

Tackling domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic

Resource for councils

Note: this guidance is correct as of 11 May 2020

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Overview

Domestic abuse is a horrendous crime, which can have a long-term and devastating impact on families and particularly children. It can take the form of psychological, physical, sexual, emotional or economic abuse, and occur in a wide range of domestic settings.

The coronavirus pandemic is a very worrying time for victims of domestic abuse. The emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic may exacerbate and escalate domestic abuse. The isolation of families could exacerbate domestic abuse, as perpetrators will be more likely to be at home with the victim, and the traditional routes to help and support such as schools, GPs and workplaces may be closed. There will also be new domestic abuse cases during this period. Isolation will also mean there are less opportunities to identify the early warning signs of abuse as new domestic abuse cases emerge.

We know that other countries, which are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, have reported an increase in domestic abuse cases. Sadly, this has been borne out in the UK too, with the UK National Domestic Abuse Helpline reporting a 25 per cent uplift in people calling the helpline since lockdown measures began.

Domestic abuse victims will face restricted access to support or escape as a result of the lockdown measures. It may even curtail measures that perpetrators may take to keep their own abusive behaviour under control. Some domestic abuse victims may feel it is not safe to reach out for support, as the stay at home policy means there are fewer opportunities to speak to someone when victims are alongside the perpetrator in the home.

There will be risks associated with calling helplines when the perpetrator is able to hear the domestic abuse victim's conversation. These concerns around safety are demonstrated by the fact that alongside the uplift in calls to the helpline, domestic abuse services have seen a significant uplift in the use of their online services and web forum support services. For example, Women's Aid's Live Chat service has seen a 41 per cent increase since 16 March 2020 when the self-isolation measures came into place. There have also been reported increases in calls to helplines late in the evening.

There will be an impact on refuges and emergency accommodation, due to those having to self-isolate if they are presenting symptoms. Government guidance has been provided to help refuges continue to remain open for domestic abuse victims, but there remain questions about how to manage self-isolation safely in communal accommodation. The sector has highlighted the need for additional financial support, guidance on accepting new referrals and managing move-on, and safety measures such as access to testing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

It is important to highlight that domestic abuse is a hidden crime, so the uplift in calls to the national helpline or the police will only be part of the picture. Domestic abuse victims will often not disclose their experiences of abuse to the police, and will choose to turn to friends, family or colleagues. They may feel it is more difficult to reach out to these support networks during the COVID-19 pandemic, so there may be a number of disclosures not being made.

We know that on average domestic abuse victims experience 50 incidents of abuse before getting effective help, so it is vitally important all agencies are working together to reassure domestic abuse victims they can reach out for help and support.¹ Alongside this, it is also important that agencies are working together to hold perpetrators to account and ensure the responsibility for abuse and stopping it, is on the perpetrator.

Ultimately, we will only be able to prevent domestic abuse from occurring by challenging perpetrator's behaviour. There is no excuse for abuse. Perpetrators are responsible for their abuse even in times of crisis or increased stress and the focus for preventing abuse should continue to be on the perpetrator. This is why the Local Government Association (LGA) is supporting Respect's campaign #NoExcuseforAbuse to help perpetrators recognise when their behaviour has become abusive and call the Respect phoneline (0808 802 4040) to help prevent their behaviour from escalating.

This document aims to provide a range of resources which offer help, guidance and support to tackle domestic abuse. We have provided a brief overview of domestic abuse and how councils can provide help and support to domestic abuse victims during the COVID-19 pandemic, and tackle perpetrators' abusive behaviour.

As with other briefings issued in this unprecedented situation, this document is current as at the date set out above and will be updated as and when necessary. We will also aim to supplement this with examples and case studies from councils. Updates and further information will continue to be placed on the LGA website.²

Important information about domestic abuse:

The Government's 'staying alert and safe (social distancing)' [guidance](#) confirms those escaping risk of harm do not have to stay at home. The guidance states that a person may also leave or be outside of their home in order to access other critical public services, including support provided to victims.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, please call 999 and ask for the police. Silent calls will work if you are not safe to speak – use the Silent Solution system and call 999 and then press 55.

