

No Hidden Door

Audit and guidelines for enhancing websites that respond to domestic, family and sexualised violence.



Tunnel

Traces of the human computer interactions with this relentless quest for help. Time passes through me. Am I in a void? Will I ever pass through the door?

Cover art by Louise Whelan.

No Hidden Door

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INSIGHT EXCHANGE

Insight Exchange centres on the expertise of people with lived experience of domestic and family violence and gives voice to these experiences. It is designed to inform and strengthen social, service and systemic responses to domestic and family violence.

Insight Exchange is governed by Domestic Violence Service Management, a registered Australian charity (ABN 26 165 400 635).

For more information visit www.insightexchange.net



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work and services operate and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend this respect to all First Nations peoples across the country and the world.



We acknowledge that the sovereignty of this land was never ceded. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Insight Exchange upholds Tino Rangatiratanga in partnership with Māori – the generations who have gone before, and the generations yet to come. We extend this respect to all Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge Sovereignty was never ceded.



Insight Exchange is for all people. Insight Exchange respects the diversity of all sexualities and gender identities including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual.

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Introduction

Every sector is a *possible* door to information and support for victim-survivors of domestic, sexualised and family violence. Because safety and communication are inextricably linked, victim-survivors rely on the quality of public-facing communication, and this includes website content and user experience. They rely on websites to be informing, affirming and safe to browse. Victim-survivors may only browse the website but never contact or use the organisation directly, however we cannot underestimate the immediate and enduring value of communication.

The No Hidden Door initiative is one of Insight Exchange’s FY2021–22 key projects.

The name ‘No Hidden Door’ highlights the importance of auditing the ‘doors’ to information that are currently available to victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexualised violence (DFSV). People experiencing DFSV rely on multiple parts of a complex information and support ecosystem for their safety and wellbeing. The more disparity there is between different parts of the ecosystem, the tougher and more compromising it is for victim-survivors to access information and to navigate support.

People using violence and abuse are more able to extend their use of abuse and control when information and communication about DFSV and support services are opaque, unclear or unsafe to access.

What we did

Between October and December 2021, Insight Exchange audited 200+ websites from five industries as sample doors in the information and support ecosystem. The selection of industries is not exclusive or exhaustive.

Health (NSW)	Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) (Australasia)	Support services (Australia & New Zealand)	Police (Australia & New Zealand)	Associations (Corporate) (Australia)
28 NSW Health websites (16 Local Health Districts, 1 specialty Network, 10 Primary Health Networks, 1 Ministry of Health)	77 EAPs (76 of the 77 EAPs oversee over 11,500 organisations covering 9.4 million direct employees)	77 support services websites linked to in Insight Exchange’s key resources (Follow My Lead, My Safety Kit and My Dignity)	9 police websites (Australian states and territories and New Zealand)	9 clubs’ associations, 2 hotel / accommodation associations and 1 retail association.

Why we conducted these audits

National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey data indicated a concerning result that 2 in 5 Australians did not know where to access help for a domestic violence issue.¹ Communication about what assistance is available is the responsibility of responding services and systems.

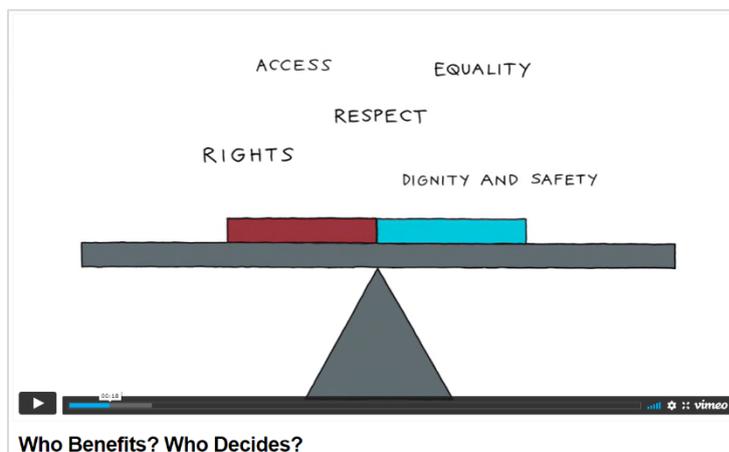
Insight Exchange audited the content and functions of 200+ websites ('doors') to gauge what communication practices are in place and to identify what gaps might need to be addressed.

