



Culture of Care preventing sexual violence on wards training

Tuesday 11 November 2025, 10:30am – 12:30pm | [MS Teams](#)

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Additional guidance on why people don't report sexual harm

Barriers to disclosure

Concern about not being believed

Anxiety about or experience of having their account of what happen will not be believed leading to silence or that the justice system won't serve justice.

Shame, Guilt and Self-Blame

Normalization, societal myths (E.g. they were asking for it) and internalized blame can cause deep feelings of shame and guilt, making it incredibly hard to speak out.

Trauma's Impact on Disclosure

The psychological effects of trauma, such as dissociation and memory issues, can make it difficult to recall or articulate the abuse.

Relationship and Trust Issues

When the perpetrator is known, fear of damaging relationships or a lack of trusted support can prevent disclosure.

Fear of Retaliation and Disbelief

Survivors often fear the perpetrator's reaction, or risk of further harm.

Fear of consequences

By their employer or wider professional group.

Societal Stigma and Systemic Failings

Widespread victim-blaming, cultural taboos, and a lack of faith in justice systems create environments where survivors feel unsafe to come forward.

Black and minoritized women

Language & Systemic Bias

Language barriers, limited understanding of UK systems, and experiences of institutional racism and cultural insensitivity within support services.

Cultural & Honour Pressures

Intense fear of dishonouring family or community, leading to ostracisation, and pressure to conform to strict gender roles.

Intersection of Stereotypes

Encountering amplified victim-blaming and disbelief due to the intersection of racialised and gendered societal myths. For example, "What was she wearing?"

Immigration Status Exploitation

Vulnerability due to reliance on the perpetrator for immigration status and fear of deportation, often compounded by "No Recourse to Public Funds" (NRPF) limitations.

Distrust & Lack of Specific Support

A deep-seated distrust of authorities due to past negative experiences or discrimination, and a lack of culturally sensitive, specialist support services.

Research cited by **Imkaan (a UK-based BME women's organisation) and **SafeLives** indicates that Black and minoritised women are **more likely to stay in abusive relationships for longer** and that BME clients suffered abuse for **1.5 times longer before seeking help** compared to those from a white British or Irish background. (Seetec, Imkaan, SafeLives)**

Male Survivors

Significant Under-reporting

Male victims are far less likely to report sexual violence due to societal pressures and a lack of awareness that men can be victims.

Masculine Norms & Shame

Traditional masculine ideals (strength, stoicism) make disclosing feel like a weakness, leading to intense shame, humiliation, and fear of emasculation.

Lack of Tailored Support

Limited staff awareness, inadequate training for professionals, and a scarcity of male-specific or male-friendly support services hinder access to help.

Public Messaging Gaps

Public awareness campaigns and media often overlook male victimisation, reinforcing stereotypes and making it harder for men to identify as survivors.

Gendered Victim-Blaming

Harmful societal myths imply men are always consenting or capable of resistance, invalidating their experiences and fostering disbelief (e.g., "Had they been drinking?").

Mankind UK's research in 2021 found that **1 in 7 men had been coerced into sex and **1 in 10 men had experienced rape or non-consensual penetration**. (NHS England)*

*One study found that **20% of men sampled took over 31 years to disclose** being sexually abused. (GOV.UK Position statement on male victims)**

LGBTQIA+ Survivors

Non-Recognition of Abuse

Difficulty identifying their experience as abuse, especially if it doesn't fit heteronormative or traditional understandings of sexual violence.

Abuser's Exploitation of Identity

Fear of being "outed" or having their sexuality/gender identity used against them by the perpetrator to maintain control.

Internalised Stigma

Feelings of shame, self-hatred, or unworthiness due to societal homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia, hindering help-seeking.

Distrust of Mainstream Services

Valid fears of discrimination, insensitivity, or re-traumatisation from service providers due to past or anticipated homo/bi/transphobia.

Lack of Inclusive Support

Limited availability of LGBTQ+-affirming and competent support services that understand their unique experiences and needs.

***SafeLives** states that LGBTQ+ people experience equal or even higher prevalence of domestic violence and abuse compared to heterosexual women, but it remains **acutely underreported** and LGBTQ+ survivors are disproportionately underrepresented in specialist domestic abuse services.*

***Galop** (an LGBTQ+ anti-violence charity) notes that **78% of gay and bisexual men and 80% of gay and bisexual women** who have experienced domestic violence have **never reported incidents to the police**. (SafeLives)*

Autism

Significantly Higher Victimization Rates

Autistic people particularly those with higher support needs, face alarmingly elevated rates of sexual victimisation.

Misconceptions About Sexuality

Harmful stereotypes about autistic sexuality (e.g., asexual, incapable of consent) lead to their experiences being dismissed or boundaries ignored.

Lack of Accessible Support

A severe absence of autism-friendly accommodations, understanding, and communication methods in education, public messaging, and support services.

Reliance on Caregivers

Many autistic people are reliant on caregivers or support staff, creating a power imbalance that can be exploited by perpetrators.

Communication & Disclosure Challenges

Difficulties in identifying abuse and communicating their experiences due to unique communication styles and processing differences.

9 out of 10 autistic women have experienced sexual violence. *This striking figure is from a study cited by **SWAN Scotland** and **Open Access Government**, with over 50% of them being 15 or younger when first attacked. (Cazalis et al., 2022 research, widely cited).*

*Broader research indicates that autistic adults experience more interpersonal maltreatment (violence and abuse from familiar others) than non-autistic adults, with a pooled prevalence rate for **poly-victimisation (multiple forms of victimisation) across the lifetime in autism at 84%**. (Weiss & Fardella, 2018; Thrundle et al., 2022, cited by *The Autism Community in Action*).*

Resources

In an emergency call 999, if it is unsafe to speak you can dial '55' to indicate you are not safe to speak but need emergency help

National Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence support services:

- **National Sexual Assault referral centres (SARCs):** offer medical, practical and emotional support to anyone who has been raped, sexually assaulted or abused.
- [Find a rape and sexual assault referral centre - NHS](#)
- **Rape Crisis England and Wales:** 24/7 helpline that can provide immediate support if you have experienced Email: helpline@thesurvivorstrust.org
- **The Survivors Trust:** Free & confidential support helpline for all survivors of sexual violence in the UK and Ireland
- **Southall Black Sisters:** Specialist support for Black and Minoritised women in the UK experiencing any form of sexual violence [Domestic Abuse Helpline - Southall Black Sisters](#)
- **Survivors UK www.survivorsuk.org:** Support men, boys, and non-binary people aged 13+ who have experienced sexual violence. Counselling and ISVA support
- **GALOP:** Support for LGBT+ people who experience domestic abuse sexual assault, harassment, image-based sexual abuse, or other forms of sexual situations that happen without consent.
- **DeafHope:** Domestic and Sexual violence support for deaf women. [Get Help - DeafHope](#)
- **National Stalking Helpline <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/>**
- **Forward:** Advice and 1:1 support for women and girls who have experienced female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and other harmful practices. [Get Help- Support services | FORWARD](#)



Specific support for Domestic abuse:

National Domestic Abuse Helpline:

Respect: Support for perpetrators of domestic abuse and male victims

NHS England sexual misconduct policy

[NHS England » NHS England sexual misconduct policy](#)

Guidance for NHS employers – includes resources of you have been affected at work