



Violence Abuse & Mental
Health Network

Violence, Abuse and Mental Health Network: Opportunities for Change

Year in review

2019-2020



@VAMHN



vamhn@kcl.ac.uk



www.vamhn.co.uk

The Violence, Abuse and Mental Health Network

Who we are

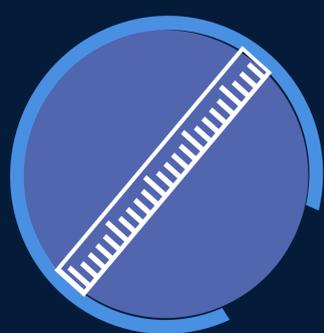
We are a network of individuals and organisations aiming to reduce the prevalence of mental health problems by addressing associated violence and abuse, particularly domestic and sexual violence. We bring together and support research by experts from a range of disciplines, sectors, and backgrounds - some with personal experience, others with expertise from the work that they do, and survivor researchers with both.

What we do

The VAMHN activities include:

- Providing grants of up to £25k through our annual competition, and training bursaries of £250;
- Hosting free webinars, lectures, meetings and events;
- Developing new resources, including an online research database;
- Disseminating the latest findings and collaboration and funding opportunities;
- Identifying priorities for future research

The activities of the network are organised into 3 themes:



Measurement

Measuring the extent and impact of domestic and sexual violence in relation to mental health.



Understanding

Understanding the pathways that lead to domestic and sexual violence and their relationship to mental health problems



Intervention

Preventing, reducing and addressing domestic and sexual violence in people with mental health problems or at risk of developing mental health problems

Our members



833

**Network
members**



1,975

**Twitter
followers**



158

**Early Career
Researchers**

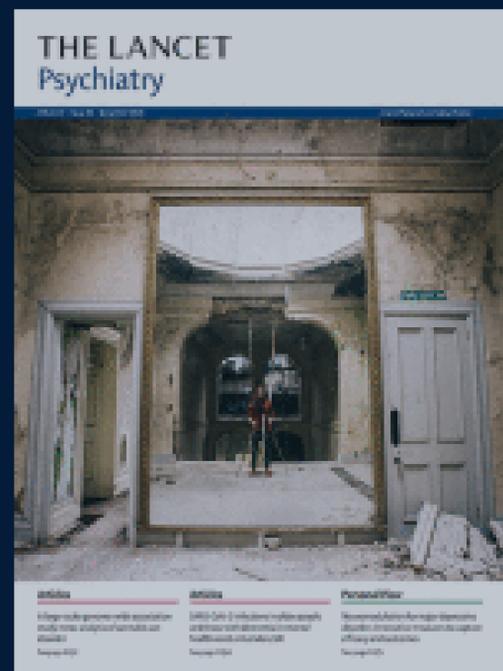
Over the past year our network has grown. We've had 271 new members join us. Our membership is comprised of individuals and organisations from a variety of sectors and disciplines including anthropology, history, health sciences, arts and more.

This year we've been pleased to engage with our members despite the hinderances of the pandemic. Read on to see what we've been up to this year, as well as a look into our plans for next year.

