



WHAT IS IRIS?

- IRIS is a research-informed programme built on 15 years of real-world evidence proving its lasting and profound impact.
- The programme was developed by a GP in Bristol and proved by University evaluation to give benefits when deployed in a single surgery.
- It equips general practice teams with the training and tools to identify and respond to domestic abuse (DA), offering support and helping prevent escalation.

IRIS IN WALES: A PROMISING HISTORY NOW AT RISK DUE TO DEVASTATING INACTION

IRIS was first deployed on an industrial scale in Cardiff and the Vale when the Police & Crime Commissioner funded the first year of implementation on condition that it was built-in to the UHB training budget for the following and subsequent years. This was repeated in two more UHBs and the evidence from all three shows the direct benefits to the local health service itself as well as to the health of the patients.

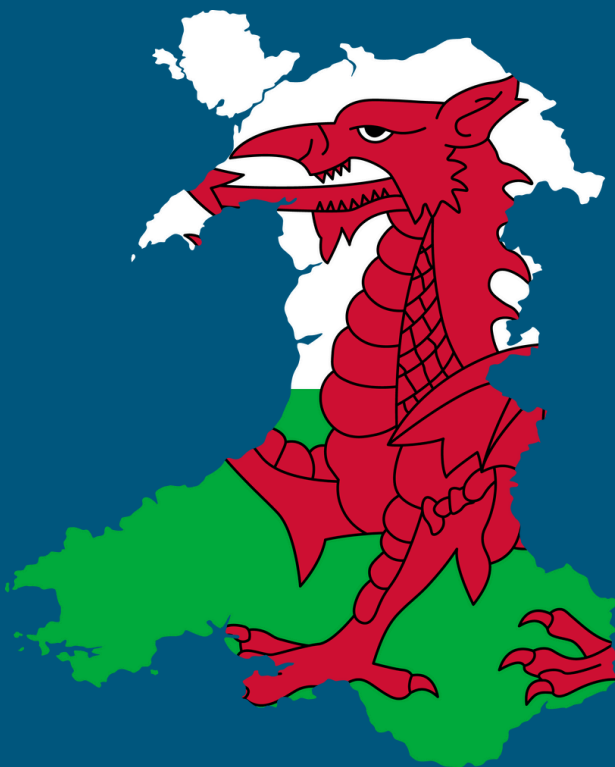
2015 Cardiff & the Vale started running the IRIS programme, delivered in partnership with Cardiff Women's Aid and BAWSO. The programme was also implemented in Cwm Taf, where it has been delivered by Safer Merthyr Tydfil and RCT Domestic Abuse Service.

2020 IRIS was introduced to Swansea Bay, delivered in partnership with Calan DVS. This site was relaunched recently and expanded to a larger number of local general practices from April 2021 onwards.

2021 IRIS began operating in Gwent, delivered in partnership with Llamau.

2022 IRIS started running in Denbighshire through a partnership with DASU and in Carmarthenshire through collaboration with Calan DVS.

2024 Despite all efforts, the IRIS Programmes in Gwent, Carmarthenshire and Denbighshire came to an end, leaving a critical gap in support for victims of domestic abuse.



IN A DECADE, 5,135 PATIENTS - PRIMARILY WOMEN - WERE IDENTIFIED AND REFERRED FOR SUPPORT THROUGH IRIS. IT IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT THE MODEL HAS NOT BECOME MAINSTREAM EVERYWHERE - WHEN:



- Domestic abuse is an epidemic in Wales - 1.6 million women and 712,000 men experienced abuse last year - yet four Health Boards refuse to back the programme.
- IRIS aligns with the Welsh Government's Women's Health Plan, equipping healthcare professionals to intervene early and save lives.
- Reinstating IRIS in primary care would turn policy into action. Every cut leaves more survivors unseen, unheard, and unprotected.
- Only Cardiff & Vale, Cwm Taf Morgannwg, and Swansea Bay Health Boards still commission IRIS, leaving the rest of Wales without this proven intervention - and patients without the needed support.
- In 2024, Gwent, Carmarthenshire, and Denbighshire cut funding, stripping 91 GP practices of the training and resources needed to support survivors.

