

A Day in the Life of an IRIS Advocate Educator

solace

My role:

As an IRIS Advocate Educator, I provide specialist case work support, advocacy and information services to victim-survivors referred to us via GP surgeries in Tower Hamlets. I provide ongoing consultancy, advice and support to NHS staff based at GP surgeries and also deliver specialist IRIS DVA sessions to GP staff especially to Doctors, Nurses, Health care Practitioners about the public health issue of domestic violence and abuse in order to improve and increase identification of domestic abuse, improve understanding about perpetrators and effective referrals to specialist services.



A typical day

I get in touch with GP surgeries (Pre COVID times) via email and organise ways to engage with the clinicians, therefore I plan which surgery I to go to in order to have meetings about IRIS Service and try and book dates for IRIS sessions. I also deal with new referrals in the nhs account and make contact with patients and organise to see them face to face to offer support and update casenotes and look into any actions. Advocacy is the core of my work and working in partnership, building new partnerships, institutional advocacy with services is part of my role.

I am also busy delivering face to face

trainings with surgeries, this is quite challenging as the GP staff are quite busy but I love to hear their responses and despite their very busy schedule they engage and eventually you see a change in their attitude and perspective.

When I go to GP surgeries at times GPs are so busy, I remember once arriving to deliver a training and there was this Doctor who told me to wait as she was, “writing a death certificate”, when later on she joined despite having a difficult day really took on board the training and interacted with us despite her busy and quite challenging schedule- I feel such practitioners and their responses makes a difference in the lives of their patients.

What I love about what I do

When you have some very complex cases and you hear the trauma and abuse and yet see the strength and courage of women who want to talk and get support especially when they tell you how much your listening and supporting meant for them, I feel really privileged that my support has made changes in their lives.

I also like it when GPs and other clinicians stay engaged in training, discuss complex cases and I get them to talk about male privilege, impact of gender violence and they give you some positive feedback, when they interact and discuss their cases. I also get to visit different surgeries and also see various different parts of London.

I have also been actively engaged in doing some VAWG campaigns in hospitals and surgeries especially 16 Days of Action where I get to talk to many NHS staff members, patients from all across different backgrounds regarding DVA and IRIS project.

One thing I wish I'd known when I started out

The challenges of engaging with GP surgeries, but one has to stay positive and motivated, somehow you navigate your way and learn and make progress- I guess that is the strength of activism!



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