

# IRIS*i*

IRIS  
ADVISE

## interventions



**ANNUAL  
IMPACT REPORT**  
APRIL 2023 • MARCH 2024

## Improving the healthcare response to domestic abuse and sexual violence

Bridging the gap between clinicians and specialist services to  
deliver holistic, tailored support for victims and survivors.



## Reflections on a year of expansion, innovation and multiple challenges

By Medina Johnson, CEO at IRISi

**A**s we reflect on another year of impactful work, I'm proud of IRISi's progress in transforming healthcare's response to domestic abuse (DA) and sexual violence (SV). Through initiatives like the IRIS+ programme and the iDAHV pilot for health visitors, and our growing influence on national policy, we continue leading the way to ensure healthcare supports every victim-survivor of DA and/or SV.

This year, we present two reports: this **Impact Report**, showcasing our work across the UK, and our **Network Report**, detailing the data behind our efforts. Key insights are summarised on pages 04-05, and the full Network Report will be available on our website.

Despite our achievements, we still face significant challenges. Securing sustainable funding for our evidence-based interventions, and ensuring that the healthcare response to DA and SV is recognised as a core priority by decision-makers and budget holders, remain a hurdle. With your support and the dedication of our partners, I'm confident we'll continue pushing boundaries and ensuring no one is left behind. Thank you to all who contribute to this vital work.

## Pioneering new possibilities

### Innovating new pathways for comprehensive domestic abuse and sexual violence support in healthcare

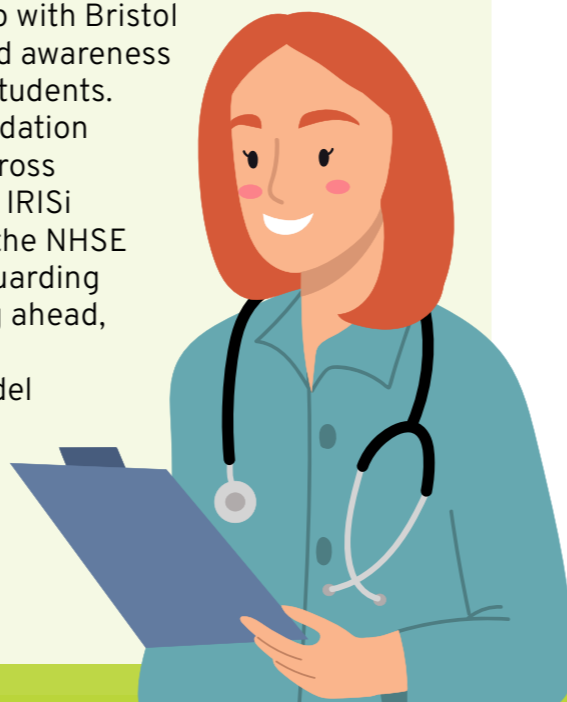
Continuing our commitment to innovation, IRISi leads in developing groundbreaking programmes to prevent and address domestic abuse and sexual violence in healthcare. Our dedication drives us to expand our impact, ensuring everyone gets the support they need. Here are the initiatives we launched last year.

#### IRIS+ Programme: clinical trial to improve general practice response to men and children affected by domestic abuse

IRISi and the University of Bristol have expanded the successful IRIS Programme, originally designed to support women affected by domestic abuse, to create the IRIS+ model, which now extends its reach to men, children and young people. Early research findings, published in January 2024, suggest that IRIS+ is both feasible and potentially cost-effective. Following this, a clinical trial has been launched to assess the programme's effectiveness in real-life settings. If you want to find out more, click here: [www.iris.org/iris-men-children-youngpeople](http://www.iris.org/iris-men-children-youngpeople)

#### Empowering the future of dentistry: strengthening the response to gender-based violence

Over the past four years, IRISi has trained student and foundation dentists to identify and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). In partnership with Bristol Dental School, we led awareness sessions for dental students. We also trained foundation and core trainees across Southwest England. IRISi also participated in the NHSE Dentistry and Safeguarding Conference. Looking ahead, we are exploring an evidence-based model tailored for dental professionals to address domestic abuse in their practice.



## Working with new partners to scale our programmes and drive change

IRIS expanded into four London boroughs and Herefordshire; ADViSE became more firmly embedded in Greater Manchester and key sexual health clinics in Hackney and Westminster, empowering healthcare providers and improving support for survivors through increased referrals and training

Over the past year IRISi has worked with new partners to introduce the IRIS and ADViSE programmes into new regions and scale up our impactful work.