CARDIFF & THE VALE

"There is a clear pattern: women supported by IRIS need to visit their GP less often. Before IRIS, they were frequent attenders without the root cause being identified".

JACQUELINE GANTLEY, FORMER GP AND IRIS CLINICAL LEAD IN SOUTH WALES

"IRIS reaches survivors that other services miss - older women, those experiencing historic abuse, and those who would never go to the police. We've had referrals from women in their 80s, as well as those who fled abuse years ago but are only now feeling its impact. Nearly every woman visits their GP at some point, making IRIS a vital, discreet lifeline. It's fast, safe, and connects survivors to support when they need it most. Without it, too many remain unseen, unheard, and unprotected."

SERVICE MANAGER AT BAWSO



CWM TAF MORGANNWG

PATIENT FEEDBACK:

- 100% were pleased to be asked by their GP/nurse or Health Visitor if they felt unsafe in their relationship.
- 100% were pleased to be referred to a specialist domestic abuse support worker.
- 100% felt the support provided by the specialist worker was helpful.
- 80% felt safer as a result of the support offered.

"We look forward to continuing our work with the IRIS programme to progress early intervention and avoid unnecessary suffering within our communities. Our GP practices offer a safe haven for victims and patients must be made aware of the strict non-judgmental and confidential role our clinicians and reception staff can offer, as part of the referral process, to provide the support that many of our most vulnerable patients require at their most desperate time of need".

FORMER DEPUTY MANAGER FOR PRIMARY CARE

Over the last 10 years, we have seen a steady increase in referrals, reflecting growing demand and reliance on our services. While the pandemic caused disruptions, the system has since recovered, demonstrating resilience and continued institutional commitment to meeting needs. Up to January 2025, we received:

+ 2,115 referrals.

Before the IRIS programme was implemented, local VAWDASV services received only four referrals from primary healthcare - a stark indication of the gap in support for victims. However, since the programme's launch in 2015 and up to January 2025, we received:

+ 1,450 referrals.

SWANSEA BAY

PATIENT FEEDBACK:

"I was asked about Domestic Abuse by my GP, who then referred me to the Advocate Educator. I was pleasantly surprised by how quickly the referral led to an improvement in my circumstances. Also, how action was taken immediately and then how everything went smoothly, without any time to get anxious. I'm already feeling less on edge and still adjusting to feeling safe, and I can see a light at the end of the tunnel".

SURVIVOR IDENTIFIED AND SUPPORTED THROUGH IRIS



In 2020 IRIS was launched in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, funded by the Police & Crime Commissioner for the first year, but the UHB failed to put it in their mainstream training budget for the following year. It was restarted in October 2022 by Swansea Bay UHB and up until January 2025, had received:

+ 550 referrals.

GWENT

PATIENT FEEDBACK:

- 100% report being happy with the provision.
- 80% report feeling safer.
- 80% report feeling better able to cope.
- 80% report feeling more optimistic about the future.

"Having the opportunity to undertake this training has given me and my colleagues the opportunity to explore the implications that domestic abuse and violence has on our patients every day. A subject that is not always addressed in the correct manner, but vitally important to understand. Having access to our AE will enhance our response to domestic abuse and we will be able to work together to ensure our patients have the best support at the right time. Highly recommend the training."

GP TRAINED BY IRIS



Between July 2021 and March 2024, the IRIS programme in Gwent received:

+ 1,020 referrals.



Patients reported needing fewer GP appointments since engaging with IRIS.

"It's bonkers: Welsh Government says it has made women's health a priority - but a model that has been a success for ten years, benefiting the Health Service as well as women and their health, is being dismissed by four of the seven health boards which are letting down the women in their area."

RT HON ALUN MICHAEL OBE

Other UHBs briefly introduced limited pilots in Denbighshire and Carmarthenshire but both failed to persevere with the model.