14 January 2021

Dear Home Secretary

I am writing to welcome the rollout by your Department of the ‘ANI’ (“Assistance Needed Immediately”) codeword scheme for domestic abuse victims to community pharmacies across the UK. Hopefully, raising awareness of this initiative will help many victims to seek help in order to escape abuse and serious harm.

However, in asking pharmacy staff to act as first contacts for people trying to escape abuse, I would respectfully ask that your Department provides pharmacies with the materials and guidance they need to signpost victims to the most appropriate sources of help. This must include the many excellent charities working to tackle domestic abuse among all sections of the community.

In particular, given the particular needs of people aged over 65 – whose experience of domestic abuse may be compounded by health or other vulnerabilities – I would politely request that this includes the safer ageing charity [Hourglass](https://wearehourglass.org/), the UK’s only charity entirely dedicated to working with older victims of abuse.

As revealed in polling conducted by Hourglass to coincide with Safer Ageing Week last November, **nearly a third (30%) of UK residents don’t see acts of domestic violence directed at an older person as abuse** and this is the same for pushing, hitting or beating an older person.

This is, of course, completely unacceptable. Sadly, it is also the case that many older people themselves may not necessarily regard what is being done to them as abuse – even when it is. To break down this level of stigma and unwarranted shame, we need to ensure that anyone coming into contact with an older victim of domestic abuse is able to interact with them sensitively and put them in touch with charities such as Hourglass that are best-placed to understand their situation and provide tailored assistance.

Hourglass has almost 30 years’ experience of helping older victims of abuse and already provides training and a range of educational and support materials – in physical and digital format (such as its new [Knowledge Bank](https://knowledgebank.wearehourglass.org/)) - that can be of immense help to pharmacists acting as ‘frontline’ responders to domestic abuse.

The Chief Executive of Hourglass, Richard Robinson, has offered to provide you and the Home Office with any assistance he can to ensure appropriate materials for older domestic abuse victims are made available, as quickly as possible. I would encourage your staff to contact him on: chiefexecutive@wearehourglass.org at the soonest opportunity to ensure as many opportunities as possible to prevent abuse and help victims are handled appropriately.

Yours sincerely,

[insert name here]