The social and economic costs of violence

Globally, an estimated 736 million women – almost one in three – have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life.² Every day around the world, 137 women are killed by a member of their family.³

DFSV can happen to anyone and impacts on the health, wellbeing and safety of millions of Australians and New Zealanders. It places an enormous burden on each nation's economy. From an economic perspective, in Australia, violence against women is estimated to cost A\$26 billion each year.⁴ The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended ensuring the centrality of victim-survivor voices in responding to domestic and family violence.⁵ In New Zealand, family violence has a significant human and social cost for many individuals, whānau and communities. In 2014, the cost of pain and suffering for victims of intimate partner violence was estimated at NZ\$2.98 billion.⁶ The Backbone Collective Report recommends listening to the voice of experience, as this is the key to ensuring New Zealand's response to family violence is safe and effective.⁷

View the animation [Who Benefits? Who Decides?](#)⁸ (4 minutes)



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¹ Summary findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) https://20ian81kynqg38b3l3eh8bf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/300419_NCAS_Summary_Report.pdf

² World Health Organization, 2018. on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data (2021). [Violence against women prevalence estimates](#). United Nations

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019). [Global Study on Homicide 2019](#), p. 10, 19.

⁴ Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. (2021). [Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence](#).

⁵ Victorian Government, [Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations](#), March 2016. Recommendation 201, page 100.

⁶ Kahui, S. and Snively, S., 2014. *Measuring the economic costs of child abuse and intimate partner violence to New Zealand*. Wellington: MoreMedia Enterprises.

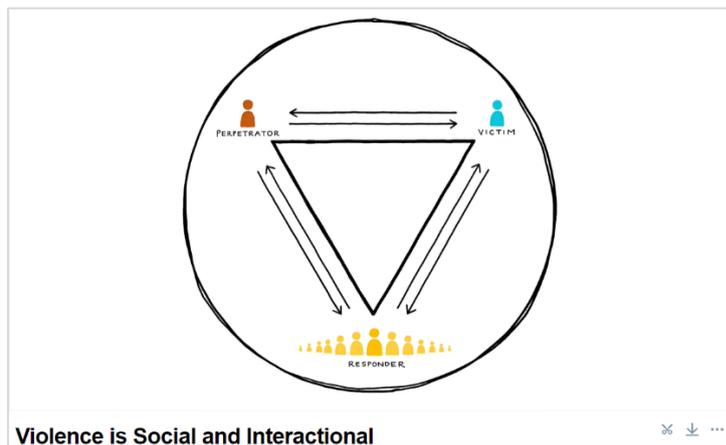
⁷ The Backbone Collective. (2020). [The Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence and Abuse](#).

⁸ <https://vimeo.com/638450609>

Who benefits from the status quo of website communication responses to DFSV?

Perpetrators of violence and abuse may monitor the time and activities (including online activity) of victim-survivors, making it impossible or unsafe to source information in limited time or at all. They may undermine the options and choices of victim-survivors through coercive control.

Designing for choice and control of the victim-survivor in the support-seeking process is vital for dignity and safety.



© 2021 Insight Exchange in development with Guy Downes | Insight Exchange Foundations & Foundations Applied⁹

When website communication about DFSV responses is invisible or inadequate, perpetrators of violence and abuse are:

- more able to undermine the victim-survivors perception of whether services are available to support if services are silent or hard to find.
- more able to conceal their responsibility for violence and abuse when definitions and descriptions of forms of violence are inconsistent or inaccurate.
- more able to isolate victim-survivors from supports when the support offer is hidden or unclear.
- more able to undermine the certainty of victim-survivors plans by weaponising gaps in the service or making false threats about what the service will or won't do if the victim-survivor reaches out. If a victim-survivor cannot see ahead, they carry the burden of risk and effort to know if the service option will build on or undermine their safety.
- more able to extend their control and evade consequences when victim-survivors cannot safely source or seek support.

⁹ <https://www.insightexchange.net/foundations/>

Seeing possibilities: why every door matters

What we understand about DFSV informs how we respond. It influences how we design and communicate products, services and systems. We need to build our collective understanding of where victim-survivors may have connection points – places where they may seek information and support.

