



Safe Spaces Survey Initial Impact Report





TOGETHER WE CAN END DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE



1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience domestic abuse and around a million children in the UK are affected by domestic abuse. So, when the first lockdown was announced in March 2020 we knew that this would have a dramatic impact on many victims who would be isolated at home with their abuser. Women like Anna, who lost her job because of lockdown leaving her at home with a partner who became increasingly abusive.

Anna told us: *“While others were quite looking forward to having some time at home I was dreading it. I knew it would mean that I would have no chance to escape the physical and emotional abuse. My partner would wait until I was asleep and then he would punch me and scratch me. I used to be able to escape his violent moods by going to the gym and swimming but during lockdown that became impossible. I felt increasingly trapped.”*

How could we reach out and provide a safe space for women like Anna? UK SAYS NO MORE is a campaign that has always been committed to increasing pathways for victims of domestic abuse to access specialist support, safely. We knew we had to find a way to continue doing this during the pandemic.

On 1st May 2020 we launched our ‘Safe Spaces’ scheme in partnership with pharmacies across the UK. By using pharmacy consulting rooms, it gave those experiencing domestic abuse somewhere safe to go to get the advice and support they so desperately needed without arousing the suspicion of their abuser. We now have around 5,000 pharmacies facilitating Safe Spaces across the UK and recently expanded the scheme by launching Online Safe Spaces in partnership with Royal Mail Group.

But we are constantly listening and learning so that we can support victims of domestic abuse in the most effective way. We welcome the findings of this first survey with pharmacists and we are already changing how the Safe Spaces scheme operates in response to these findings.

In consultation with the General Pharmaceutical Council and Royal Pharmaceutical Society, we have simplified our Safe Spaces scheme to ensure minimal disruption to a pharmacy’s daily operation without impacting on the resources available to victims of domestic abuse.

We will continue to deliver Safe Spaces post COVID-19 and develop the scheme with local and national partners to create further pathways for victims to access specialist support, safely.

We thank all those who have supported Safe Spaces so far and urge people to continue to share the details of this scheme in local communities and on social media so that we can continue to support women and families escape abuse and start to rebuild their lives.

“We set up a Safe Space in our pharmacy not thinking for one minute that anyone would need to use it. However, it has been used on several occasions over the last two weeks by the same person who needed a space to make phone calls to the local domestic violence team. She has been so grateful that the space was made available. Thank you for your campaign. It has made us realise just what is happening in our locality and how we can play a small part in making people’s lives safer.”

-Member of staff from an independent pharmacy

Safe Spaces: COVID-19 Response

When the government announced lockdown measures in late March 2020 due to COVID-19 domestic abuse charities, including Hestia’s UK SAYS NO MORE campaign, warned that cases of domestic abuse would rise as victims were isolated at home with their abusers. The government slogan, ‘Stay Home, Stay Safe’, did not apply to everyone and for many home was a terrifying and dangerous place.

These concerns were confirmed when in the first three weeks of lockdown, there were sixteen domestic abuse killings recorded in the UK, the highest for 11 years (Smith, 2020). Hestia’s Bright Sky app (designed to provide support and information to those concerned about domestic abuse) was used almost 68,000 times during the lockdown and there was a 70% increase in the number of calls made within the app to domestic abuse services, helplines or 999 (Hestia, 2020).

In response to this crisis, and in collaboration with Boots, Superdrug, Morrisons and local independent pharmacies, Hestia’s UK SAYS NO MORE campaign launched the Safe Spaces scheme in May 2020. By utilising pharmacy consultation rooms across the country victims of domestic abuse were able to safely access information and receive support without arousing the suspicion of their abuser.

Over 5,000 pharmacies are now part of this scheme and it is supported by the General Pharmaceutical Council and Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

In order to understand the initial impact of the Safe Spaces scheme, London South Bank University supported UK SAYS NO MORE to survey participating pharmacies between June and August 2020. There was a total of 178 responses to the survey - almost 6% of the total pharmacies engaged in the scheme.

