

Health Minister Robin Swann and Justice Minister Naomi Long have welcomed a new scheme launched by the UK Government for victims of domestic abuse to discreetly seek help through pharmacies. The scheme will initially be available in Boots pharmacies, as well as a number of other independent pharmacies. Participating pharmacies will have promotional material on display in store to signal that they are taking part.

The 'Ask for ANI' scheme allows those at risk or suffering from abuse to discreetly signal that they need help and access to support. By asking for 'ANI', a trained pharmacy worker will offer a private space where they can understand if the victim needs to speak to the police or would like help to access the 24 hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline.

As a trusted source of advice and support in towns and villages across the country, and with specifically trained staff, pharmacies can provide a safe space for victims to sound an alarm if they are isolated at home with their abuser and unable to get help in another way.

The Ask for ANI scheme was welcomed by Minister Swann: **"I am acutely aware of how difficult lockdown has been for those affected by domestic abuse. A trip to the pharmacy may be the only chance victims have to access emergency support. My Department, along with the Department of Justice, has been working closely with the Home Office to help develop the Ask for ANI scheme so that victims can get that support safely and discreetly.**