#### • ADViSE in Greater Manchester: continued success

The ADViSE programme in Greater Manchester has been extended for another year. **Deputy Mayor Kate Green celebrated its impact: "Greater Manchester is once again leading the way in tackling gender-based violence. The results of the pilot have been impressive."** ADViSE, which runs in sexual health clinics across Manchester, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford, is delivered in partnership with Manchester Women's Aid, Stockport Without Abuse, Trafford Domestic Abuse Services (TDAS), JIGSAW Support, Manchester Foundation Trust and Locala. Together, they equip sexual health professionals with the tools to identify support patients affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence.

#### • London: VRU commissions IRIS and ADViSE across multiple boroughs

London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) commissioned the expansion of IRIS into four new boroughs – Newham, Redbridge, Richmond and Kingston – under its 4B programme, partnering with London Black Women's Project, Aanchal and Refuge. The VRU also funded the launch of the ADViSE programme delivered in partnership with nia at Homerton Hospital (Hackney) and Advance at St. Mary's Hospital (Westminster). Additionally, the IRIS 6B programme rolled out in six more boroughs: Havering, Merton, Wandsworth, Harrow, Hillingdon and Sutton, supported by local services like Refuge, Advance and Sutton Women's Centre. **Lib Peck, Director of London's Violence Reduction Unit, stated: "Our partnership with the healthcare sector and domestic abuse specialists highlights that,**

**by working together, we can prevent violence against women and girls."**

#### • Herefordshire: expanding our reach with funding from STADA's Crossing Pathways programme

With Home Office funding via Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (STADA), the IRIS programme launched in Herefordshire in February 2024, as part of a three-site cohort with Sefton and Halton (launching later in 2024). Local healthcare professionals are already engaging with the programme, eager to implement its essential support. **Sue Coleman, CEO at West Mercia Women's Aid, shared, "Clinicians in these areas have long recognised the urgent need for the IRIS programme. Their commitment and enthusiasm have been instrumental in bringing this initiative to life. IRIS will be a real driver for change in these areas."**



# IRISi's interventions:

## Bridging the gap between healthcare and the specialist Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls sector

### IRIS TRAINING

4,522 general practice staff completed their initial IRIS training.

### Estimated reach

Across England and Wales, we estimate that 1.5 million women who have experienced domestic abuse are now able to access the IRIS Programme via their general practice.

We estimate that GPs identified & supported at least 15,800 victim survivors as a result of their IRIS training.

### Bridging the gap between health and the specialist DA & VAWG Sector

- IRIS and ADViSE partner organisations worked with over 1,000 GP practices/sexual health clinics to improve their response to DA and SV.
- This is not one-off training; relationships are maintained - nearly 200 follow up training sessions were delivered for healthcare professionals.

### PARTNERSHIP WORK WITH SPECIALIST DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

Over 100 advocate educators from 38 specialist partners supported clinicians and service users across the country.

### Advocate educator

“Our role is twofold: we provide training to clinicians and support service users throughout their journey. Delivering training and hearing the diverse experiences and insights from participants is one of my favourite aspects of being an AE.”

### SUPPORT FOR VICTIM-SURVIVORS

- Support is patient-led and tailored to individual needs.
- It could be one-off advice, or advocacy and support for several months.
- The most common areas AEs supported service users with were ongoing emotional support and advice & information.

### ADViSE TRAINING

121 sexual health clinic staff completed their initial ADViSE training.

### Clinician trained by IRISi

“Having personal experience of being in an abusive relationship, this really resonated with me. Very informative and well presented”.

In total, there were 7,234 referrals to IRIS and ADViSE programmes, comprised of 6,626 referrals made to IRIS advocates and 608 made to ADViSE advocates.

*This is the first service I have been involved with that makes me feel seen, heard, understood and supported. I very much appreciate the help given to me and will always be grateful”*

**Service User**



# Strengthening our network

Empowering our partners: sustaining excellence through ongoing support and innovation in our gold-standard programmes

Our impact relies on a network of like-minded partners who share our vision and deliver our programmes. We're committed to keeping them informed, equipped and connected. By staying updated on research and policy, we refine IRIS and ADVISE, and provide expert training to ensure partners have the tools to deliver these interventions effectively. Here's how we've supported and strengthened our network this past year.

## Sharing knowledge: Through the Lens sessions tackle key domestic abuse issues

As part of our **IRISi Through the Lens** series, we offered two free webinars on complex aspects of domestic abuse. In May, we partnered with Refuge4Pets to address animal abuse as a coercive control tactic by perpetrators. In December, we teamed up with SafeLives to cover non-fatal strangulation (NFS), providing legal insights and clinical guidelines to help partners identify and respond to this newly recognised offence.

