

1. Support for children who have been sexually abused

February 2019

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and Home Office minister, Victoria Atkins, joined forces today to launch The Lighthouse, our latest service for children.

The pioneering facility in Camden, London, sees us working with The University College London Hospitals Foundation Trust (UCLH), in partnership with Tavistock and Portman Foundation Hospital. It offers a full range of support to children and their families who've been affected by sexual abuse.

Until now, young people who reported sexual abuse could face multiple interviews with social workers, law enforcement and medical professionals in different and sometimes unfriendly settings, while also struggling to access long-term emotional support.

Based on the Icelandic Barnahus model, The Lighthouse brings all that support under one roof. It will also gather evidence from interviews to help gain more successful prosecutions in the future.

Link: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/lighthouse-opens-to-help-sexually-abused-children/?utm_source=Aestra&utm_medium=email&utm_content=NSPCC%3A%20A0The%20Lighthouse%20opens%20to%20help%20children%20and%20their%20families%20deal%20with%20the%2

2. Sexual violence

Sexual violence and abuse support services have been described as at crisis point. Need and demand for their specialist services from victims and survivors of all forms of sexual violence and abuse are at unprecedented levels and continue to rise year on year. Many Rape Crisis Centres and other specialist providers operate waiting lists for their services and some have had to take the difficult decision to close their waiting lists. It can take a lot of courage to reach out for support and services describe it as 'agonising' and 'soul-destroying' to not always be able to provide this.⁵ Funding and commissioning opportunities that services are able to access vary widely across the sector, partly as a result of the agenda of devolving funds to local levels. Many services feel they survive on a 'hand to mouth' basis, with the prevalence of short-term grants and contracts meaning too much time and energy is diverted to sourcing the funds for survival each year. Difficult decisions frequently have to be made to make experienced staff redundant or reduce or suspend services. Some services report pressure to merge and/or stop providing dedicated single sex services from Commissioners who do not understand their Equality Duty responsibilities⁶ and prefer to issue larger contracts to generic providers with minimal track record, despite the cost effectiveness and considerable expertise and experience of smaller, specialist providers.

Link: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/media/1920/report-on-funding-and-commissioning-of-sv-and-abuse-services-2018.pdf>

3. Protecting children from domestic abuse

February 2019

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse.

Each UK nation has its own definition of domestic abuse for professionals who are working to prevent domestic abuse and protect those who have experienced it (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016; Home Office, 2013; Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, 2017; Welsh Government, 2016).

Domestic abuse can include:

- sexual abuse and rape (including within a relationship)
- punching, kicking, cutting, hitting with an object
- withholding money or preventing someone from earning money
- taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear
- not letting someone leave the house
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or pet.

Secondary schools

In secondary schools personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) (England), personal development and mutual understanding (PDMU) (Northern Ireland), and personal and social education (PSE) (Wales and Scotland) lessons can be used to teach children about all forms of domestic and relationship abuse and healthy relationships.

We've worked with the PSHE Association to create lesson plans for children aged 10-16 on personal safety and healthy relationships. This includes topics such as unhealthy relationships and consent.

AGENDA is a free online toolkit developed with young people, for young people. It supports them in safely and creatively challenging gender inequalities and oppressive gender norms.

Peer support schemes can also be an effective way of encouraging young people to share concerns. They can help to create an atmosphere of trust and make it more likely that problems are picked up.

Link: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/domestic-abuse/>