The authors have used the term ‘victim’ throughout this report to describe individuals who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. This term was chosen because it reflects the language used across government, and it is thought to be more readily understood by the general public. The use of the term here does not in any way diminish the agency, strength or resilience of those living with domestic abuse.

#LISTENINGFROMHOME COVID-19

This is a Safe Space.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone.
Support is available.

If you are in immediate danger dial 999

Call Northern Ireland's Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline (Freephone, 24/7) 0808 802 1414

Call the Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

Download the free Bright Sky app to find your local specialist domestic abuse service.

TOGETHER WE CAN END DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

NO MORE     

UKSAYSNOMORE.ORG/SAFESPACES

Northern Ireland

#LISTENINGFROMHOME COVID-19

This is a Safe Space.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone.
Support is available.

If you are in immediate danger dial 999

Call Scotland's Domestic Abuse & Forced Marriage Helpline (Freephone, 24/7) 0800 027 1234

Call the Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

Download the free Bright Sky app to find your local specialist domestic abuse service.

TOGETHER WE CAN END DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

NO MORE     

UKSAYSNOMORE.ORG/SAFESPACES

Scotland

#LISTENINGFROMHOME COVID-19

This is a Safe Space.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone.
Support is available.

If you are in immediate danger dial 999

Call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline (Freephone, 24/7) 0808 2000 247

Call the Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

Download the free Bright Sky app to find your local specialist domestic abuse service.

TOGETHER WE CAN END DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

NO MORE     

UKSAYSNOMORE.ORG/SAFESPACES

England

#LISTENINGFROMHOME COVID-19

This is a Safe Space.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone.
Support is available.

If you are in immediate danger dial 999

Call Live Fear Free Helpline (Freephone, 24/7) 0808 801 0800

Call the Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

Download the free Bright Sky app to find your local specialist domestic abuse service.

