

Covid-19 Response

ADULT SAFEGUARDING AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Document Purpose

This document sets out guidance on carrying out our adult safeguarding work regarding domestic abuse during the current outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19). The plan has been developed in accordance with current National Guidance and will be reviewed on a regular basis as government advice changes.

The document has immediate effect and lasts until further notice.

Overall Position – 06/04/2020

In carrying out our adult safeguarding work we will take account of ways that the impact of the outbreak of Covid-19 may lead to increased risks to survivors of domestic abuse

Adult Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse

When carrying out adult safeguarding work relating to domestic abuse during the current period, we will need to pay attention to additional risks.

Risks to survivors

The steps taken in response to the Cov-19 outbreak such as

- Working from home
- Social distancing
- Self-isolating for those with symptoms and for people in at risk groups

will reduce the chances of survivors of domestic abuse to seek help. When they do seek help, limited resources in terms of housing options and finances will mean they are more likely to decide to remain with the perpetrator or return if they have left.

Risks from perpetrators

The likely economic disruption coupled with the resulting financial pressures provides perpetrators with further means by which to isolate, control and abuse their partners. They have been provided with the reason to isolate their families, to consume alcohol at home and the excuses as to why they perpetrate physical violence, such as attributing it to increased stress.

Risks to children

With schools shut there is also a very real possibility of an increase in child abuse as school provides a physical and emotional sanctuary for many children living in homes where domestic abuse is

present. As the behaviour of children is often picked up on by schools this also reduces the likelihood of agencies becoming aware of domestic abuse in the home. Extra vigilance from other services that continue to have contact with families where there are children at home from school can help mitigate this risk.

Impact on domestic abuse outreach services

Like many other services, domestic abuse outreach services will face challenges in delivering their usual service level, and with responding to a likely increase in demand. There may be limits to the direct work they are able to do with survivors but that can make all the more important the work they do with Adult Social Care and other partners in helping support the work we do with people experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse. We can make use of their expertise to inform our understanding of and response to adults with care and support needs who are survivors of domestic abuse.

Responding to adult safeguarding concerns about domestic abuse during the COVID19 outbreak

The recently introduced [Silent Solution system](#) can be of assistance for victims of domestic abuse who might be afraid of further danger and escalation of harm if they are overheard when calling 999 in an emergency. When somebody calls 999, an operator will ask which emergency service is required. If the caller is unable to audibly signal to the operator, the call will be forwarded to an operating system. If 55 is pressed by the caller, the system will detect this. The operator will then transfer the call to the relevant police force as an emergency.

The [Next Generation Text service](#), run by BT, is designed for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment. You need to register your mobile number before using the service

Practical tips for use during phone or video contact with someone at risk of domestic abuse:

- Check who else is in the house/room
- Ask if they feel safe
- Ask about what support they have, how they are managing with isolation/schools closing/social distancing.
- Consider use of 'closed' questions when asking about safety – questions with 'yes/no' answers may help a victim of abuse share that they are being harmed.
- Encourage and promote ongoing social support and contact with their friends and family through virtual means e.g. by phone, video chat.

You can find further information at

- The [Women's Aid website page on COVID19](#)
- The [Safe Lives website page on COV19](#)
- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>

For further information:

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