Guidance on the Silent Solution:

https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/research-learning/Silent_solution_guide.pdf

¹ <https://safelives.org.uk/policy-evidence/about-domestic-abuse/how-long-do-people-live-domestic-abuse-and-when-do-they-get>

² www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils

What is domestic abuse?

The cross-government definition of domestic abuse is 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.'³

Domestic abuse does not only occur between couples. It can also involve wider family members, including parental abuse by an adolescent or grown child. It can exist between older siblings, or the wider extended family in elder or honour-based abuse.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background. Every case of domestic abuse should be taken seriously and each individual given access to the support they need. All victims should be able to access appropriate support. Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence.⁴

Domestic abuse can take the form of psychological, physical, sexual, emotional or economic abuse, and occur in a wide range of domestic settings. This can include physical violence, manipulation, isolation, control, and use of threats and humiliation which harm, frighten or punish a victim.

It is also important to recognise the harm caused by coercion or control, the cumulative impact on the victim and that a repeated pattern of abuse which can be more injurious and harmful than a single incident of violence.

- **Controlling behaviour** is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- **Coercive behaviour** is: a continuing act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Each year nearly two million people in the UK suffer some form of domestic abuse - 1.3 million female victims (8.2 per cent of the population) and 600,000 male victims (4 per cent).⁵

³ <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06337/SN06337.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-is-a-gendered-crime/>

⁵ <https://safelives.org.uk/policy-evidence/about-domestic-abuse>

COVID-19 pandemic: Supporting domestic abuse victims and tackling perpetrators behaviour

There will be new risks for domestic abuse victims and survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the social distancing and self-isolation measures in place, domestic abuse victims may be trapped at home with the perpetrator for a long period of time. They will have less opportunity to meet with friends and family and they may feel it is unsafe to reach out for help or support during this time given the requirement to remain at home with the perpetrator. COVID-19 measures may also be used by the perpetrator to further their abuse such as withholding child contact.

The COVID-19 pandemic may lead to increased tensions or stress within a household, which could exacerbate abuse. For example, financial worries, children staying at home all day or overall feelings of isolation. There will also be less opportunities to identify the early warning signs of abuse as new domestic abuse cases emerge.

A Women's Aid Survivor Survey has found that more than two-thirds of domestic abuse survivors say domestic abuse is escalating under lockdown and 72 per cent said that their abuser has more control over their life since isolation measures were introduced.⁶

There are also different themes of domestic abuse which are being increasingly reported during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example abuse of young people (18 years old to 24 years old) living at home with parents, LGBTQ+ phobic issues, parents abused by adult children, people contacting services about housemates who are not family or partners behaving in abusive ways for the first time.

Domestic abuse victims may feel they are unable to leave their household to escape an abusive setting, because of the stay at home policy, or because of barriers in accessing refuge or emergency accommodation services available. There may be additional barriers to leaving the household, for example concerns about finances or access to benefits or sick pay. Where possible, domestic abuse victims should be supported to remain in their home where it is safe to do so, and the perpetrator should be the one to leave.

Government guidance confirms you do not have to stay at home if you are escaping risk of harm or accessing support provided to victims.

Safe Lives has produced a guide for victims and survivors of domestic abuse who need help to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷

⁶ https://www.womensaid.org.uk/survivors-say-domestic-abuse-is-escalating-under-lockdown/?utm_campaign=11500758_Key%20Issues%2029%20April%202020&utm_medium=email&utm_source=London%20Councils&dm_i=192K,6U11I,RAR7ET,RH0HO,1

⁷ <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safety%20planning%20guide,%20victims%20and%20survivors,%20COVID-19.pdf>

Surviving Economic Abuse has produced guidance on economic abuse while self-isolating, as well as practical issues including benefits and sick pay. The guidance is being updated regularly as the situation changes.⁸

Women's Aid Federation of England has published safety and support guidance for survivors of domestic abuse during COVID 19.⁹

⁸ <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/resources/>

⁹ www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-resource-hub/

What can councils do?