For more information, view this 6-minute animation [Seeing possibilities](#).¹⁰



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Imagine the difference it would make for victim-survivors if all ‘connection points’ – workplaces, businesses, families, friends, and specialist and statutory services – were informed and ready to respond. Imagine the difference it would make for victim-survivors if all of these ‘connection points’ clearly communicated to victim-survivors with information and support options.

¹⁰ <https://vimeo.com/684039585>

No Hidden Door Audit

- Between October and December 2021, Insight Exchange audited 9 police websites, 77 support service websites (a sample drawn from the support services that key Insight Exchange materials point to), 28 NSW Health websites, 77 Employee Assistance Program (EAP) websites and 12 Association websites.
- Insight Exchange established the audit criteria based on its work with victim-survivors and the ecosystem of 'connection points' or 'doors' to information that are currently available to victim-survivors of [domestic, family and sexualised violence](#).¹¹

This includes drawing from the qualitative data collected through the following:

- De-identified Insight Exchange interviews (in person, virtual or a hybrid) using structured questions based on the principles of Response-Based Practice. Participants have shared lived experiences that occurred in the ACT, NSW, NT, Qld, SA, Vic, WA and NZ. Participants have participated from NSW, NT and Vic. The Victim-survivors came from a broad spectrum of situations having lived in cities and towns, held leadership and executive roles, worked various sectors, roles and levels, accessed welfare, were prohibited from working by their partner, or couldn't work because the person using abuse was not safe with the kids, told their workplace, changed workplaces, lost their job, role, rank or reputation, told no-one until this narrative, did or didn't involve the police, or the police became involved through others.
- De-identified Insight Exchange survey responses to inform the [Insights Paper: Experiences and perceptions of workplace responses to domestic and family violence](#)¹² as well as responses to our resource development and review practices, and to a draft of the website audit criteria for the No Hidden Door project.

The audit asked questions important to victim-survivors however we acknowledge that the importance of any, each or all of the criteria may vary vastly between victim-survivors, and that their needs may change rapidly.

- This audit includes four reports developed as part of Insight Exchange's No Hidden Door initiative. Each audit report focuses on a sample of industry-specific websites and is designed to inform and support an uplift in communication. Audit results from the sample of 12 association websites were largely zero. Only 1 of the 12 associations named DFSV in their focus, priorities or resources that there was not enough data to warrant a distinct report.
- Overall, the audit results reveal that the opportunity to uplift communication across multiple aspects of the ecosystem is vast and urgent. Clearer communication from the existing response system will support informed choice, safer passage and visibility for support-seekers. This uplift will also support responding friends and family, and responders who make referrals.

¹¹ <https://www.insightexchange.net/what-is-dfv/>

¹² Insight Exchange, 2020, [Insights Paper - Experiences and perceptions of workplace responses to domestic and family violence](#)

Possible considerations | lived experience insights

“I don't like what I am experiencing in this relationship. When I turned to see if what was being done to me was 'wrong' I found very little information, and my experiences just didn't fit or count. I figured I mustn't be experiencing 'abuse' or it's not 'abusive enough' for me to be eligible to receive support.”

“One website was offering some words for what I was experiencing. But the label just wasn't enough. They didn't provide much information or signposting on where I could find out more. This left me to search from scratch, and to second guess myself. I didn't know where to start and didn't have the privacy or safety to spend time searching.”

“It's a big decision (and for me a big risk) to reach out. Knowing more before making any contact can inform my choice about if and how I take my next step. Everywhere there is this general number to call but what is on the other side.”

“I'm always aware of the possible threats and consequences of changing something or seeking support. If I don't know the process of what happens when I make contact how can I know if this is safe enough for me? And how can I plan my steps if I can't see ahead?”

“I'm sometimes monitored by the person abusing me - in person, on my phone and online. I may have limited time and safety to search for information about what support is available. I may have to close the website in a hurry. I may need to hide that I have searched at all. What functions and features do you have in place to make my access to information safer?”

“I am really aware of which options work best for me and when I can browse or make contact. Using email, chat functions or making call might be safe one day and dangerous the next. When I am not leading my way, or underinformed, I can be exposed to more danger and consequences for reaching out at all. What choice and control do you give me about being in contact?”

Recommendations and guidance

Each report contains guidance for industry employees responsible for designing, developing and delivering communications relating to DFSV, with a particular focus on digital platforms (websites).

Industries can use this guidance to inform and influence the design of content and functions on their website to communicate directly with DFSV victim-survivors. This guidance is designed to support reflection, validate the lived experiences of victim-survivors, provide access to information, and raise awareness of victim-survivors' available options.

