

# Violence Prevention and Reduction at Barts Health NHS Trust

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# Agenda

- Context – Violence, abuse and staff experience in the NHS
- Barts Health – collaborative, systemic approach to preventing, reducing and managing violence and abuse
- Some highlights from our campaign
- Sexual abuse
- Staff wellbeing



# Why we're here

We continue to share and explore different perspectives on violence and abuse, reflecting on what we can do - individually and together - to deliver compassionate and safe care. This is continually evolving & we are always learning.

There is evidence that teams that **regularly talk** about violence and abuse see a decrease in incidents.

Talking about it in a **purposeful** way can help to create a culture where it is **not** accepted as 'part of the job' but where teams work collaboratively to mitigate or prevent risks of violence in a compassionate way.



# What we know about violence and abuse in London's NHS

## ...widespread

**86%** Have been victims of **Verbal Abuse**

**39%** Have been victims of **Physical Abuse**

That should be shocking, but I'm sure everyone on this call if they haven't themselves knows someone who's been pushed, punched, kicked

## ...relentless

**54%** Had experienced abuse **in the past month**

**1 in 2** Had experienced abuse **10+ times**

If we're counting being shouted at or called names, told to 'fuck off' as abuse then, it's everyday. Obviously, there are nice people too, nice patients, but everyday there's someone who thinks it's acceptable to scream at you, tell you you're shit

## ...worse than ever

**55%** Feel issues of violence, aggression + abuse are the **worst it's ever been**

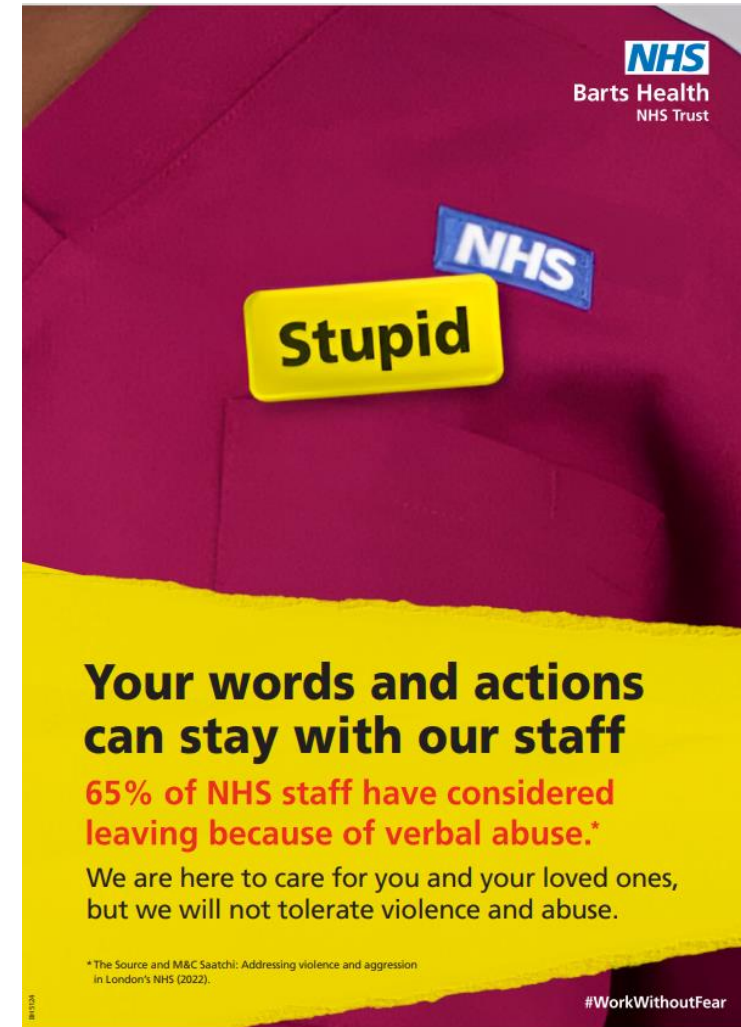
**56%** **Did not report** their last experience of abuse

No point in even reporting the verbal abuse I encounter; the patient is always going to be right. I have become accustomed to being sworn at shouted at and treated like dirt from face-to-face patients

The Source and M&C Saatchi: Addressing violence and aggression in London's NHS (2022)

# What we know about Violence and Abuse in Barts Health

- We work in the trauma rich environment of North East London, and have the busiest trauma centre in the UK
- We have challenges with under reporting and normalising abuse
- Areas with body worn cameras have seen reductions in incidents
- Colleagues don't feel supported
- Many don't #WorkWithoutFear



# It's not just the abuse that is hurting staff, it's the lack of support, action and protection felt

Again and again through stories and data you get a sense that staff feel they are not treated equitably, they are not protected. In fact, they feel it has become more acceptable to abuse NHS staff (compared to others across society) with authorities and management either unwilling, reluctant or powerless to stand up for them.

I've been assaulted, beaten up on the job essentially, 3 times in the last two years. I was okay but obviously it's very distressing...

**... I was wearing a bodycam on all 3 occasions, we knew who they were but all 3 times the CPS decided not to prosecute**

... on the last incident in my response to the incident report [through Datix] from management basically just said 'these are the things that you could do differently'

LAS Paramedic

If we're honest I'd say it's everyday you get something, it might only be someone telling you to fuck off, shouting at you telling you you're useless. But who else would accept that at work?

We do, we accept it. When it gets personal that's when it's different I think then we, most of us will try and address it...