TOGETHER WE CAN END DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

NO MORE     

UKSAYSNOMORE.ORG/SAFESPACES

Wales

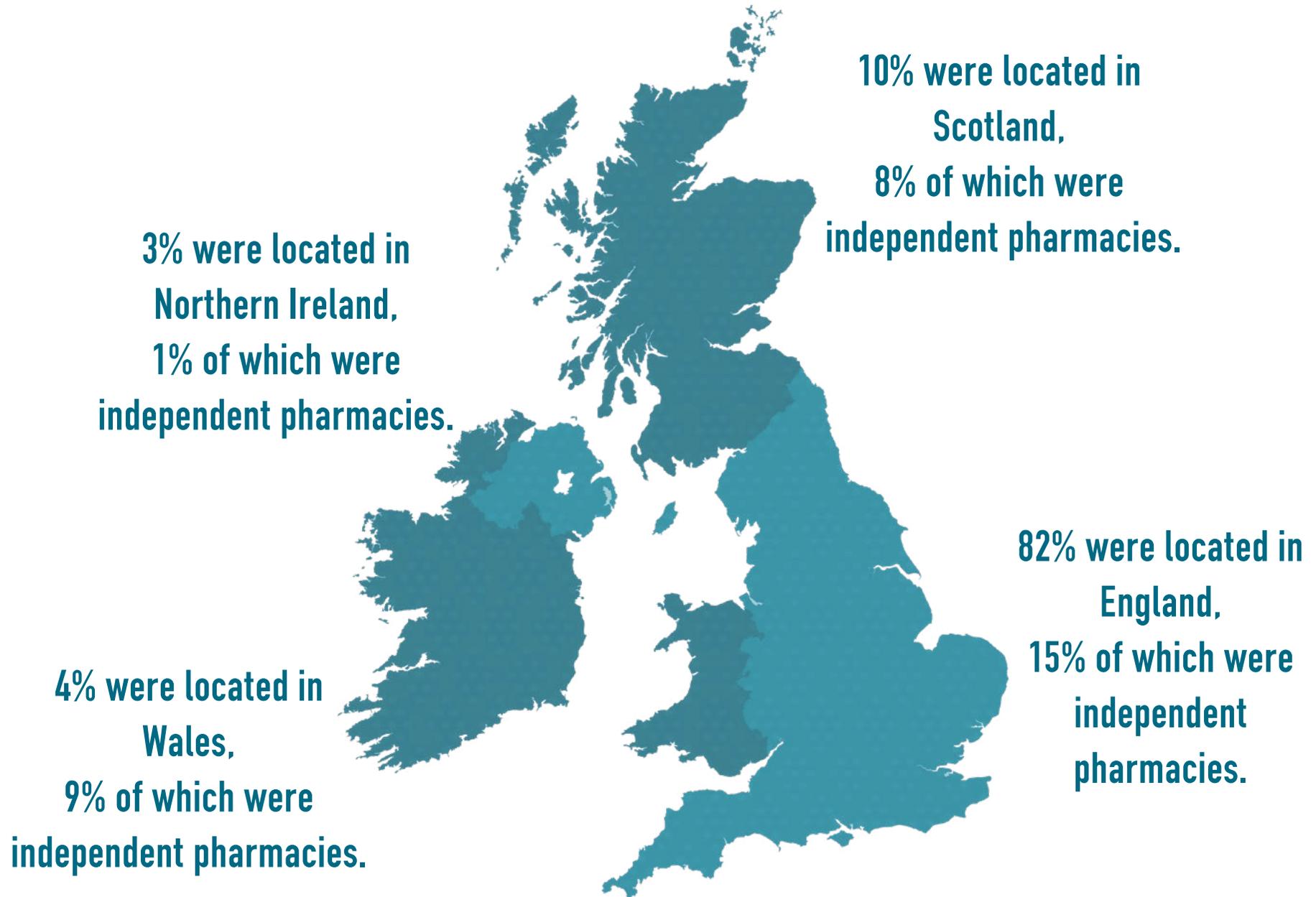
Key findings include:

- Almost 90% of respondents had no difficulties creating a Safe Space in their pharmacy
- The majority of pharmacists (over 90%) were 'quite confident' in responding to disclosures of domestic abuse, since the launch of Safe Spaces. Suggesting the scheme has had a positive impact on pharmacy staff's confidence in dealing with domestic abuse disclosures
- Fewer than 14% were 'very confident' in dealing with disclosures indicating a need for further training



The authors have used the term 'victim' throughout this report to describe individuals who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. This term was chosen because it reflects the language used across government, and it is thought to be more readily understood by the general public. The use of the term here does not in any way diminish the agency, strength or resilience of those living with domestic abuse.

All pharmacies are continuing with Safe Spaces beyond COVID-19 and more continue to join.



3% were located in Northern Ireland, 1% of which were independent pharmacies.

10% were located in Scotland, 8% of which were independent pharmacies.

4% were located in Wales, 9% of which were independent pharmacies.

82% were located in England, 15% of which were independent pharmacies.

A total of 4,171 pharmacies took part in the Safe Spaces scheme throughout the UK.



Methods

London South Bank University supported UK SAYS NO MORE to develop the survey questions for pharmacies. The questionnaires were created with Survey Monkey and then distributed by email to all pharmacies facilitating Safe Spaces. Survey submission was encouraged by General Pharmaceutical Council (GPC), Royal Pharmacy Society (RPS) and other Safe Spaces stakeholders. The questionnaires were available to respondents between the 2nd June 2020 and 14th August 2020.

Four questions asked respondents to rate their perceptions of the success of the Safe Spaces Scheme according to a Lickert scale of 1-5. This included pharmacy staff's impressions of the frequency with which the public used their Safe Spaces and staff's confidence when dealing with disclosures of domestic abuse. Respondents were also offered the opportunity to comment about the scheme at the end of the questionnaire.