While we acknowledge that the circumstances of victim-survivors may vary greatly, this guidance can still help inform website design by responding to the possible needs faced by:

- victim-survivors of DFSV who may be considering reaching out via digital platforms
- friends and family of victim-survivors who are looking to help by researching responses on digital platforms.

The guidance is structured in a six-part format. Each part includes:

- Possible need/context of the victim-survivor
- Industry audit results
- Guided checklist
- Example for use.

Scope and Limitations:

The guidance focuses on content and function, not on software, aesthetic design or user navigation. Identifying and addressing gaps in website content and function is vital. Victim-survivors of DFSV also rely on the organisations' broader commitment to cultural safety, accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

Guidance summary

<p style="text-align: center;"> 01</p> <p style="text-align: center;">About domestic, family and sexualised violence</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> 02</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Provide information and signposting</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> 03</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Support informed choice</p>
<p>1.1 Acknowledge that violence and abuse can be perpetrated by and experienced by anyone.</p> <p>1.2 Acknowledge definitions vary across locations, however violence is never ok.</p> <p>1.3 Acknowledge and explain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are many forms of violence and abuse - domestic and family violence is often a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour - whenever people are subjected to abuse, coercive control, and violence, they resist. 	<p>2.1 Provide links to more information about each form of violence.</p> <p>2.2 Provide links to information about supports.</p> <p>2.3 Provide access to information and reflection resources that don't require making contact.</p>	<p>3.1 Clarify information about what is offered, who is eligible, what the options are.</p> <p>3.2 Clarify rights, responsibilities, channels for feedback and complaints.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> 04</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Make the process visible</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> 05</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Include features & functions to support safety</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> 06</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Communicate options and support control</p>
<p>4.1 Describe the process of what will happen after making contact.</p> <p>4.2 Display the process and steps visually so that people can see their steps and see ahead.</p>	<p>5.1 Include features that support safer access, use and exit from the website.</p> <p>5.2 Clarify practices that support privacy and reduce digital footprint or exposure.</p>	<p>6.1 Create different channels for making contact and clarify when these are available.</p> <p>6.2 Communicate what digital footprint each channel might create if used.</p>

Guided checklist: Identify and close gaps

Ref	Guided checklist	From the outside (the public)		From the inside (an employee)	
		Self-Audit Result:	Gap Closed:	Self-Audit Result:	Gap Closed:
1.1	Acknowledge that violence and abuse can be perpetrated by and experienced by anyone.	●	□	●	□
1.2	Acknowledge definitions vary across locations, however violence is never ok.	●	□	●	□
1.3	Acknowledge and explain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are many forms of violence and abuse - domestic and family violence is often a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour - whenever people are subjected to abuse, coercive control, and violence, they resist 	●	□	●	□
2.1	Provide links to more information about each form of violence	●	□	●	□
2.2	Provide links to information about supports	●	□	●	□
2.3	Provide access to information and reflection resources that don't require making contact	●	□	●	□
3.1	Clarify information about what is offered, who is eligible, what the options are	●	□	●	□
3.2	Clarify rights, responsibilities, channels for feedback and complaints	●	□	●	□
4.1	Describe the process of what will happen after making contact	●	□	●	□
4.2	Display the process and steps visually so that people can see their steps and see ahead	●	□	●	□
5.1	Include features that support safer access, use and exit from the website	●	□	●	□
5.2	Clarify practices that support privacy and reduce digital footprint or exposure	●	□	●	□
6.1	Create different channels for making contact and clarify when these are available	●	□	●	□
6.2	Communicate what digital footprint each channel might create if used.	●	□	●	□

No Hidden Door | Industry Reports

NSW Health

How the No Hidden Door initiative relates to NSW Health

The NSW public health system is the largest public health system in Australia, providing healthcare to the 8.1M citizens of NSW. The NSW Health 2019-2020 Annual Report indicated 122,538FTE staff, \$26.7B spent on Health Care services in 2019-2020, 2.9M Emergency Department Attendances, 1.8M Inpatient episodes, 1,217,657 ambulance emergency responses, 303,557 surgeries performed. NSW Health features 228 public hospitals and 17 local health district and speciality health networks.¹³

The NSW Health Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Domestic and Family Violence 2021-2026 has 6 strategic directions, each with priority areas and actions.¹⁴ Aspects of the strategy highlight the interdependency on public facing communication about Health Service responses to domestic, family and sexualised violence.

