

Responding to Intimate Partner Violence: Key Messages for Health & Social Care Professionals

#16Days

HELP SEEKING IS A JOURNEY...

It's gone on too long...

There are many reasons why a person experiencing abuse will seek help, such as wanting a better life, losing hope their partner will change, feeling the abuse has gone on too long, or fear for their children.

BUT SPEAKING OUT CAN BE DIFFICULT...

She's just been feeling down lately.

Her partner might be monitoring her very closely, preventing her from accessing medical services or accompanying her to appointments and speaking on her behalf. She may appear uncomfortable speaking in front of him.

Someone experiencing abuse is more likely to disclose their experience to a health care practitioner than any other service.

...it's just easier to let him decide what we do. I don't like rows.

Do you feel safe in your home?

The response of the health care practitioner is key.

Talk in private. Ask simple, direct questions. Assure her of her confidentiality. Make space to talk by asking open-ended questions.

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A disclosure does not necessarily mean she wants to leave her abuser. She may have very practical reasons for not leaving...

...but it is essential that she knows the door is open for further conversations.

A risk assessment provides a framework to identify the signs of escalating violence and take the appropriate response. If neither she nor other family members are in immediate danger, she can be directed to supports.

In a busy surgery, health centre support staff can provide an essential link to these services. With her permission, they can arrange this conversation.

Local support services

ROI NI

The most dangerous time is when she's on the verge of leaving and 12 months following separation. She's best placed to know when the time is right to act.

SAFETY PLAN

You can draw up a safety plan together in a collaborative, non-directive manner.

Sample plans A B C

If she chooses to leave there are protective measures available.

Legal options ROI NI

SAFETY ORDER

Content derived from an evidence review of Intimate Partner Violence to be published by the centre for effective services in 2021.

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