

- To:
- ICB:
 - Domestic abuse and sexual violence leads
 - Chief nursing officers
 - Medical directors
 - Human resources and organisational development directors
 - NHS Trust and Foundation Trust:
 - Domestic abuse and sexual violence leads
 - Chief nursing officers
 - Medical directors
 - Human resources and organisational development directors
 - Regional human resources and organisational development directors

NHS England
Wellington House
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SE1 8UG

4 September 2023

- cc.
- ICB:
 - Chief executives
 - Chairs
 - NHS Trust and Foundation Trust:
 - Chief executives
 - Chairs
 - NHS England Regional
 - Directors
 - Chief nursing officers
 - Medical directors

Dear colleague,

Domestic abuse and sexual violence leadership update – launch of the first NHS sexual safety charter

In my [letter](#) to you of 23 June 2023, I emphasised the importance of redoubling and strengthening our efforts to ensure that every part of the NHS takes a systematic zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct and violence, keeping our patients and staff safe.

Sexual misconduct can happen to anyone anywhere – it is crucial that when our staff come to work, they feel safe and supported. Thank you to the many of you who have risen to that challenge and agreed to lead work for your organisation on tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV).



I'm writing to you with the next steps on how this critical work can support NHS staff.

Today NHS England launched its first ever [sexual safety charter](#) in collaboration with key partners across the healthcare system.

Signatories to this charter commit to taking and enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any unwanted, inappropriate and/or harmful sexual behaviours within the workplace, and to ten core principles and actions to help achieve this. Signatories to the charter commit to implementing all ten commitments by July 2024.

The NHS Chief Executive Amanda Pritchard has signed the charter on behalf of NHS England, I urge all Trusts and ICBs to join us as signatories.

How NHS England will assist NHS organisations implement the charter

We all need to ensure that the NHS is taking the right action to identify, safeguard and care for individuals who have been or are being sexually assaulted or abused. Signing up to this charter will send a powerful message to NHS staff that we take their experiences seriously. But these actions will require close collaboration where we learn from each other and solve problems together.

NHS England will use the new network of NHS DASV leads across the system to help share and promote good practice, identify issues and develop practical solutions in relation to implementation of the charter as quickly and effectively as possible.

My letter of 23 June asked you to review your policies, support and training for staff and this showed that there is already good work in this area across the NHS. NHS England has set up an expert advisory group who have been tasked with reviewing our policies, training and support, and we will share with you model guidance, e-learning and other products, as they are developed.

Data capture is a key commitment in the charter. To help you and your teams have a clearer view of the situation in your organisation, NHS England has included a new question in the NHS Staff Survey which will be published in October 2023:

'In the last 12 months, how many times have you been the target of unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature in the workplace? This may include offensive or inappropriate sexualised conversation (including jokes), touching or assault.'

The anonymous data gathered from this question will help us understand the potential prevalence of sexual misconduct in your organisation and inform further action to protect and support staff across the NHS.

We understand the conversations you and your teams will be having with staff will be sensitive and complicated. Alongside this letter we have cascaded a toolkit with the information you and your teams will need to support conversations in relation to sexual safety in the workplace.

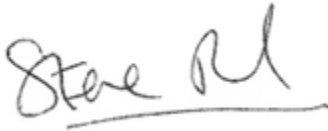
Although the responsibility for making progress in this area lies with all of us, I am conscious that our new network of DASV leads across the system will need support as they take forward this important work. To assist them, and learn from their feedback, I will be hosting quarterly webinars. The first one will take place on 17 October as an introduction to the

DASV programme and the network, as well as discussing sexual safety and charter implementation. Over the coming weeks, my team will be contacting NHS organisations who are still identifying DASV leads.

You can sign the charter on behalf of your organisation by emailing england.domesticabusesexualviolence@nhs.net. Please also get in touch with the team if you have questions about this programme.

Thank you for your support to help ensure the NHS is a safe space for staff and patients, and a place in which sexual misconduct, violence, harassment or abuse will not be tolerated and I am certain that by working together, we will achieve this.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Russell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Steve Russell
Chief Delivery Officer
NHS England