📖 Read the [No Hidden Door report | NSW Health](#) with accompanying guidance.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

How the No Hidden Door initiative relates to Employee Assistance Programs

For some businesses their responses to employees experiencing DFSV include an Employee Assistance Professional Association of Australasia (EAPAA) provider members (76) throughout Australasia oversee over 11,500 organisations, providing coverage to 9.4 million direct employees¹⁵.

EAPs have connection with individuals and families in local community, many of whom may not now, or ever, engage with other formal services for support. EAPs can also make a meaningful difference through their own workplace responses to employees and associates.

📖 Read the [No Hidden Door report | Employee Assistance Programs](#) with accompanying guidance.

Support Services

How the No Hidden Door initiative relates to Support Services

In March 2011, the Australian Government adopted the [National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022](#) (National Plan) as its primary policy on DFSV. The National Plan is guided by key principles and sets out six national outcomes for all governments to deliver by 2022:

- National Outcome 1 – Communities are safe and free from violence
- National Outcome 2 – Relationships are respectful
- National Outcome 3 – Indigenous communities are strengthened

¹³ NSW Health Annual Report 2019-20 (p1V) health.nsw.gov.au/AnnualReport

¹⁴ NSW Health Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Domestic and Family Violence 2021-2026, p10-13.

¹⁵ Source: Engagement Rate of the Employee Assistance Professional Association of Australasia (Inc.) October 2021

- National Outcome 4 – Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence
 - National Outcome 5 – Justice responses are effective
 - National Outcome 6 – Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account
- The No Hidden Door initiative focuses on National Outcome 4.

📖 Read the [No Hidden Door report | Support Services](#) with accompanying guidance.

Police

How the No Hidden Door initiative relates to Police services

Australia and New Zealand make published commitments to victims of crime. Australian states and territories each have a *Victims of Crimes Charter* and New Zealand has a *Victims Code* (collectively referred to in this report as the Victims of Crime charters/code).

The Australian state and territory *Victims of Crime charters* contain many commonalities in the content, however the wording varies between each one. All *Victims of Crime Charters* and the New Zealand *Victims Code* feature a statement relating to the ‘rights and treatment of the victim’ of crime, as well as a statement (excluding one Australian state) on ‘access to information about appropriate support services’.

📖 Read the [No Hidden Door report | Police](#) with accompanying guidance.

Associations

How the No Hidden Door initiative relates to Associations

The Australian Chamber of commerce and industry has a network of over 160 business associations made up of peak state and territory chambers of commerce, national industry associations from all sectors, and the Business Leaders Council.¹⁶

We selected a sample of business associations to illustrate the vast connection points where victim-survivors may be customers and/or employees who are seeking access to information and support about domestic, family and sexualised violence.

The sample included retail, accommodation/hotel and clubs' associations. The sample set (described in the table below) is not conclusive or exhaustive. These industry associations, along with many more, could influence and support member businesses in their communication with victim-survivors of DFSV who may be either customers of, and/or employees in the industry.

Retail	Accommodation/Hotels	Clubs
<p>The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) represents all retailers which formulates policy on national issues of importance to all sectors of the retail industry.</p> <p>The Australian Retailers Association is the oldest, largest and most diverse national retail body, representing a \$360bn sector which employs 1.3 million Australians and is the largest private sector employer in the country.</p> <p>As Australia's peak retail body, representing more than 100,000 retail shop fronts and online stores, the ARA informs, advocates, educates, protects and unifies our independent, national and international retail community.¹⁷</p>	<p>The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) represents more than 5,000 members across Australia. The AHA represents businesses ranging from country pubs to five star resorts, providing 270,000 jobs, generating \$12,000,000,000 economic benefit, and supports over 50,000 community groups.¹⁸</p> <p>The Accommodation Association is the peak industry group established in 1969 and is now the largest representative association for the Accommodation Sector in Australia. In 2020 the Accommodation Association now represents over 80% of all known accommodation providers ranging from small regional motels, caravan parks and the largest hotel groups in world.¹⁹</p>	<p>Clubs Australia is the coalition of state and territory associations representing the interests of more than 6,500 licensed clubs across Australia and New Zealand. As the peak industry body, Clubs Australia's principal aim is to be an effective advocate of club interests, promoting policies that provide for a dynamic and prosperous club sector.²⁰</p> <p>2015 industry data estimates 6,000 clubs in Australia with 13 million members and 300 million visits annually.²¹</p> <p>Overall, Clubs supported 172,000 full time equivalent (FTEs) jobs, comprising around 85,000 direct FTEs and just over 87,000 indirect FTEs employed.²²</p>

Associations are well placed to influence the importance placed on and responses to DFSV within their member businesses. Associations are also employers and can support employees experiencing domestic, family and sexualised violence.

