

IRIS Programme - Identification and Referral to Improve Safety

Report

Two young women discussing at table

Key information

Publication type: General

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The programme

IRIS (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) is a general practice (GP) based domestic violence and abuse (DVA) training support and referral programme. It is aimed at training GPs to better support individuals experiencing domestic abuse from a current partner, ex-partner or adult family member. IRIS also provides information and signposting for male victims and for perpetrators.

The programme currently runs in 8 boroughs across London. The core programme activities are providing training and education, improving clinical enquiry, building care pathways and an enhanced referral pathway to specialist domestic violence services.

Evaluation summary and methodology

DMSS Research was commissioned by IRISi as evaluation and learning partner. The evaluation takes a primarily qualitative data collection approach (including over 90 interviews with staff), with quarterly monitoring data providing context around the number of referrals and training sessions delivered.

The evaluation, as well as the programme itself, was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key findings

The mobilisation and initial delivery of the service was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which affected recruitment, maintaining relationships, staff isolation and the programme had to adapt to online training.

However, despite the challenges, the evaluation found that:

- training had succeeded in increasing the GP's awareness of domestic abuse and increased confidence when talking to patients about abuse
- individual level outcomes highlighted awareness, knowledge and confidence among service users reached by the programme.

Emerging best practice

Online training delivery was deemed successful and for many clinicians the ability to access the training virtually was welcomed.

Supportive relationships with lead agencies as well as within teams/boroughs was seen as crucial to good implementation. The vital role the clinical lead can play in engaging practices and providing the clinical expertise and professional networks underlining the credibility of IRIS was highlighted.

Clinician's highlighted IRIS's offer of a single, clear pathway of referral to a named worker of as a crucial benefit of the programme. Maintaining this quality of service and communicating its benefits to key decision makers was recommended as a key component of IRISi's ongoing strategy.

Several interviewees commented that a key value of the IRIS 7B programme is the focus on diversity. Several of the service managers commented that the referrals that came to them were not known to their service previously. The fact that the programme deliberately fostered expertise on diversity was seen as highly beneficial.

Challenges and lessons learned

The set up of the programme was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which affected recruitment, adjustments to online training, maintaining relationships and dealing with staff isolation.

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