Ensure strong partnership working with the police, housing and health services, the domestic abuse sector and wider agencies

Many councils are working closely with their partners in the police, housing and health services and wider domestic abuse sector, to reassure people at risk and provide support and guidance. Police and Crime Commissioners, health and wellbeing boards, adult and children's safeguarding boards, public health teams, housing and homelessness services and community safety partnerships will have key roles to play here.

Councils are well-placed to help provide targeted support to known domestic abuse victims and vulnerable people. Some good case studies include Devon and Cornwall¹⁰, Southwark and other London boroughs¹¹, St Helens¹², Sutton¹³, Middlesbrough¹⁴ and South Yorkshire Police.¹⁵

Our LGA website highlights examples of good council practice during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶ There is also a dedicated domestic abuse section on our vulnerable groups and volunteering page.¹⁷

In addition to statutory partners, councils may find it useful to contact other voluntary, community and support groups in the area, such as women's groups, contact centres, religious and faith groups, and toddler and parent groups. Residents associations, the Neighbourhood Watch, the NHS volunteering network and Mutual Aid groups may also be able to help. These forums may also be providing support to those experiencing abuse.

Ensure there are regular updates about the safe accommodation options available for domestic abuse victims

Local refuges, outreach services and independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) services will be able to provide useful information about the local response to tackling domestic abuse. It could be useful to establish a weekly update or set up a forum to share information about the local response to domestic abuse.

Some domestic abuse emergency accommodation services may require additional support during this time, for example to maintain safe staffing ratios or continuing to accept new referrals. Reaching out to these services, both commissioned or independently funded, will help to build a picture of the provision available locally.

¹⁰ <https://www.devonnewscentre.info/new-domestic-campaign-launched-as-cases-expected-to-increase/>

¹¹ <https://www.newshopper.co.uk/news/18352361.southwark-council-gives-funding-domestic-violence-charity-amid-covid-19-outbreak/>

¹² <https://www.sthelensstar.co.uk/news/18327376.council-reassure-domestic-abuse-victims-are-not-alone-amid-coronavirus-lockdown/>

¹³ https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200335/at_home/1090/domestic_abuse/9

¹⁴ <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/community-support-and-safety/domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-domestic-abuse-support>

¹⁵ <https://www.southyorks.police.uk/find-out/news-and-appeals/2020/march-2020/covid-19-domestic-abuse/>

¹⁶ <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-good-council-practice>

¹⁷ <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-vulnerable-groups-and-volunteering>

The Government has published guidance for domestic abuse safe accommodation¹⁸ and guidance for social landlords on essential moves.¹⁹

The Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Luke Hall MP, has written to all local authorities to ask them to work closely with the domestic abuse services in their area, providing support where necessary in order to protect victims, for example by providing crisis funding to safe accommodation services. The Minister asks councils to work closely with domestic abuse safe accommodation providers to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their families, including those from out of area, can be provided with safe emergency accommodation. The letter also provided access to a hotel booking arrangement if councils need additional accommodation to meet demand.²⁰

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government also announced £10 million would be made available to domestic abuse charities providing domestic abuse accommodation (including refuges).²¹ This is part of a £76 million package of Government support for the most vulnerable in society, including those affected by domestic abuse.²²

One of the barriers to seeking refuge for domestic abuse victims might be concerns about travel. Where possible, it might be useful to highlight that Women's Aid and Imkaan have partnered with train companies to offer a 'Rail to refuge' scheme, providing domestic abuse survivors and their children with access to free train travel to refuge accommodation during COVID-19 restrictions once they have received an offer of a refuge place.²³

Identify what safeguarding arrangements are needed for children and young people in domestic abuse households

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are also considering local arrangements for protecting children at this time, ensuring that the key safeguarding partners (councils, police and health) and other agencies, including schools, are prioritising resources and amending their activity to keep children safe.

