



IRIS

Identification & Referral to Improve Safety

IRIS Domestic & Sexual Abuse Project in Northern Ireland

IRIS (Identification & Referral to Improve Safety) is a service between General Practice and Specialist 3rd Party Sectors to improve identification of domestic and sexual abuse in the patient population and provide a direct point of referral to the specialist service for the patient to get the appropriate support according to their needs.

It funded by the NI Department of Health as part of the LES (Local Enhanced Service) to enhance services within primary care. Women's Aid are the lead agency for this project in a consortium of other members including Victim Support NI, Nexus and MAP. It is open to both male and female patients aged 18+ who have experienced domestic and sexual abuse or childhood sexual abuse. It offers the practice team a direct contact for support and consultation for cases as well as specialist training and ongoing support for the practice and it's patients. It is open to the whole practice, not just clinical staff as Reception & Administration staff will also received tailored specialist training too.

The Advocate Educator is responsible for recruiting practices, delivering the specialised training and acting as the point of referral. The AE can also provide direct emotional and practical support to the patient as well as signposting/referring to other services according to the patient's need.

It began in 2020 as a pilot project within Newry & Mourne GP Federation Area and East Belfast and has now opened up to practices within the NMD and ABC areas and Belfast areas. The overall aim of IRIS is to improve the General Practice response to DVSA and close the gap between disclosure and the patient accessing the right, specialist support, confidentially and efficiently.

The 5 R's principle of Recognise, Respond, Risk, Refer and Record is at the core of the training for GP's and the practice staff.

The GP is often the only safe person a victim of DVSA may be able to access alone and are often the first and only point of contact for someone who is experiencing DVSA so it's absolutely imperative that GP's and their team know how to recognise the signs, respond appropriately and effectively to a disclosure, as well as be aware of risk indicators, know who to refer to and ensure the appropriate information is recorded in the patient's notes confidentially.

We hope to see IRIS roll out to further areas in the near future.