

Domestic Abuse code word scheme: Partner Q&A

What is the domestic abuse code word scheme?

- Working with partners across both the public and private sector, the government has launched a new codeword scheme to enable victims of domestic abuse to access immediate help from the police, or other support services, from the safety of their local pharmacy.
- The scheme provides a simple and discreet way for domestic abuse victims to signal that they need immediate help using a codeword.
- The code word is “ANI” which stands for Action Needed Immediately but also phonetically sounds like the name Annie.

Why are you launching the scheme now?

- National measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus mean victims of domestic abuse may have spent long periods at home with their abusers.
- This is now even more likely to be the case with the new national lockdown that was announced by the Prime Minister on the 4th January 2021.
- The government has worked with specialist charity and support services in the sector and the Police since March to develop a scheme which can be used in pharmacies.

Why have pharmacies been chosen?

- For many victims affected by domestic abuse, seeking medical assistance through a pharmacy is often allowed by the perpetrator of abuse.
- Pharmacies remain open during coronavirus restrictions and lockdowns as they are essential retail.
- 5,000 pharmacies across the UK are already successfully offering Safe Spaces to victims of domestic abuse, opening up their consulting rooms to enable individuals to access information and make phone calls.
- Pharmacies across the country are already responding to safeguarding issues. Most pharmacies will have consultation rooms available and the staff have already undergone training on safeguarding. This scheme provides a clear process to follow, and additional training and guidance to support them to deliver this additional assistance.

How is the scheme being delivered?

- The Government has worked with the National Pharmacy Association, Boots and Hestia’s UK SAYS NO MORE team who deliver Safe Spaces to launch the scheme and encourage pharmacies to sign up.
- Training materials have been created for pharmacies that have signed up to the scheme. This training outlines for staff the principles to consider when an individual uses the codeword, and the formal response and process required

to direct the victim to the right support in a safe and supportive way. Additional guidance has been produced to help members of staff better understand domestic abuse.

- Participating pharmacies can access in-store promotional materials to inform customers at the pharmacy that they are operating the codeword scheme and that staff are prepared to deliver a suitable response.

How long will the training take?

- Pharmacies must agree to undertake the required training as part of signing up to the scheme and staff must complete the training before the pharmacies begins to offer the scheme.
- The training includes a 7 minute animation and staff will need to read two sets of guidance which will help them understand how to respond to the codeword being used and to understand domestic abuse as an issue.
- The training materials have been designed to be easily accessible for pharmacy staff (hosted here <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ask-for-ani-domestic-abuse-codeword-scheme-pharmacy-materials>). This will enable staff to refer back to material as and when they need to refresh their knowledge and understanding.
- The training and guidance will be regularly reviewed, with feedback from participating pharmacies and staff taken on board.

Which pharmacies are you working with?

- The scheme will run in all Boots pharmacies and in independent pharmacies that have confirmed their participation.
- There is an on-going sign-up process open to all pharmacies to join the scheme, so the total number of pharmacies involved in the scheme is increasing each week.

How many pharmacies have signed up so far?

- The scheme will be available in all Boots pharmacies, of which there are approximately 2,300 stores across the UK and approximately 250 independent pharmacies (as of January 8th 2021) .

How will victims know which independent pharmacies are signed up to the scheme?

- Participating pharmacies will use in-store promotional materials to inform customers that they are operating the codeword scheme and that staff are prepared to deliver a suitable response.

Can other pharmacies and businesses support this scheme?

- Yes. Interested pharmacies can find more information at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ask-for-ani-domestic-abuse-codeword-scheme-pharmacy-materials>.
- The scheme only runs in pharmacies at present but other business may wish to look at other ways they can support victims of domestic abuse including through the UK SAYS NO MORE Safe Spaces scheme. More information can be found here: <https://uksaysnomore.org/>.

Who are you seeking to use the scheme?

- The codeword can be used by any person looking to access immediate help from the police or other support services, from the safety of their local pharmacy for domestic abuse.