Councils are reporting that referrals to children's social care have fallen since 'stay at home' guidance was issued. Councils receive, on average, almost 1800 referrals per day,²⁴ and anecdotal evidence suggests that referrals have fallen by more than half in some areas. This raises concerns that, without the regular oversight of professionals in schools or medical settings for example, some children may be at risk of abuse or neglect in the home that cannot currently be picked up in the normal ways.

Councils have also reported issues in accessing appropriate PPE for children's social workers, which can make home visits and responding to the needs of victims challenging. The LGA continues to work with the Government to address these important issues.

¹⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-provision?utm_source=be808786-ffe8-4c36-98ce-a0088aba8945&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-social-landlords-on-essential-moves>

²⁰ <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Letter.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/domestic-abuse-charities-can-apply-for-vital-funds>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-funding-to-support-most-vulnerable-in-society-during-pandemic>

²³ <https://media.raildeliverygroup.com/news/train-companies-to-offer-free-travel-to-those-fleeing-domestic-abuse-during-coronavirus-lockdown>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2018-to-2019>

The Government has published guidance for local authorities on children's social care (during the COVID-19 pandemic).²⁵

The Home Office has also announced £3.1 million will go to specialist services for children who have both been directly and indirectly affected by domestic abuse. This can include one-to-one and group counselling sessions to improve the mental health of children affected and early intervention schemes. The new funding will be split between local authorities, children's charities and Police and Crime Commissioners across England and Wales.²⁶

We need to ensure that children know they can reach out for help if they are living in abusive households. Any frontline professionals working with vulnerable children or speaking with them on a regular basis will be assessing risk within the home and taking appropriate action. Similarly, where professionals such as the police are working with a family experiencing domestic abuse, risk assessments should be taking place to establish whether it is safe and appropriate for any children to remain in the household.

The following resources are available to provide advice and support for those with concerns about children or young people:

- The NSPCC helpline is available for advice and support for anyone with concerns about a child. The NSPCC has issued guidance for spotting and reporting the signs of abuse²⁷
Telephone 0800 800 5000 and email help@nspcc.org.uk
- Childline provides help and support to children and young people:
<https://www.childline.org.uk/> Telephone 0800 1111
- Barnardo's provide support to families affected by domestic abuse:
<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/domestic-abuse>
- Family Lives provide support through online forums: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

It is also important during this time that consideration is given to ensuring those who may have contact with families, including neighbours and volunteers, know the signs of abuse or neglect and understand how to report concerns. The #TackleAbuseTogether hashtag has been used to share information on social media about this, including from the Department for Education and local authorities.

Identify how Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs) can provide support

It is important to note that Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) can help recognise increasing pressures and expected demand, and they are well-placed to facilitate robust partnership efforts. SABs will also be seeking assurance of the effectiveness of local safeguarding activity according to their statutory duties. This LGA guide is aimed at practitioners and managers in councils and partner agencies engaged in working (directly or indirectly) with people who have care and support needs, whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and who may also be victims of domestic abuse is available here.²⁸

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care>

²⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-support-for-children-affected-by-domestic-abuse?utm_source=e2a3e4cc-11f0-44b1-86e0-0ab8c7a97ad2&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

²⁷ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/coronavirus-abuse-neglect-vulnerable-children/>

²⁸ www.local.gov.uk/adult-safeguarding-and-domestic-abuse-guide-support-practitioners-and-managers-second-edition

Support consistent messaging across all agencies that:

- reassures anyone at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse that help is available, and the police will respond in an emergency
- challenges perpetrator's abusive behaviour to prompt them to seek help and take responsibility for their actions.