*We did not collate an association report due to low volume of data retrieved in the No Hidden Door sample audit findings.

¹⁶ <https://www.australianchamber.com.au/>

¹⁷ <https://www.retail.org.au/abouttheara>

¹⁸ <https://aha.org.au/>

¹⁹ <https://www.aaoa.com.au/>

²⁰ <http://www.clubsaustralia.com.au/>

²¹ https://www.clubsnsww.com.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/summary_card.pdf

²² https://www.clubsnsww.com.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/club_employment.pdf

No Hidden Door Collection

The No Hidden Door Collection was commissioned in 2022 by Insight Exchange. This collection of original artworks was created by collaborating artist Louise Whelan.

The artworks are designed to illuminate the importance of making the 'door' of responding services/organisations more visible to the public, and valued ongoingly by industry as a social response to victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexualised violence. Each artwork amplifies the unique and changing needs of victim-survivors who may be reaching out for the first, only or last time to find information and/or to seek support.

The collection amplifies how the burden of effort to find, ask and communicate often rests on the victim-survivor. This is contrasted with the lack of communication from the service/institutional 'door' which is shown to be obscure, unclear or unkept. The burden of effort must shift from the victim-survivor to the service and institution. Each 'door' needs to be made more visible and the human experience offered to victim-survivors more 'discreet, dignified and supportive'.

Artist Statement



In collaboration with Insight Exchange and The No Hidden Doors Project these artworks aim to use the power of collective action to create an environment that evokes a response.

The No Hidden Doors Collection was created with the purpose of using art and image making as a way of critiquing the system. Of bearing witness to the current status quo from a lived experience-centric-approach. An approach from the outside - in. Stages of provocation have been imagined with doorway tableaus for viewers to decode and in turn respond to the many layers of interactions, intentions and experiences otherwise not seen. Where the experience takes the leading role in the work.

“The painter constructs, the photographer discloses.” | Susan Sontag, On Photography

A myriad of encounters in the portal. Unseen bodies with whispering tones, forceful actioned blurred movements, seizing, grasping, dodging, camouflaging. Weighty encounters pushing against gravity and oscillating between the known and unknown. Unsigned, unposted re-worked, outdated entries and mirrored mazes where reclamation of access is a sort-after-state. The fulfilment of a response is not yet achieved.

Scale, transparency, colour and art direction play out in the images not just as a tools of photographic image making, but as signals and visual cues for meaning making. Creating an emergent awareness that transcribes to fragments of experiences.

The gaze transfers from the subject to the viewer in the hope for shifting insights and actionable outcomes.

Seeking support: What part are you playing?

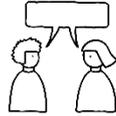
Victim-survivors

who are not talking to anyone but may be looking for information



Victim-survivors

who are talking to someone and/or seeking support



Family and Friends

who are looking for information to support someone they know



There is no one path or preference. And every option matters.

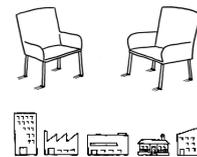
Helplines & services



Workplaces



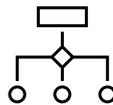
Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)



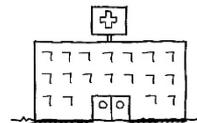
Business



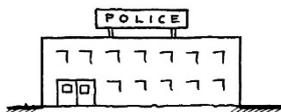
Associations



Health

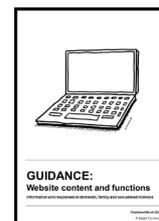


Police



And more...

What part is your workplace / business / service / institution / system playing in communication to and with victim-survivors of DFSV?



Explore the [Guidance: Website content and functions](#)

Project acknowledgements

We would like to thank:

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Artist [Louise Whelan](#) for the original artworks developed for the Arts Lab No Hidden Door collection.

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