How will you promote the scheme to people enduring domestic abuse?

- The scheme will be promoted using discreet digital and social media activity, including targeted influencer activity.
- Police, Local Authorities and specialist local support services for victims will also be asked to promote the scheme.
- Hestia and their UK SAYS NO MORE campaign, Boots and the independent pharmacies will also promote the scheme on social media, public facing websites and customer email mailouts.

How will the scheme work in practice for victims of domestic abuse?

- The codeword and other related requests for support will alert members of staff that a victim is seeking immediate, urgent help. The pharmacy's role is to offer a quiet, private space and to understand whether the victim wants to call the police, a national helpline or local support service, who will advise and support the victim accordingly. The staff member will then assist the victim in placing the call and offer a private space where they can wait for the police.

What happens if victims can't access pharmacies?

- If in immediate danger victims should call 999.
- Victims can also call a national helpline service, like Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline for free and confidential advice, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247.
- People experiencing domestic abuse are able to access an untraceable Online Safe Space via many public websites including the Royal Mail website, where they can access information on helplines and specialist support.
- In April 2020 the government launched the #YouAreNotAlone campaign to raise awareness amongst victims, potential victims and their support network on help and support services that are available. The campaign sign posted

victims to the Gov.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help>.

- Household isolation instructions as a result of coronavirus do not apply if a victim needs to leave their home to escape domestic abuse.

How can you be confident people won't be put at risk in delivering or accessing the scheme?

- We have worked with the sector to help make the scheme as safe as possible. Including developing guidance and training for staff to follow. Pharmacies across the country are already responding to safeguarding issues. Most pharmacies will have consultation rooms available and the staff have already undergone training on safeguarding. We will be evaluating the scheme to ensure it works to help the individuals accessing it.

Isn't there a risk that perpetrators will find out about the scheme?

- We cannot completely eliminate the risk that perpetrators of abuse may find out about the codeword. Our promotion of the scheme is intended to help maximise the ability of victims to find out about the scheme in as a discreet a fashion as possible.

How will you assess whether the scheme is working?

- We have commissioned an independent evaluation of the scheme.

How long will the scheme run for?

- We are committed to the scheme for the long term but will review it following the findings of the evaluation.

How does the scheme work with Safe Spaces scheme?

- Hestia's UK SAYS NO MORE Safe Spaces scheme launched in May 2020 and is now available in over 5,000 UK pharmacies including Boots, Superdrug and Morrison's.
- Safe Spaces enables victims of domestic abuse to access information on specialist services and use the Bright Sky app in a quiet, private space. Where a victim needs immediate, emergency assistance, the Codeword scheme provides a way for victims to tell pharmacy staff that they need their help to either call the police on 999 or contact specialist services.
- Pharmacies already operating the Safe Spaces scheme can adopt the Codeword scheme to enhance the support offered to victims.
- The schemes can work together, and specific guidance and training materials have been made available for pharmacies running both schemes, including jointly branded Codeword scheme and Safe Spaces in-store promotional materials.

Is the scheme running throughout the United Kingdom?

- The scheme will be available in all Boots stores across the UK as well as in participating independent participating pharmacies.

Will Covid restrictions impact people's ability to access the scheme?

- Pharmacies are classed as essential retail, so will be open regardless of the restrictions in place.
- National measures should not stop a victim of domestic abuse reaching out for help and staying home does not apply where someone is suffering domestic abuse and needs to leave home to access help.

Where can people find out more about this scheme?

- More information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ask-for-ani-domestic-abuse-codeword-scheme-pharmacy-materials>.

How does this scheme fit in with other campaigns to tackle domestic abuse?

- This scheme is designed to complement existing national campaigns and facilitate help from existing nationally or locally commissioned services. This includes the #YouAreNotAlone campaign which raises awareness amongst victims, potential victims and their support network on help and support services that are available for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- that are available for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.