In an emergency, call the police:

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, please call 999 and ask for the police. Silent calls will work if you are not safe to speak – use the Silent Solution system and call 999. If you can't speak, you will be diverted to an automated silent solution system. You can press 55 to be transferred to the local police force.²⁹

If it is not an emergency, you can contact the National Domestic Abuse Helpline 24-hours a day, for free and in confidence: 0808 2000 247

The Helpline adviser will offer confidential, non-judgmental information and expert support.

The Helpline is free to call. It uses the services of Language Line to provide access to interpreters for non-English-speaking callers. The Helpline can also access the BT Type Talk Service for deaf or hard-of-hearing callers.

Refuge, the charity who run the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, have a series of posters publicising the helpline number.³⁰

It is helpful to make this information available through a variety of different channels, in different languages including British Sign Language, Easy Read, and accessible formats for blind and partially sighted people.

Some possible ways to share this information could be:

- through community and voluntary sector networks and groups
- through the local radio station
- publicising at local bus stops
- publicising in local newspapers
- asking shops and supermarkets to include posters at the front of their stores or include the National Domestic Helpline number on receipts
- posters and leaflets at food banks
- publicising at pharmacies, general practitioners, hospitals, sexual health clinics and sexual assault referral centres
- public notice boards – available at parks, outside council buildings etc
- housing, homelessness, welfare and public health services.

Do not send any domestic abuse support leaflets directly to households as this could alert the perpetrator. Consult local domestic abuse charities and networks for guidance on this.

²⁹ https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/research-learning/Silent_solution_guide.pdf

³⁰ <https://www.refuge.org.uk/refuge-publications-2/posters-and-resources/>

Employers can also help signpost support available. The Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse provides help for employees when home is not a safe place and guidance for employers.³¹

Additional domestic abuse helpline numbers:

Northern Ireland: 0808 802 1414

Scotland: 0800 027 1234

Wales: 0808 8010 800

Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327

Respect phonenumber: 0808 802 4040 (for anyone worried that they may be harming someone else)

Galop - for members of the LGBT+ community: 0800 999 5428

Raise awareness of the Home Office's public awareness campaign #YouAreNotAlone

The Home Office's new public awareness campaign highlights that anyone at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse, can still leave and seek refuge. Under the hashtag #YouAreNotAlone, it aims to create a community around those affected and reassure victims that support remains available.³²

The Home Office is encouraging councils to support the [campaign](#) on social media in any of the following ways³³:

- Posting a picture of someone from the organisation with the symbol of a heart drawn on their palm. Tag five or more people asking them to do the same to spread the message, using #YouAreNotAlone.
- Alternatively, posting the campaign assets on your channels and tag five or more people asking them to reshare, using #YouAreNotAlone.
- Share the gov.uk/domestic-abuse address where people can find out more information, using #YouAreNotAlone.

You can find all the campaign materials [here](#)³⁴

For social media: At home shouldn't mean at risk. If you or someone you know is suffering from #DomesticAbuse, isolation rules do not apply. Police response and support services remain available. Find support at gov.uk/domestic-abuse or call 999 if you are in immediate danger. #YouAreNotAlone

Raise awareness of the Respect campaign #NoExcuseforAbuse which targets perpetrators to recognise when their behaviour has become abusive and urges them to reach out for help and guidance.

³¹ <https://www.eida.org.uk/covid-19-response>

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-announces-support-for-domestic-abuse-victims>

³³ <https://homeoffice.brandworkz.com/BMS/albums/?album=2039&lightboxAccessID=C8381A71-F29D-4FBC-9AE3C297B7ACFFD1>

³⁴ <https://homeoffice.brandworkz.com/BMS/albums/?album=2039&lightboxAccessID=C8381A71-F29D-4FBC-9AE3C297B7ACFFD1>

Respect, the membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services, has launched the #NoExcuseforAbuse campaign. The campaign calls on perpetrators of domestic abuse to get help to manage and change their behaviour, by calling their phonenumber.³⁵

A series of posters and promotional materials are available.³⁶

For social media: Don't let coronavirus get the better of your behaviour. Choose to not use abuse. Call us for confidential help and support. Call the Respect Phonenumber, 0808 8024040 <https://lght.ly/71nifeo> #RespectPhonenumber #NoExcuseforAbuse #DomesticAbuse #SafeatHome #Covid19 #Coronavirus

Highlight which domestic abuse support services and perpetrator programmes are still open and available.