There was a total of 178 responses to the survey - almost 6% of the total pharmacies who engaged in the scheme. An encouraging percentage given that a response rate of 5% is considered typical and data collection occurred when COVID-19 lockdown measures were lifting and pharmacies were experiencing huge amounts of pressure and stress.

The responses from the questionnaires were collated by UK SAYS NO MORE and the data presented to the evaluation team for analysis and write up.



By December 2020, just over 5000 pharmacies will be taking part in the Safe Spaces Scheme.

The authors have used the term 'victim' throughout this report to describe individuals who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. This term was chosen because it reflects the language used across government, and it is thought to be more readily understood by the general public. The use of the term here does not in any way diminish the agency, strength or resilience of those living with domestic abuse.

HOME ISN'T ALWAYS A SAFE SPACE.

Your local Morrisons Pharmacy is.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Recognising the need for Safe Spaces

“As an independent pharmacy, we strive to be as community focused as we possibly can. For us, the Safe Space scheme is another way of offering essential support to some of our most vulnerable customers.”

“As a pharmacy we think it’s a good idea, especially because I believe it can provide peace of mind to people knowing that the space is available if needed.”

“Very glad we started this as we’ve had to use it recently.”

Overall, pharmacy staff embraced Safe Spaces and were aware of the significance of the scheme to victims in the community. Over 80% of respondents thought that continuing with the Safe Spaces scheme was important or very important to survivors of domestic abuse.

“If a victim is being closely monitored, this scheme provides a discrete avenue through which they can seek help.”

“Having experienced domestic abuse and not knowing where to turn to I think it’s vital that safe spaces are available even in areas where you would not normally think it would be a problem.”

2. Creating a Safe Space

“I think that this is a brilliant scheme it’s simple for people to escape to a pharmacy....”

“[The] service was well welcomed.”

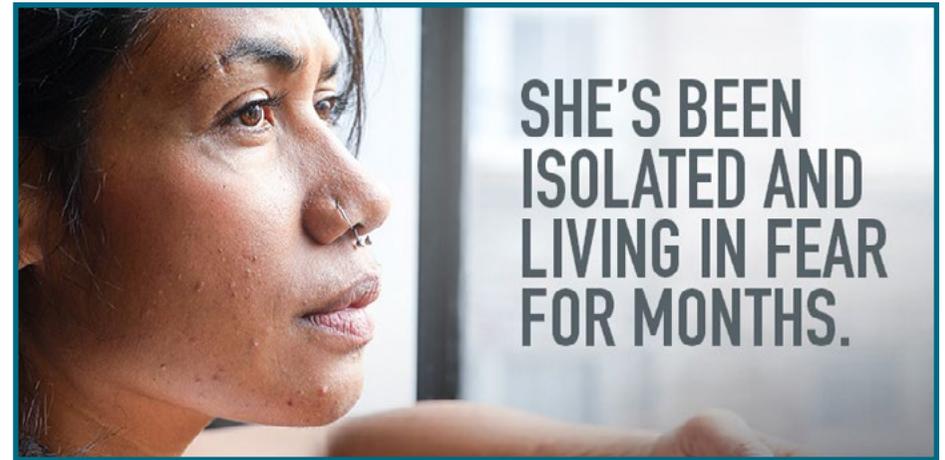
Almost 90% of respondents had no difficulties creating a Safe Space in the pharmacy and over 91% were at least ‘quite confident’ in responding to disclosures of domestic abuse, since the launch of Safe Spaces. This suggests that the Safe Space scheme has a positive impact on pharmacy staff’s confidence when it comes to dealing with disclosures about domestic abuse.

However, fewer than 14% of these were ‘very confident’ indicating a need for further training. When asked to comment, 17% of people specifically requested additional training.

“I feel like as a team we could do with more training on this matter to enable us to better support these people.”

“Perhaps some safeguarding guidance and how to escalate a concern.”

“More training to better equip pharmacies to offer this service would be appreciated.”



SUPERDRUG IS A SAFE SPACE

If you're experiencing domestic abuse, you can access a Safe Space at Superdrug pharmacies.