Setting a research agenda

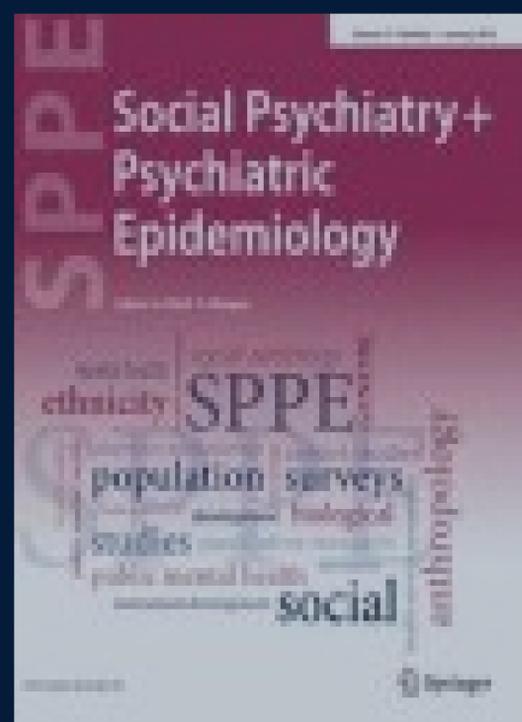
The Lancet Psychiatry Commission

We're continuing our work to lead The Lancet Psychiatry Commission on Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health, which brings together experts from around the world to develop a roadmap for future research, service provision, and policy. We hope to launch the Commission in Spring 2021



Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology Journal Linked Series

We are coordinating a linked series with the journal Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, featuring six papers on violence, abuse, and mental health from 2021.



Policy Involvement

The Domestic Abuse Bill: Written evidence

On the 4th June 2020, the Public Bill Committee met to conduct a line-by-line reading of the Domestic Abuse Bill. The network submitted written evidence and recommendations to the Committee with regards to the bill. A huge thank you to the 91 network members and organisations that signed our submission. To read our evidence submission [click here](#).



Response to the CPS consultation on pre-trial therapy guidance



In October we met with 13 of our network members to develop a response to the Crown Prosecution Service's guidance on the provision of pre-trial therapy for victims. We submitted our response on the 30th October and aim to make it available online once we're allowed to do so.

Webinars

In May 2020 we hosted our first VAMHN webinar and have been running more ever since. We've had a brilliant range of speakers and have uploaded the webinar recordings and extra resources on our website here. If you've got any ideas for future webinars we should run then let us know!

**12th
May**

Understanding violence, abuse and mental health

Speakers: Nicole Jacobs, Akiko Hart, Prof. Joanna Bourke & Laura Fischer

**21st
July**

Violence against women and girls, intersectionality and COVID-19

Speakers: Sumanta Roy, Dr Ravi Thiara, Eleanor Lisney & Dr Akima Thomas

**1st
Oct**

Children and Domestic Abuse

Speakers: Dr Emma Howarth, Dr Leesa Hooker, Concetta Perot & Prof. Helen Minnis

**30th
Oct**

Network Meeting

Included a keynote from Prof. Rachel Jewkes, networking sessions, Grant competition Q&A and launch of our data directory

Supporting Early Career Researchers

ECR Grant Writing Workshops

ECRs attending our first grant-writing workshop series have met four times so far. The workshops support attendees to develop their grant proposals through feedback from their peers and senior members of the VAMHN team. VAMHN wishes all participants the best of luck with their proposals.

ECR Bursary Awards

This year we've been able to award 10 Early Career Researchers (ECRs) with up to £250 to support their attendance at training courses or conferences as part of our ECR bursary award scheme.

We run these bursary schemes twice a year. Our next round is currently open and closes in April 2021. To find out more visit our website [here](#). To read how our awardees used their bursaries, click [here](#).

ECR Lunchtime Seminar Series

We recently announced our ECR Lunchtime Seminar Series programme comprised of six events planned across 2021. Have a look at our programme [here](#), and to find out more click [here](#).

Our New Lived Experience Coordinator



This year we were delighted to welcome Lisa Ward to the VAMHN team as our Lived Experience Coordinator. Lisa is the CEO of the Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre and will be involved in coordinating the network's Lived Experience Advisory Group.

Small grant competition

We just closed our second annual small grant competition. We were delighted to receive 44 applications, on the theme of understanding violence, abuse and mental health. Thank you to all our amazing applicants and we look forward to announcing the outcome in the new year.

We'll also be launching our next grant competition on the theme of interventions shortly, so keep an eye on our newsletters for more information.

To read about the projects we've funded in our previous call click [here](#).