Many councils are continuing to deliver domestic abuse support services during the lockdown and have adapted measures to continue offering one-to-one support via online and telephone. We know that a number of specialist domestic abuse services, commissioned by the council or independently funded, will also have adapted their services to support domestic abuse victims during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time, it will be difficult for domestic abuse victims to phone the helpline safely without being overheard by their abuser. We know there has been a significant uplift in domestic abuse victims accessing web forums and live chat functions for support.

On councils' websites, it may help to have a 'quick exit' button on the domestic abuse webpage, to enable domestic abuse victims to close the site down quickly if needed. Where domestic abuse services are moved online, it will be important to use secure online platforms. Councils may find it useful to liaise with local groups and support services to ensure they are operating safely.

The following guides are available to help domestic abuse victims stay safe online and clear their browsing history:

- Safe Lives guide to staying safe online³⁷
- Women's Aid guide to private browsing³⁸
- Technology Safely: A guide which contains safety tips, information, and privacy strategies for survivors on the use of technology³⁹
- Chayn's Online Safety Guide⁴⁰
- Refuge techbot for those worried about hiding their activity online.⁴¹

³⁵ <https://respectphonenumber.org.uk/help-for-perpetrators/>

³⁶ <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5wbpamubbzfx1ps/AAD62emlCf9mGxi5YhCY3jfoa?dl=0>

³⁷ <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Staying%20safe%20online%20guide.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/cover-your-tracks-online/>

³⁹ <https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors>

⁴⁰ <https://chayn.co/safety/>

⁴¹ <https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/tech-abuse-empowerment-service/>

Set up virtual meetings to continue Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a victim focused information sharing and risk management meeting attended by all key agencies, where high risk domestic abuse cases are discussed. The role of the MARAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.

There are a number of guidance documents available to help councils and their partners continue to hold MARACs during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Safe Lives: Responding to the challenges of COVID-19: Guidance for multi-agency forums (including MARACs)⁴²
- Standing Together against Domestic Violence and Abuse, MARAC COVID-19 PLAN⁴³
- Standing Together against Domestic Violence and Abuse, At Risk List / Research Template.⁴⁴

⁴² <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Marac%20guidance%20-%20COVID%2019.pdf>

⁴³ http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/STADV_VirtualMARACPlan_ResponseToCOVID19%20-%20final.pdf

⁴⁴ http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/ARL_Research%20Template.docx

Supporting resources

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, please call 999 and ask for the police. Silent calls will work if you are not safe to speak – use the Silent Solution system and call 999 and then press 55.

Silent solution guidance:

https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/research-learning/Silent_solution_guide.pdf

If it is not an emergency, please contact the National Domestic Abuse Helpline (24 hours, free): 0808 2000 247

Telephone support services

- **England: National Domestic Abuse Helpline** 0808 2000 247 (Freephone 24 hour)
- **Northern Ireland:** 0808 802 1414
- **Scotland:** 0800 027 1234
- **Wales:** 0808 8010 800
- **Men's Advice Line:** 0808 801 0327
- **Respect phoneline:** 0808 802 4040 (for anyone worried that they may be harming someone else.
- **Galop** - for members of the LGBT+ community: 0800 999 5428
- **Solace Women's Aid:** Advice Service is open for advice and support - 0808 802 5565
- **Southall Black Sisters:** Advice and advocacy service by phone - 0208 571 9595
- **Age UK Advice Line:** 0800 678 1602

Disability specialist services

These services are run by deaf and/or disabled people.

