

Clair Fisher Impact Research Award 2025 winner

| Project Title |
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| Domestic Abuse and Life-Limiting Illness: identifying and supporting adults at risk (the DALLI study). |
| Project lead |
| Dr Michelle Myall |
| Summary |
| <p>In England and Wales an estimated 2.4 million adults experience domestic abuse (DA). People living with a life-limiting illness (LLI) are at increased risk of DA because they are often vulnerable, frail, isolated and dependent on others. They may spend long periods of time in the home, in close proximity to the abuser, often their carer, may experience multiple barriers to accessing and seeking support, and less willing or able to escape the abusive situation.</p> <p>Little attention has been paid to the experiences of those living with a LLI, who are victims of DA, or the health and social care professionals who support them. While resources exist for professionals to screen for and respond to DA, these do not address the complexities of DA in the LLI context.</p> <p>In 2021 we commenced the mixed-method DALLI (Domestic Abuse and Life-Limiting Illness) study. Initially we carried out scoping work comprising a literature review; survey to map local service provision; and informal discussions with those with lived experience, health and social care professionals working in hospice and palliative care services, and specialist DA organisations. This identified research priorities and the focus of the study.</p> <p>Our scoping review highlighted the impact that DA has on mental health and wellbeing which can result in delays in screening, leading to late diagnosis and an illness advancing with only palliative rather than curable treatments being available. We know many people living with a LLI are likely to access palliative and other health and care services frequently. Trusted relationships with healthcare professionals, enhanced by continuity of care can lead to the development of interpersonal trust between patient and professional, increasing the likelihood of disclosures of abuse. However, interviews carried out for the DALLI study with professionals highlighted a lack confidence to ask about abuse, challenges with recognising signs and responding to abuse amid the complexities of DA in the LLI context. This highlighted the need for increased training, education, and continued professional development in this area.</p> <p>Working with hospice and palliative care professionals, third sector organisations, and people with lived experience of DA and LLI, a community of practice was established and through a series of workshops over 15 months co-developed the DALLI Toolkit. Interviews were also conducted with these stakeholders to inform Toolkit content. The toolkit was piloted in hospice and acute palliative care settings and feedback was used to further develop the Toolkit and highlighted the need for a Quick Reference Guide to accompany it.</p> <p>The Toolkit is designed to be used flexibly to meet differing needs, and each section can be used stand alone or in conjunction with other sections. It aims to increase practitioners' confidence and understanding, offering resources to support health and social care professionals working with people with a LLI to enquire and respond to DA encountered in practice. Sections include information on types of abuse, referral pathways, managing the perpetrator, and keeping themselves safe. It is intended to sit alongside existing organisational safeguarding policies.</p> |

DALLI has generated new knowledge and worked in partnership with stakeholders to co-produce the DALLI Toolkit. The toolkit has been implemented in 15 hospices to date in England and Northern Ireland and generated international interest from Australia and the USA. It has been adopted by Marie Curie, local authorities and NHS Trusts. It is being used as a training resource in multi-disciplinary team meetings, as well as by individual practitioners. It is listed as a resource in the Macmillan Cancer Support Cancer and Domestic Abuse Toolkit. A promotional film has been co-produced and was shared along with the toolkit at a national launch event which generated media interest, including local television news programmes and an article in the national press.

Who was the funder for this project?

NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Wessex.

Marie Curie Impact Fund Award.

Are there any links or resources you want to share?

Myall M, Taylor S, Wheelwright S, Lund S (2023) Domestic abuse in the life-limiting illness context: a systematic scoping review. Health and Social Care in the Community.

<https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/1841944>

The DALLI Toolkit Film <https://vimeo.com/1010664713>

The DALLI Toolkit chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://998f8078-c8c1-4d9a-be82-8e196315f521.usrfiles.com/ugd/6fe132_4b6ee5d3c4134242880ec028db09ce8b.pdf

The DALLI Toolkit Quick Reference Guide chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://998f8078-c8c1-4d9a-be82-8e196315f521.usrfiles.com/ugd/6fe132_73b32addc9fb4825a1a38ad081fc3198.pdf