



ASSOCIATION OF
AMBULANCE
CHIEF EXECUTIVES



Reducing misogyny and improving sexual safety in the ambulance service

Consensus statement

October 2023



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Introduction

This consensus statement sets out our shared commitment to lead meaningful reduction of misogyny and improvement of sexual safety across the ambulance sector, focusing on reducing harm caused by themes of misogyny through a learning approach to change, removing barriers to speaking up, accessing support, and embedding a culture of respect, understanding and safety. Any experience of misogyny or breach of sexual safety, impacting all genders, which may be in the form of non-verbal, verbal, or physical harassment, is unacceptable and it is our collective responsibility to protect those working within the ambulance service and students from experiencing such behaviour at work.

While legislation, professional standards and expectations of conduct are already in place, these don't always prevent issues from happening nor do regulatory bodies oversee all staff within the ambulance service. We know from available data and lived experience that misogyny and sexual harassment in the ambulance service can be perpetrated by colleague towards colleague, colleague towards patient, and patient towards colleague. A specific suite of co-produced evidence-based interventions have been identified to support organisations and individuals to reduce harm and work towards prevention. Low reporting of misogyny and sexual safety breaches across the ambulance service, highlight a need for education and awareness to be raised.

Evidence to support this document can be found in the accompanying publication:

'Reducing misogyny and improving sexual safety in the ambulance service: What we know'.

The interventions are outlined in the **'Next steps'** resource.





Why is this work important?

As awareness across different industries and sectors, including the NHS and emergency services continues we are reminded that we have a responsibility to our colleagues and the patients we look after to explore this ourselves with full ownership and accountability. More broadly, the links between misogyny and racism have been demonstrated in recent research, and we are learning from other organisations the importance of improving our understanding of intersectionality and how social identities can overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination.

Research shows that sexual harassment has long lasting mental and physical effects. It is important that the ambulance service takes proactive steps to ensure a safe and inclusive working environment for all. The impact on affected colleagues includes increased absence, lower job satisfaction, career interruption, high turnover, low psychological safety, lower diversity and 'word of mouth' reputational damage. Misogynistic behaviour and harassment at work can, overtime become normalised risking cultural stagnation, harmful power imbalances and silencing.

Non-recent experiences

We are ashamed by harm suffered, both past and present, because of abuse of power, sexualisation, harassment or assault, discrimination, and victimisation.

It is important to acknowledge that systemic barriers unfit for the advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion in our organisations have overtime, significantly eroded trust, which we want to rebuild by listening to lived experience as we continue to make improvements to our culture. We respect it is a deeply personal choice, to report non-recent experiences.

Language and terminology

This workstream acknowledges that language and terminology can evolve. A co-produced glossary of terms is located within the **'What we know'** document. Terminology and language presented is also aligned to the NHS England: Sexual Safety in the workplace: resources and support toolkit.





Guiding principles

In partnership, we will:

Guiding principle 1

Focus on protecting ambulance staff from experiences of misogyny and inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature.

We will take action to reduce harm caused by misogyny and improve the climate of sexual safety for all ambulance staff.

- Ensure every allegation of harassment or assault is taken seriously and appropriately investigated.
- Adopt a learning approach to change by listening to lived experience.
- Raise awareness through education on what constitutes, and how to address misogyny.
- Improve understanding of abuse of power within the ambulance service.
- Encourage staff to recognise the full spectrum of sexual safety and talk without shame or fear.
- Empower all staff to become active bystanders challenging misogyny and inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature.

Guiding principle 2

Remove barriers to speaking up and provide appropriate support for those affected.

We will take action to identify any barriers to speaking up within the ambulance service and provide all staff with clear support routes.

- Create confidential and safe spaces for all staff to access, without pressure to formally report.
- Communicate regularly and proactively about the options for support.
- Support Line Managers at all levels to respond confidently to concerns raised.
- Embed a victim-centred approach to addressing concerns and when required, seek safeguarding advice.
- Recognise and provide for the ongoing mental health and wellbeing needs of staff who speak up.





Guiding principle 3

Work towards an inclusive culture where all staff understand misogyny and come to work feeling sexually safe.

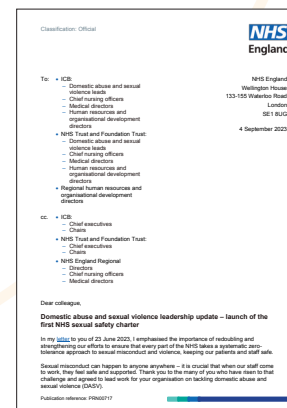
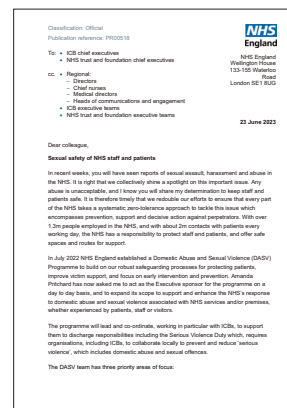
We will take action to embed a culture of respect, understanding and safety.

- Increase understanding of misogyny and sexual safety in the ambulance service, including broader issues such as the role of banter and gender stereotypes.
- Improve the preparedness of students and new staff of our cultural challenges, demonstrating leadership support for speaking up.
- Support choice and address harm at the earliest opportunity.
- Change the acceptance of inappropriate behaviour and encourage individual ownership of this.

The Sexual Safety in Healthcare Organisations Charter

For those working in the Ambulance service in England the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE) and NHS England have signed up to the Sexual Safety in Healthcare Organisational Charter.

This represents the key framework for health and care systems to ensure the sexual safety of all staff. Following publication in September 2023, work is ongoing to implement this charter and individual ambulance Trusts are encouraged to sign-up.





Appendix one. Project stakeholders.

Reducing misogyny and improving sexual safety in the ambulance service

NHS England

- Office of the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (CHAPO)
- Workforce Training and Education Directorate (WTE)
- Urgent, Emergency Care (UEC) team
- Intensive Support team
- Communications
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) team

Office of Health Inequalities and Disparities (OHID)

College of Paramedics (including the student committee)

The Ambulance Staff Charity (TASC)

Social Partnership Forum

NHS Employers

Chief AHP Advisors

- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Wales

Association of the Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE)

- Council
- Ambulance Trust HR Directors (HRDs)
- National Directors of Operations Group (NDOG)
- Women's Network
- National Ambulance Diversity and Inclusion Forum (NADIF)

Ambulance Trusts

- England including the Isle of Wight
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Wellbeing guardians
- "Freedom to Speak Up" Guardian network

National Guardians Office

Researchers working in related field.

Individuals with lived experience in the Ambulance service





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