- Stay Safe East provides specialist and holistic advocacy and support services to disabled victims and survivors of abuse: <http://staysafe-east.org.uk/>
- SignHealth provides domestic abuse service support for deaf people in British Sign Language (BSL). <https://signhealth.org.uk/>
WhatsApp or Facetime: 07970 350366/ Telephone: 020 3947 2601
Email: da@signhealth.org.uk

Support for children and young people

- The NSPCC helpline is available for advice and support for anyone with concerns about a child. The NSPCC has issued guidance for spotting and reporting the signs of abuse: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/coronavirus-abuse-neglect-vulnerable-children/>
Telephone 0808 800 5000 and email help@nspcc.org.uk
- Childline provides help and support to children and young people: <https://www.childline.org.uk/> Telephone 0800 1111
- Barnardo's provide support to families affected by domestic abuse: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/domestic-abuse>
- Family Lives provide support through online forums: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

A number of guidance documents and resources are available to help support domestic abuse victims:

Government guidance and announcements

- (As of 11 May 2020) GOV.UK Staying alert and safe (social distancing): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>
- GOV.UK – Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on domestic abuse: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse>
- GOV.UK – Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>
- GOV.UK – Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for domestic abuse safe accommodation provision: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-provision?utm_source=be808786-ffe8-4c36-98ce-a0088aba8945&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate
- GOV.UK - Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for local authorities on children’s social care: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care>
- GOV.UK - Vulnerable groups set to benefit from improved legal aid support: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vulnerable-groups-set-to-benefit-from-improved-legal-aid-support>
- GOV.UK - Further support for children affected by domestic abuse: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-support-for-children-affected-by-domestic-abuse?utm_source=e2a3e4cc-11f0-44b1-86e0-0ab8c7a97ad2&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate
- GOV.UK - Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for social landlords on essential moves: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-social-landlords-on-essential-moves>
- The Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Luke Hall MP, has written to all local authorities to ask them to work closely with the domestic abuse services in their area, providing support where necessary in order to protect victims, for example by providing crisis funding to safe accommodation services: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Letter.pdf>
- GOV.UK – The Government announces £76 million extra funding to support survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and vulnerable children and their families and victims of modern slavery: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-funding-to-support-most-vulnerable-in-society-during-pandemic>
- GOV.UK - Domestic abuse safe accommodation: COVID-19 emergency support fund prospectus: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884004/C19_DA_Fund_Prospectus_FINAL_new_deadline.pdf

Wider guidance

- Chayn's Online Safety Guide: <https://chayn.co/safety/>
- Citizens Advice have guidance on coronavirus and you can contact your local office by phone, email and some provide a web service. Check your local office website for the most up to date information on contact details: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>
- College of Policing, dedicated page on responding to domestic abuse: <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/domestic-abuse/>
- Crimestoppers, reporting domestic abuse anonymously <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/keeping-safe/personal-safety/domestic-abuse>
- Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) guidance for housing providers during COVID-19: <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/media/10691/daha-covid-housing-guidance-v5-uploaded-010420.pdf> and wider resources: <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/resources/information-on-covid-19/>
- Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse, help for employees when home is not a safe place: <https://www.eida.org.uk/covid-19-response>
- Harmful Traditional Practices in the Workplace: Urgent Response to COVID-19: <http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/32886/1/COVID-19%20Response-HARM.pdf>
- IRIS, Guidance for General Practice Teams – Responding to domestic abuse during telephone and video consultations: https://pdfhost.io/v/gYvqnkHlr_IRISi_Guidance_for_General_Practice_teams_phone_and_video_.pdf
- National Police Chiefs' Council, press release urging domestic abuse victims to seek help during the coronavirus pandemic: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/domestic-abuse-victims-urged-to-keep-seeking-help-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
- Refuge: Resources and posters highlighting the National Domestic Abuse Helpline and further details about the Helpline: <https://www.refuge.org.uk/refuge-publications-2/posters-and-resources/>
- Respect: #NoExcuseforAbuse campaign calls on perpetrators of domestic abuse to get help to manage and change their behaviour: <https://respectphoneline.org.uk/>
- Respect: Campaign materials: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5wbpamubbzfx1ps/AAD62emlCf9mGxi5YhCY3jfoa?dl=0>
- Respect, Guidance for domestic abuse practitioners working with perpetrators: https://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/respect/redactor2_assets/files/81/Respect_Covid19_Guidance_for_DA_Practitioners_March_2020.pdf
- Rights of Women, Family Court Guidance <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-information/family-law/coronavirus-remote-hearings-in-the-family-court/>
- Royal College of General Practitioners, COVID-19 and Safeguarding: https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/pluginfile.php/149180/mod_resource/content/2/COVID-19%20and%20Safeguarding%20%286%29.pdf
- Safe Lives, Guide for victims and survivors of domestic abuse staying safe during COVID-19: <https://safelives.org.uk/staying-safe-during-covid-19-guidance>
- Safe Lives: Responding to the challenges of COVID-19: Guidance for multi-agency forums (including MARACs): <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Marac%20guidance%20-%20COVID%2019.pdf>
- Solace Women's Aid: Coronavirus and abuse: <https://www.solacewomensaid.org/coronavirus-and-abuse>

