

## Safe Pharmacy: New Initiative to Help Victims of Domestic abuse launched in pharmacies nationwide



- **Over 850 participating pharmacies will provide victims with access to a phone and contact details for support services in the security of a private consultation room**
- **Participating pharmacies will have a purple 'Safe Pharmacy' sign**

A new initiative to enable people experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control to receive support in their local pharmacy has been launched nationwide today. **Safe Pharmacy**, is being led by the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) in partnership with Safe Ireland, An Garda Síochána and the HSE.

Safe Pharmacy will see over 850 community pharmacies, in every county in Ireland, providing any person who is experiencing domestic abuse with a safe and secure location to seek support.

Participating pharmacies will provide access to a phone in a private consultation room and contact details for local support services. This will allow victims to make that important call, for example, to a family member, local specialist domestic violence services or An Garda Síochána.

Anyone who is experiencing a domestic abuse situation and wishes to seek the support provided is advised to look for the purple Safe Pharmacy sign on the window displays of participating pharmacies. In the pharmacy they should ask to speak to the pharmacist in the consultation room, this happens multiple times a day in every pharmacy so will not appear out of the ordinary to anyone who is in the pharmacy at the time. In the privacy and security of the consultation room the person can inform the pharmacist that they require support and this will be provided.

Welcoming the launch of Safe Pharmacy, **community pharmacist and Safe Pharmacy participant, Oonagh O'Hagan** said, "Domestic abuse is an issue that affects people in every community. Safe Pharmacy will create access to safe points of contact in practically every town and village in the country. Pharmacies are a trusted part of our communities with highly trained and compassionate staff. By partnering with Safe Ireland, An Garda Síochána and the HSE we hope that this initiative will provide a pathway from abuse for those who are experiencing it.

"Anyone who seeks the support of a Safe Pharmacy will be treated with compassion and respect can and be assured of full confidentiality. In the safety and privacy of our consultation rooms they will be provided with information, contact details and a means to access additional support from Specialist Domestic Violence Services and An Garda Síochána."

"For anyone who is in need of help, I would say to them: 'All that's needed is that you ask for help. You will be prioritised. You will be believed. You will be supported.'"

**Detective Superintendent Sinéad Greene, Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB), An Garda Síochána** said, "Sadly, it's often the case that victims of domestic abuse and coercive control feel that they don't have someone to turn to for vital support or to disclose what they are experiencing.

"The COVID pandemic made it even more difficult for victims to seek safety and in response, Gardaí continue to reach out to provide reassurance and to guide those affected to access local and specialised resources. In extending access to their private consultation room, the pharmacies that are part of Safe Pharmacy will be providing victims with a safe environment to access support, away from the perpetrator.

"This important initiative will complement all our work in the area, particularly around Operation Faoiseamh which specifically focuses on protecting the victims of domestic abuse. Gardaí will be

working closely with these pharmacies nationwide to encourage victims to access several free and confidential supports.”

**Kate Mulvenna, MPSI, Head of the Pharmacy Function, HSE PCRS** commented, “This is a really important initiative and I would encourage people at risk and those experiencing domestic abuse to avail of this service in pharmacies, particularly if access to phones is monitored and limited. Domestic abuse includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and can happen to anyone. Safe Pharmacy provides the mechanism for a standardised, quality-assured, access point offering across the entire country and the HSE is committed to ensuring that people experiencing domestic abuse get the help that they need.”

Commending the initiative, **Mary McDermott, CEO of Safe Ireland** said, “Safe Ireland is delighted to be partnering with the IPU in the roll-out of the Safe Pharmacy initiative as a community response to support people silently suffering from domestic abuse.

“Participating pharmacies will provide a confidential space where a victim can make safe contact with a specialist domestic abuse service or can reach out to An Garda Síochána for emergency support. Pharmacies are trusted locations and Safe Pharmacy is an exemplar of the type of skilled community response necessary to facilitate pathways from violence for women and children. Priming competent personnel in local pharmacies to partner with specialist trained services in the locality, will contribute to the emergence and growth of safer communities into the future. This initiative provides a mechanism for a standardised, quality-assured, safety access-point offering across the entire country and Safe Ireland commends the IPU for its leadership role in responding to the ongoing surge of violence against women.”