Ask to use the consultation room, where you can find the support you need.

[UKSAYSNOMORE.ORG/SAFESPACES](https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces)

The authors have used the term ‘victim’ throughout this report to describe individuals who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. This term was chosen because it reflects the language used across government, and it is thought to be more readily understood by the general public. The use of the term here does not in any way diminish the agency, strength or resilience of those living with domestic abuse.

3. Impact of Safe Spaces

“The consultation room became a safe part of my lockdown from hell. I called the local domestic abuse and violence partnership who immediately worked out the best plans to keep me safe in the first instance. I phoned my mum and sister for the first time in months (everything I did at home was monitored), I phoned a good friend and a solicitor. Over the weeks I used the Safe Space, I developed a plan to get the abuser out of my home.” - Letter from a domestic abuse survivor after using Safe Spaces

“... [I’ve] had people abused in the past saying what a great idea and how they wished they had somewhere to go that was easily assemble and with someone they could trust.”

Based on the survey, UK SAYS NO MORE estimate that there have been at least 3,700 visits to a Safe Spaces since its launch.

The qualitative and quantitative data from the survey strongly suggests that there was significant support for the scheme amongst pharmacy staff. Staff recognised its importance to victims and its value to the community, seemingly glad or empowered that they were now in a position to help.

“I feel this is a fantastic initiative and something that is very much needed particularly in our demographic area. A lot of people suffer in silence and it is good to have somewhere to refer.”

“I know a few women that have been through domestic abuse. I think this is a good scheme where people can come and feel safe. But they really should have more places for women or men that to go if they are going through mental or physical abuse.”

The data also demonstrated how the Safe Spaces scheme encouraged partnerships and a community response to domestic abuse with individuals and organisations working together to help keep survivors (and where relevant children) safe:

“The local domestic team were also using our space; they asked the individual to meet them at boots. Was great to see us all working together.”

“.... a local domestic support team stepped in and took care of [the] case.”



4. Practical concerns

“.... the pharmacy environment may not offer the ideal place especially when issues concerning confidentiality with patients.... the consultation room may need to be used not only as the refuge but also to consult with the patients in question. More may have to be done to support this project within the pharmacy environment.”

While most welcomed the creation of Safe Spaces, less than 5% of respondents expressed some apprehension that the Safe Spaces scheme put additional pressure on pharmacy staff at a time of high demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many who shared these views expressed concern about customer safety.

“.... the Pharmacy profession was overburdened..... ensuring staff and customers are safe, maintaining social distancing whilst waiting for their [prescription], we carry on taking back unwanted waste/medication returns from customers, not knowing if the customer had passed away due to the Corona virus.”

“As pharmacists we have enough to do already without having to act as counsellors as well. This was in the middle of the pandemic as well. We are not paid to do this either.”

There were differences in opinion about the suitability of the pharmacy and/or consultation rooms as a space for safety, with the majority in favour. Again, pharmacy staff seemed to have the needs of their customers at the forefront of their minds.

“..... the campaign is helpful and supportive but was the pharmacy really the place to be to seek refuge from if you are abused at home?”

“I think it’s a good idea and use of the consultation room.”

Yet despite these concerns the findings clearly showed a commitment to the longevity of the programme with the vast majority of respondents determined to continue to offer Safe Spaces.

“I’d just like to see the scheme continue - it has long been an issue that victims of abuse seek support in pharmacies, and we need to publicise that this is continuing.”

“We should have permanent signs up to let customers know we have the Safe Space facility in our pharmacies.”

The authors have used the term ‘victim’ throughout this report to describe individuals who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. This term was chosen because it reflects the language used across government, and it is thought to be more readily understood by the general public. The use of the term here does not in any way diminish the agency, strength or resilience of those living with domestic abuse.

5. Raising awareness

“Because Boots advertised it, people assumed it was a Boots only service.”

