

August 20 2020

Dear Colleague

IRIS (Identification & Referral to Improve Safety) in Barking & Dagenham

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) against women is a common violation of human rights with long-term consequences for the physical and mental health of survivors and their children. At present 2 women a week in England and Wales lose their lives as a result. A further 3 women a week will commit suicide.

A study of 1,000 women in GP waiting rooms found that 41% of women had experienced physical violence from partner/ex-partner and 74% had experienced controlling behaviour by their partner. Following a successful trial of the IRIS model between 2007-2010, results showed that clinicians dramatically increased both their identification of women experiencing DVA and referral of these women to specialist services.

To date IRIS is implemented in **36** sites across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since its initial implementation IRIS has trained over 850 practices and has over 14,000 patients have been referred into support.

DVA in the context of Covid-19

We know that Covid-19 is having a detrimental impact on the safety and lives of patients affected by DVA and their children. Home may not be a safe place for those affected by DVA. Weeks and months of self-isolation has been a dangerous and deeply difficult time for many, as their routes to support and safety has been shut down or limited. GPs and other general practice clinicians play a vital role in addressing DVA in the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Barking and Dagenham is now adopting the evidence-based IRIS model for the local area, funded by the Violence Reduction Unit. This is a substantial and exciting opportunity for general practices to raise the quality of their response to patients experiencing abuse.

We are recruiting general practices to the IRIS programme in Barking & Dagenham.

What will you receive?

- Online or in-house specialist domestic violence training sessions to become better equipped to respond to concerns and disclosures of DVA from all patients, including perpetrators
- Ongoing support and DVA consultancy from a named Advocate Educator.
- Literature for your practice recognising you as a DVA aware practice
- Developed and enhanced safeguarding responses to both children and vulnerable adults
- A simple referral pathway for your patients to a named Advocate Educator, reducing time required from GPs and practices to respond to disclosures and related issues
- IRIS training counts towards Level 3 Safeguarding requirements (for child and adultsafeguarding)
- A certificate for each clinician who attends training, counting towards their CPD points

"We would love your practice to be part of this exciting and important programme that we believe will drastically impact the quality of the support you provide to you patients."

The training includes Clinical team training – two training sessions, each lasting two hours. The content focuses on how to recognise DVA and how to respond, refer and record disclosures. There is also administrative team training – one training session, lasting one hour. This training focuses on understanding DVA, responding to patients, resource provision, confidentiality and safety.

We will be offering the first set of Clinical session 1 trainings in September on the following dates:

- **Thursday 10 September, 1pm to 3.30pm**
- **Wednesday 16 September, 1pm to 3.30pm**
- **Wednesday 23 September, 1pm to 3.30pm**
- **Wednesday 30 September, 1pm to 3.30pm**
- **Wednesday 7 October, 1pm to 3.30pm**

These sessions are **first come, first served** so please don't delay in contacting us!

To register your practice for the IRIS programme please contact Selma Taha, IRIS Service Manager on:
irislbdd@nhs.net

Please note, in order for practices to become an IRIS-trained DVA aware practice, **75%** of the practice must attend training and complete both clinical sessions and also the administrative team training session. You only need to send one email, on behalf of the practice, requesting your preferred date and listing the names of all clinicians who will be attending this training.

"I found this session very interesting and feel that the service you offer will save so many lives. If all concerned follow your advice and we all work together it will make a difference."

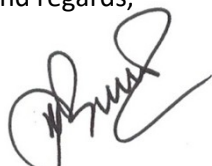
- IRIS trained clinician

"Now I have the confidence to confide in Dr/nurse. Very helpful service. You helped me stand on my feet again and move on with my life; to start fresh and helped me with my child. Please keep on helping women."

- IRIS service user

We look forward to hearing from you

Kind regards,



Dr Richard Burack
Clinical Lead
B&D IRIS team



Selma Taha
Advocacy Services Manager