## Working alongside our network: IRIS training review sessions

In June 2023, we invited our network to participate in the **IRIS Training Review** sessions, gathering feedback on the training materials used across IRIS programmes. This collaborative process ensures our training remains relevant, effective and aligned with frontline realities, maintaining the highest standards in domestic abuse intervention. The new materials are already available and in use.

## Streamlining monitoring and recording systems through Oasis updates: you said, we did!

In response to feedback from our network, we implemented key updates to the **Oasis system**,

our data management platform used to track and report on programme delivery. These enhancements, from adding the ability to record multiple perpetrators to updating clinician roles in training sessions, ensure that our partners can accurately report on data in a robust way.

## Ensuring Consistency: IRISi Communications, Marketing and PR Guidance for nationwide standards

In May 2023, we introduced the **"IRISi Communications, Marketing, and PR Guidance"** to ensure consistent, professional communication across our network. This guide helps partners share information about our programmes while following brand guidelines, keeping our messaging uniform and maintaining the integrity and standards of our work wherever it's shared.

## Bringing people together: IRISi Network Day 2023, a day of inspiration

On September 26th, we held our first **National Network Day** since the pandemic, with 67 members from across the UK. The event featured powerful talks by Professor Jane Monckton-Smith on the eight stages of homicide, while Dr Alison Gregory shed light on the needs of friends and family supporting domestic abuse survivors, as well as the abuse faced by healthcare professionals. Attendees appreciated the chance to connect, share experiences, and learn from experts, with overwhelmingly positive feedback and pride in being part of these transformative programmes.



# Leading the Change: IRISi's national impact on healthcare settings and policy making

IRISi is establishing itself as a key player in driving the national agenda on the healthcare response to gender-based violence

Over the past year, we've made significant strides in transforming healthcare's response to domestic abuse and sexual violence. From empowering Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and addressing medical record access changes to reflecting on 75 years of the NHS's commitment to women's health and engaging in national policy discussions, our efforts have reinforced IRISi's role as a lead organisation in this critical area.

## Empowering ICBs

In June 2023, IRISi strengthened its role in shaping the national healthcare response to gender-based violence at the Health Summit, co-hosted with Women's Aid and the Health Foundation. The summit emphasised a whole-system approach, leading to NHSE's request for all ICBs to appoint Executive Leads for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. This marked a key step in IRISi's advocacy, pushing for the healthcare system to prioritise the safety and well-being of survivors at every level.

## Supporting safe medical record access

As the NHS implemented changes to medical record access, IRISi proactively supported both healthcare professionals and survivors. Recognising the potential risks, particularly in cases of coercive control, IRISi provided comprehensive guidance and hosted a free webinar to address these concerns. This initiative reflects our commitment to bridging gaps between healthcare and the domestic abuse sector, ensuring clinicians are equipped with the knowledge and tools to protect their most vulnerable patients.

## Reflecting on 75 Years of the NHS's commitment to women's health

As part of our "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" campaign in 2023, IRISi commemorated the 75th anniversary of the NHS by reflecting on its profound impact on women's



health, rights and safety. To mark this milestone, we prepared comprehensive content and an infographic exploring 16 of the most significant moments in NHS history that have shaped women's health, including the 1967 Abortion Act and its influence on women's reproductive rights, key advancements in menopause care, and the relevance of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) across the UK. This initiative highlighted the NHS's critical role in addressing gender-based violence while acknowledging the ongoing challenges.

## Shaping national policy on domestic abuse and sexual violence

IRISi's impact goes beyond programme delivery; we have been developing a strong national voice, shaping policy through collaborations with leading organisations like Women's Aid, SafeLives, Karma Nirvana, Imkaan, Agenda Alliance, and various medical royal colleges. Our participation in key forums such as the Inter-Collegiate and Agency National DVA Forum (INCADVA), the Domestic Abuse Health and Leadership Group, and NHS England (NHSE) and Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) meetings cements IRISi's role in advancing survivor-led, evidence-based policies to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence within healthcare settings.



“I love working with IRIS, I love giving the trainings when they come, and believe wholeheartedly that the work of IRIS and now ADVISE is life changing, life saving and essential”.

Clinician

“I genuinely don't know where I'd be without you. It's taken me from a place I never thought I'd be to seeing a future. I'm not very good with words, I wish I could give you all the best words in the world. Thank you, thank you so much”.

Service user



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