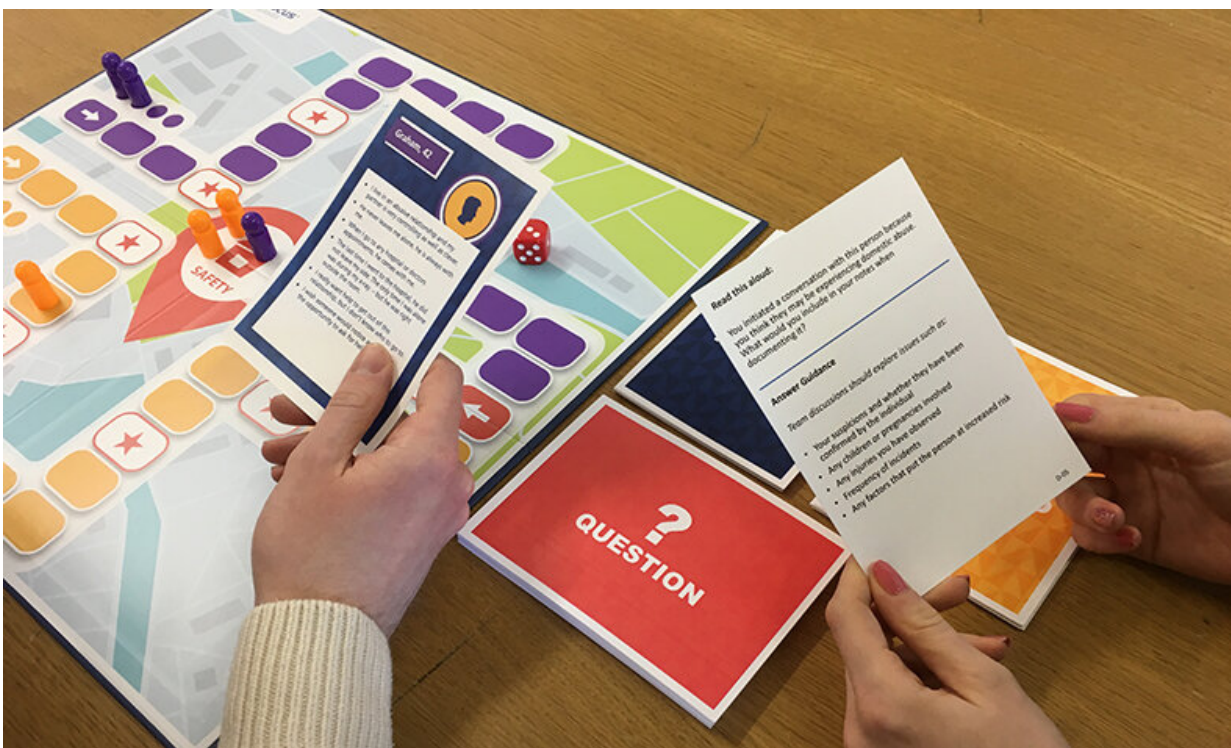


# Board game launched to help health professionals support victims of domestic violence

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Credit: University of Sheffield

A new and novel training aid has been developed by a University of Sheffield academic to help healthcare professionals support victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA).

The [training](#) aid takes the form of an interactive board [game](#) which health and social care professionals can use to enhance their training, further understand the complexities of DVA and help them creatively explore ways to support those in their care.

Dr. Parveen Ali, Senior Lecturer and Lead at the University of Sheffield Interpersonal Violence Research Group at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, has been working with Focus Games—specialists in health and social care training resources—to develop the new game.

She said: "The Domestic Abuse Training Game will help health and [social care professionals](#) understand the impact and effects of DVA on victims and their families, and facilitate discussion about how victims and survivors of DVA can be supported by professionals in various settings."

DVA is classified as the violence or pattern of abusive behaviours by an intimate partner or ex-partner resulting in physical, sexual or psychological harm. It can take the form of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.

Dr. Ali's research into domestic abuse at the University of Sheffield Interpersonal Violence Research Group and her work with frontline [healthcare professionals](#) and victims of DVA was the driving force behind the development of the game.

"DVA is a major public health and social issue that affects people of every gender, sexuality, community, culture and country, and according to last year's Crime Survey for England and Wales, an estimated two million adults aged 16 to 59 years have been a victim," said Dr. Ali.

"We know that healthcare professionals can feel unprepared and lack confidence to ask questions when it comes to approaching topics like

DVA with patients. So getting students and practitioners to engage with the topic, explore their own attitudes, build an awareness of cultural sensitivities needed when approaching patients and build skills to communicate effectively with vulnerable adults will improve the quality of service provided in the long-term."

The board game structure to the training aid, which has been piloted with University of Sheffield students, is to facilitate independent discussion by two teams of trainee healthcare professionals, so they can learn from each other and share best practice from across a range of clinical environments.

Rebecca Slack, a postgraduate nursing student from the University of Sheffield has played the game as part of her training. She said: "I enjoyed the learning experience and I feel more aware of what to look out for, and just to be generally mindful of what situations could be going on at home with patients I could be caring for.

"The scenarios were realistic and could be related to practice to aid discussion. It made me think of the types of abuse to look out for and how, as nurses, we should be reacting and helping our patients."

The board game will be used at the University of Sheffield to enhance the training of student nurses and healthcare professionals working in advanced health care roles and is now commercially available to buy through Focus Games.

"The symptoms of DVA can be hard to spot, but they have severe physical and psychological consequences for victims," said Dr. Ali. "Healthcare professionals, such as nurses and midwives play a crucial role in identifying, preventing and management of DVA in the community, so it's vital that the education and training we offer is effective to equip them to support those in their care."

The game provides a valuable resource for clinical staff supporting those experiencing DVA, but Dr. Ali said it also has the potential to reach a much wider audience and be of great value to staff working in other frontline professions which have contact with victims of DVA. This could include social workers, those working in education, law enforcement or the charity sector.

Zlakha Ahmed, Chief Executive of Apna Haq, a survivor-led organisation in Rotherham which specialises in supporting black and ethnic minority women and girls who experience violence, said:

"The game is very much welcomed as a teaching method that will lead to good practice. I am impressed with the in-depth thinking that has gone into its development and was particularly pleased to see that issues faced by black and minority ethnic women have been incorporated.

"The game will enable valuable learning around the issues being faced by survivors and provide real time discussion for students to explore barriers to effective support."

Umme Rubab, a survivor from Rotherham who has been supported by Apna Haq, said: "Professionals need to understand that domestic violence is wider than just apparent physical abuse that they may see. Mental and verbal abuse can not be seen but needs to be identified, and if professionals do not have a holistic understanding of the issue, they may miss the signs and never identify that DVA is even taking place.

"The game will lead to professionals feeling more confident in identification and thus early help can be offered, reducing the impact on the survivor."

Dr. Ali added: "The launch of our new training aid is a really good example of how we mobilise research within and outside the University.

We use our research findings to create resources and tools for healthcare professionals, which will have a direct impact on patients."

Dr. Ali will be demonstrating the game for attendees at the The RCN International Nursing Research Conference on 3-5 September 2019 at Sheffield Hallam University. Following this she plans to develop the game further to release new versions aimed at educating healthcare professionals about child and elder abuse.

Provided by University of Sheffield

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