Less than 5% of Pharmacy staff felt that there was a lack of clarity about which pharmacies offered the scheme. Although the launch of the scheme received widespread media coverage, some suggested it contributed to a perception that Safe Spaces was only available in named pharmacy chains.

“It would be really helpful if the media do not give the impression that it is just the multiple pharmacies i.e. Boots and Superdrug which are safe spaces. Even now many people are not aware that ANY pharmacy with a consulting room can register to be a safe space.”

Some (13%) respondents who commented, expressed the view that there could have been more public awareness of the scheme. Suggestions made to address this included the use of more posters or leaflets directing victims to local resources which would be helpful to all involved and make the campaign more visible.

“Need better bolder signposting - very low levels of awareness among the public.”

“Cards advising store as a safe space & cards to show need a safe space!”

Overall, the willingness with which many staff made suggestions to improve and increase awareness of the scheme indicates the extent of their enthusiasm for, and commitment to, Safe Spaces.

“This is a very important thing to have regardless of lockdown. People need to know we are a safe space every day of every year that we are open and not just for lockdown periods. This can save lives!!”

“...we need to keep advertising the posters, so the information is well spread.”





**SHE'S BEEN
ISOLATED AND
LIVING IN FEAR
FOR MONTHS.**



Moving forward

Currently, 1 in 4 pharmacies across the UK are facilitating a Safe Space. As this pandemic continues with prolonged periods of restrictions on daily life, so does our everyday epidemic - domestic abuse. In September 2020, UK SAYS NO MORE expanded the scheme by launching Online Safe Spaces in partnership with Royal Mail Group. UK SAYS NO MORE confirmed that the scheme will remain a priority and continue post lockdown with an increase of Safe Spaces across the UK in 2021.

The authors have used the term 'victim' throughout this report to describe individuals who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. This term was chosen because it reflects the language used across government, and it is thought to be more readily understood by the general public. The use of the term here does not in any way diminish the agency, strength or resilience of those living with domestic abuse.

A Special acknowledgement of thanks:

To the national and local media for featuring this scheme on your platforms. Without your support, we wouldn't have been able to reach those enduring domestic abuse.

To the pharmacists and pharmacy staff for your frontline role within your communities. Without you, UK SAYS NO MORE's Safe Spaces Scheme would not have been possible.

To all Survivors of Domestic Abuse and Voices of UK SAYS NO MORE, we will continue to occupy a space where survivor voices are heard and work together to end our everyday epidemic, domestic abuse.

Special thanks:

Dr Tirion Havard
Dr Christine Magill
General Pharmaceutical Council
Royal Pharmaceutical Council
The Company Chemists Association
The Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies
Community Pharmacy Scotland
Boots UK
Superdrug
Morrisons
Independent pharmacies facilitating Safe Spaces across the UK
Local authorities engaging with Safe Spaces across the UK
Local Police forces engaging with Safe Spaces across the UK
Home Office
Scotland Government
Scotland Women's Aid
Live Fear Free
Refuge
Nexus
Ms Nerys Phillips
SignHealth

References:

Customer Thermometer (no date): Average survey response rate-what you need to know. Available from <https://www.customerthermometer.com/customer-surveys/average-survey-response-rate/> [accessed 1st September 2020].

Smith Karen Ingala (2020) Coronavirus doesn't cause men's violence against women. 15th April. Available from <https://kareningalasmith.com/2020/04/15/coronavirus-doesnt-cause-mens-violence-against-women/> [accessed 9th September 2020].

Multiple Manager (2020) COVID-19 pressures lead to my worst day as a pharmacist. Community Pharmacy news, analysis and CPD. Available from <https://www.chemistand-druggist.co.uk/opinion/COVID-19-p pressures-lead-my-worst-day-pharmacist> [accessed 2nd September]

Hestia (2020) Domestic abuse in lockdown: Key data from Hestia Services since 23 March 2020. London.

UK SAYS NO MORE is facilitated by London based Charity Hestia.
Charity number 294 555.
Contact: info@hestia.org