- Standing Together against Domestic Abuse: Guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic: <http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/news/read-our-latest-covid-19-guidance-and-procedures>
- Surviving Economic Abuse: Guidance and resources on economic abuse during COVID-19: <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/resources/>
- Women's Aid: Making a safety plan: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/making-a-safety-plan/>
- Women's Aid and Imkaan have partnered with train companies to offer a 'Rail to refuge' scheme, providing domestic abuse survivors and their children with access to free train travel to refuge accommodation during COVID-19 restrictions once they have received an offer of a refuge place: <https://media.raildeliverygroup.com/news/train-companies-to-offer-free-travel-to-those-fleeing-domestic-abuse-during-coronavirus-lockdown>
- World Health Organisation, COVID-19 and violence against women: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/emergencies/COVID-19-VAW-full-text.pdf>

Live chats and survivor forums

- Women's Aid Survivors Forum: <https://survivorsforum.womensaid.org.uk/>
- Women's Aid Live Chat: <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/>
- Victim Support Live Chat: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help/support-near-you/live-chat>
- The Samaritans can also be a source of support for people who are generally feeling low and would like to talk to someone. They are a non-judgemental listening service that will not give advice or pressure them in any way. <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Bright Sky app by Hestia

Bright Sky is a free mobile app, launched by Hestia in partnership with the Vodafone Foundation, providing support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know. <https://www.hestia.org/brightsky>

Hestia, the charity which supports adults in crisis, has put together a quick-read guide to support people at risk of domestic abuse during lockdown, including useful apps, numbers and resources. For people experiencing domestic abuse and isolated at home with their perpetrator, this could be a dangerous time. Many opportunities for intervention have diminished. <https://www.governmentevents.co.uk/domestic-abuse-isolation-lockdown/>

Additional publications

- House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee report, Home Office preparedness for Covid-19 (Coronavirus): domestic abuse and risks of harm within the home: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmhaff/321/321.pdf>
- Respect: The Impact of COVID-19 on Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Services: <http://respect.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Impact-of-COVID19-on-DA-Perpetrator-Services-03.04.20.pdf>
- UK AID Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Violence against Women and Girls: <http://www.sddirect.org.uk/media/1881/vawg-helpdesk-284-covid-19-and-vawg.pdf>
- Briefing: Covid-19 – Gender and other Equality Issues: <https://wbq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FINAL-Covid-19-briefing.pdf>

- Briefing: End Violence Against Women Coalition - COVID-19 Pandemic and the Duty to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls:
<https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/EVAW-Coalition-Briefing-on-COVID19-Pandemic-and-Duty-to-Prevent-VAWG-April-2020-FINAL.pdf>
- Women's Budget Group - 'Crises Collide: Women and Covid-19': <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FINAL.pdf>

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