5% to over 65%.
- Engagement with prosecutions / investigations increased from 14.4% to over 40%.

Following a joint visit by the National Police Chiefs Council, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the College of Policing in July 2022, the service was mobilised in October 2022 as a national model for homicide reduction to all 43 police forces. Hazel Gregory, Head of Safeguarding at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said: *"The Trust has worked with more than 1,000 victims, protecting them immediately after an incident and ensuring they have the support they need with our police colleagues and key partners. We will continue to work to transform the response to domestic abuse, to prevent further harm and reduce offending."*

# Recent events

## Women’s Aid Public Policy Conference 2023

On 28 February, Women’s Aid held their annual public policy conference. Catherine Hinwood OBE spoke on a panel addressing how to ensure good health outcomes for women on a stretched NHS budget. Catherine highlighted the opportunities that exist within ICSs and ICPs, including the need for systems to work with the specialist sector.

Catherine said “We have significant opportunities for better collaboration and focus on local needs with the creation of ICSs and I urged organisations to engage with their ICPs to share their expertise. The specialist sector is critical in the NHS’s mission to transform the way it responds to domestic abuse.”



Women’s Aid also launched their [recent economic analysis](#) which presents the economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support.

## International Women’s Day 2023

To mark International Women’s Day, Catherine spoke at a screening of Andrea Aviet’s film ‘Don’t Cry’, a film highlighting Andrea’s own experiences of domestic abuse. The event focussed on ensuring the voices of lived experience are at the front and centre of conversations to improve support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.



Where else we have been this month -

- The Health and Wellbeing Conference in Birmingham is one of the biggest meetings of employers in the country. Catherine spoke on a panel chaired by EIDA sharing how to support employees affected by domestic abuse. Catherine’s top takeaway from the event was on the importance of creating a safe environment for employees to have normalised conversations about domestic abuse in the workplace.
- The programme team attended the launch of a new interpersonal trauma response service at Devon ICB. The service offers training for GP teams on recognising indicators of abuse and trauma. Speakers at the event included Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, Dr Sarah Wollaston, Chair of NHS Devon and Jo, a patient with lived experience.

## Upcoming Events

**28 and 29 March 2023** – Meet the Programme Team at the Domestic Abuse Commissioners Festival of Practice, where the NHS England Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Programme will have a designated stall.



Catherine Hinwood OBE will be chairing a panel session on embedding domestic abuse awareness and response across the healthcare system that will include a range of perspectives from strategic and practice levels. The panel will provide a holistic picture of existing practice in embedding a cohesive response to domestic abuse across the healthcare system. Panel members will provide an overview of national strategic aims and responsibilities and showcase good practice examples of collaboration and whole-system working to demonstrate the importance of the healthcare system having awareness of and a clear response to domestic abuse. Please do come and say hello!

## Contact us

To get in touch with the programme team, email [england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net](mailto:england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net).