Data Directory



This year we launched our VAMHN Data Directory. The directory signposts users to survey datasets, repositories and aggregate/published statistics that have measures of domestic violence/abuse/coercive control and/or sexual violence and mental health. This directory includes key information about each resource as well as guidance on where you can access them. To access the directory click [here](#).

Research

At the start of lockdown we teamed up with Survivors' Voices and the McPin Foundation to explore how to identify and support children and young people who are at risk of experiencing domestic abuse but who are unknown to statutory services.

Our initial report details findings from a survivor-led, rapid-response consultation of adult survivors of abuse in childhood, including priority actions . To read in full [click here](#).

Our interim report has a call to action to government and services like schools to take urgent steps to help children in a situation like mine. But it also suggests practical things we can all do, to help children trapped in abusive situations. We can notice the children in our neighbourhood, our circle of family and friends. We can find ways to show them we care. We can let them know they matter, that there is hope.

- Jane Chevous, study co-investigator, survivor researcher and Founding Director of Survivors Voices

We have extended this work with funding from King's Together and the KCL ESRC Impact Acceleration Account, and look forward to updating our members in the new year.

Your feedback

Earlier this year we asked you how you benefited from engaging with VAMHN. Thank you to our 42 respondents – below is a summary of the feedback received

65%

Have been connected with researchers, community organisations and/or individuals with lived experience through VAMHN

44%

Have been helped by VAMHN with their current or planned research

43%

Have been connected with people or research outside of their discipline or sector as a result of being a member of the VAMHN

48%

Have made use of VAMHN resources in their policy work

43%

Have been helped by VAMHN to disseminate or increase engagement in their research

78%

Have been helped by VAMHN to further engage with research

Your feedback: What are we doing well?

We asked our members for feedback on the network. Here's what some of them had to say...

"I find the network and newsletter helpful and encouraging having been involved in this sort of work for many year..."

"It is a great platform for finding information/ resources/ potential contacts. Thank you."

"It's a really useful space and I have got a lot of being part of the network - both on individual and organisational level"

"I really appreciate being part of this network and find the newsletter a very useful source of information, alongside dedicated opportunities for early career researchers. I think the ambitions of the grant competitions are laudable and it is heartening to see such a commitment to multi-disciplinary work, alongside survivors and voluntary sector organisations."

"Such a great network - widely respected and genuinely interdisciplinary. The newsletter and events have always been interesting"

"I really enjoyed the events where you have several speakers. I appreciate that you have brought in conversations on racism. I also appreciate the focus on survivor involvement."

"I've met people I wouldn't otherwise at events e.g. service providers or people working in different sectors from me"

What can we do to improve?

1. More events and resources

Some of our members mentioned wanting more opportunities to attend events and for the network to produce more resources. In the coming year we have planned to run even more webinars. On top of our bi-annual network meetings, we'll be running webinars surrounding year three theme - interventions. We'll also be running six online seminars as part of our ECR Lunchtime Series.

2. Increasing promotion of the work of the network

Some members mentioned they'd like to see the VAMHN disseminate it's work more widely among the community. To address this we'll be collaborating with the seven other UKRI mental health networks to host cross-disciplinary webinars on various research topics. We're also planning to increase engagement across different disciplines through our webinar subjects.

3. Further policy engagement

A couple of members mentioned they'd like to see more policy engagement from the network in the future. We hope to publish our policy briefing note on trauma informed care over the next year, as well as increasing our involvement in consultations. We'll also be publishing policy recommendations as part of our work on "off-radar" children and young people at risk of experiencing domestic abuse.

The year ahead

We wanted to say a huge thank you to all our network members for being such an important part of the network! We're excited for the year ahead and look forward to updating you on our upcoming plans through our newsletter and twitter.

- ECR lunchtime seminar series
- More webinars
- Our third grant competition on the theme of interventions
- Two more rounds of our ECR bursary scheme
and more...

Wishing you all a merry Christmas and happy new year!



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