**but honestly, there's not much we can really do and they know that, we're powerless, even the security are largely powerless**

Emergency Department

Just the other week I had someone threatening me, I'll find you, all this.

And it does happen I know colleagues who have been followed to their cars, abused outside of work. On social media, it's terrifying.

**And nothing ever happens we're totally exposed**

**... they put our full names, photos up on a board, why is that helpful, it's scary, people can use that**

Outpatients

The Source and M&C Saatchi: Addressing violence and aggression in London's NHS (2022)

# Barts Health systemic, collaborative approach to Preventing, Managing & Reducing Violence and Abuse



# St Giles

Turning a past into a future

What We Do ▫ Support Us ▫

## Operation Cavell

NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE

Home ▫ MAYOR OF LONDON ▫ LONDON ASSEMBLY

Home ▫ Programmes and Strategies ▫ Communities and Social Justice ▫ London's Violence Reduction Unit

### London's Violence Reduction Unit

Working together to prevent and reduce violence in London.

## METROPOLITAN POLICE

System-wide collaboration

### A health-based approach to reducing violence in communities

In conversation with *Martin P Griffiths* – NHS London Clinical Director for Violence Reduction and Consultant Trauma and Vascular Surgeon at Royal London Hospital

## London Community of Practice

Violence Prevention and Reduction (VPR) Education Pathway





Hidden is a film aimed at providing a platform for debate and discussion around violence and abuse against NHS staff. Commissioned by Barts Health, the film is based on experiences shared by staff. The film is currently being rolled out to all staff.



# Barts Health Comms V&A campaign – recognition for our trauma-informed approach

## Barts Health NHS Trust

### Developing a compassionate approach

Barts Health recognised that rising levels of physical and non-physical abuse were negatively affecting staff well-being and took steps to create a safer environment, where staff felt listened to and supported. Using a systemic and collaborative approach, clinicians and non-clinicians came together to share learnings, and peer reviews of work environments were conducted with external and multi-agency colleagues – including the police.

The trust chose to work with a psychologist from their well-being team to develop a compassionate approach. This resulted in them moving away from a 'Zero-tolerance' communications strategy to focusing on understanding how violent and abusive behaviour can stem from trauma and complex issues.

// The most important thing you can do when preparing a campaign like this is listen to the staff experiencing the abuse, take time to understand what they've been through, make sure they have support – and let them be angry, they're right to be angry.



## Exploring the stories behind violence

Central to the campaign was [a short film called Hidden](#). The film explores the stories behind acts of violence and abuse, and the power of empathy to understand that hostile behaviour is not always a personal issue against the people targeted. Inspired by a true story, the film was made following consultation with staff and patient focus groups. The trust held watching sessions with staff as a way for staff to discuss their own experiences with peers. These sessions were also used to gain insight about how the film made staff feel.



As part of a broader project, which included policy, security and people workstreams, the trust communications team launched a poster featuring real stories from Barts Health staff, experienced at the trust or in previous roles. This encouraged everyone to take a moment and think about what others, including staff, visitors and patients, may be going through. The colours of the posters were guided by the trust's psychologist and the quotes were extracted from longer interviews with staff about their violence and abuse experiences. All posters are displayed on large screens across the trust and appear on rotation for longer time periods in areas where the trusts experiences high levels of violence and abuse.



## The role of communications in reducing violence and aggression in the NHS

2024





# Conflict Resolution and Physical Intervention training

Training delivered by in-house security team, with external accreditation

Combines evidence-based information and interventions with signposting to local policy, resources and wellbeing support, and can be tweaked to cover live issues in the organisation – eg. reporting psychological harm

More than 2000 staff trained this year

Part of Statutory and Mandatory training for staff in high-risk areas, and open to all



# Unwanted sexual behaviour

- Outlier in last year's NHS Staff Survey
  - unwanted sexual behaviour from **other colleagues** (5.7%)
  - unwanted sexual behaviour **from patients** (7.7%)
- People do not feel comfortable, or know how to, call it out
- People do not feel confident in reporting unwanted sexual behaviour
- People do not have confidence in something being done

# Do we fully understand the scale of the Sexual Safety issue?

Risk that our current data does not provide an accurate reflection of the scale of unwanted, inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour

We are running a large, confidential internal survey – this will help us understand more what is in the shadows of our organisation



# It's (not) just ..... an education campaign

**NHS**  
Barts Health  
NHS Trust

**"it's ~~just banter~~"**  
**SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

**There's no excuse**

If something doesn't feel right, report it and receive the support you need.

Support and report



#workwithoutfear

**NHS**  
Barts Health  
NHS Trust

**"it's ~~just a compliment~~"**  
**SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

**There's no excuse**

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Support and report



#workwithoutfear

**NHS**  
Barts Health  
NHS Trust

**"it's ~~just part of the job~~"**  
**SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

**There's no excuse**

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#workwithoutfear

## Improving Sexual Safety at Barts Health

- Implementation of sexual safety charter & policy, moving from redress to prevention
- A robust response to reported incidents
- Commitment from senior leadership teams, V&A committee, wellbeing teams



# WeCare about your health and wellbeing

## Supporting you at work

As a trust, we take your wellbeing seriously, and whilst we continue to embed positive improvements to create a kinder and more compassionate culture in line with our [WeCare values](#), we know that having someone to talk to can help you feel better able to cope with a stressful situation.

You should feel confident that they can freely raise concerns about any issue; that is why there are various channels of support that staff can access.



Raising a concern

No means no – we call for an end to sexual misconduct





# Thank you for listening 😊

**Please do contact us for any further information:**

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