



# Central Public Protection - Domestic Abuse

## Safeguarding Advice

**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

This is a critical briefing from Central Public Protection in response to protect survivors of domestic abuse and their children during the COVID-19 pandemic and in particular lockdown. It is vital that you read this document and consider how you can implement the advice contained in it within your role and beyond.

### **HEADING - DA Harm & Homicide Reduction Guidance**

**What follows are considerations for keeping people safe from the harm perpetrated by DA abusers and preventing DA homicide during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown. When considering these options it is imperative that you consider the individual circumstances of each incident/survivor/family in order to increase routes to safety and manage risk.**

\*This document has been created based upon specialist advice issued by the following agencies ESDAS, Women's Aid, Paladin, RASASC, Hestia and more.

We know that COVID-19 will have serious impacts on the lives of survivors and children. Survivors are telling us that they are feeling unsafe with the prospect of being isolated in the house with their perpetrator and research from countries like China, Italy and Spain have reported significant increases in DA.

We want to reassure survivors that we and local specialist services are here for them and we will be doing everything we can to support them during this challenging time.

## **Key message**

Isolation and lockdown has severely impacted upon survivors ability to report abuse so you must see every contact with a survivor as an opportunity to provide potentially life saving safety advice. Our window of opportunity to provide follow up advice and support safely has also lessened so the 'one chance rule' is more important than ever.

If you are having contact over the phone with survivors during the pandemic always presume the perpetrator is present and that you could be on loud speaker

## **Key Safety Advice to give to survivors (further info on each of these contained below)**

- **Encourage survivors to try and keep a mobile phone with them and charged at all times if possible.**
- **Ensure survivors are aware of the The Silent Solution system**
- **Ensure survivors are aware that they are still permitted to leave their relationship during this time (however their options on where to go maybe limited). The Home Secretary has made a specific announcement on this issue**
- **Reassure survivors that the Surrey specialist Outreach Services are still open and able to provide advice, information and support via the phone, email and online chat**
- **Provide advice about safety planning both for staying at home and if they are intending to leave their relationship during the pandemic this should include showing them how to access the BrightSky app, Hollie Guard and specialist support services**
- **The police are a key service when in immediate danger. Do not be afraid to call 999 in an emergency.**

## Further information

All Surrey specialist Outreach Services are still operating during this crisis and will support survivors who contact us. We understand that the measures we are all having to take to reduce the spread of the virus are particularly difficult & potentially dangerous for those experiencing domestic abuse which is why we are determined to keep running our vital services.

SDAP outreach services offer an independent, confidential, listening service to anyone affected by domestic abuse. They are free and impartial services, which can assist by giving practical help and emotional support as well as providing information on a wide range of issues including housing, benefits, safety planning and the needs of children affected by domestic abuse. They can also assist with accessing refuge accommodation if you need to leave your home in order to keep yourself safe. SDAP's outreach services provide support to any victim of domestic abuse regardless of age, gender, sexuality or race.

- [East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services](#): 01737 771350 (Serving Reigate and Banstead, Mole Valley and Tandridge)
- [Your Sanctuary](#): 01483 776822 (Serving Woking, Runnymede and Surrey Heath)
- [North Surrey Domestic Abuse Services](#): 01932 260690 (Serving Epsom and Ewell, Elmbridge and Spelthorne)
- [South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Services](#): 01483 898884 (Serving Guildford and Waverley)

Opening hours - Monday – Friday 9am - 4pm

Your Sanctuary Helpline 01483 776822 is available from 9am till 9pm 7 days a week

Your Sanctuary online chat service is available here <https://www.yoursanctuary.org.uk/>

They also have a cover your tracks online page

[www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk)

Use link - [Safelives](#)

They have a dedicated page to helping during Covid 19

### [Cyber and Online safety | Veritas Justice](#)

They also have some good advice round staking and staying safe

### **Bright Sky App (Free)**

Use this link - [Brightsky](#)

An app that looks like a weather app and provides support and information to anyone who maybe in an abusive relationship

It is available in Polish, Punjabi and Urdu

To activate you open the app and then simply hold your finger down on the screen and it will take you to the safeguarding advice screen which includes a risk assessment – online safety advice – support resources – a journal so you can keep a log of events. This can be via a voice recording or typed. You can also take photos of injuries or damage that won't show on your phone in your photo gallery.

### **Holly Guard (Free and is an alternative App to Bright Sky)**

Use this link-[Hollieguard](#)

'Hollie Guard turns your smart phone in to a personal safety device.

If in danger, shake your phone or tap the screen to generate an alert. Your location and audio/video evidence will automatically be sent to your emergency contacts who can take action to help you quickly. Three alert types – personal, stealth and deterrent – allow you to choose an alert setting appropriate to your specific needs'

You can set meeting timers, when the meeting has expired an alert will automatically be raised. If travelling you can notify people of your journey so the emergency contacts will know when you've started and completed the journey.

## **The Silent Solution System**

This is a system 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. [Click here to find out more.](#)

## **Child Contact**

Child Contact arrangements are of particular concern to many survivors at the moment. Perpetrators have always used child contact arrangements as a tool of coercive and controlling behaviour, and are likely to use COVID-19 as a way to threaten to not adhere to – or flout – contact arrangements. We are also hearing from survivors that the guidance given around ‘isolation’ can feel very unclear. Survivors are concerned that they will be accused of breaching a court order by not allowing contact for example. We recognise that accessing legal advice might be difficult at the moment.

The President of the Family Division has released ‘Guidance on Compliance with Family Court Child Arrangement Orders’ during COVID 19:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/coronavirus-crisis-guidance-on-compliance-with-family-court-child-arrangement-orders/>

The guidance does not include specific advice in cases of domestic abuse, but states that if parents cannot agree to an arrangement they may exercise their parental responsibility and vary the arrangement to one that they consider to be safe. If a contact arrangement is varied as a result of COVID 19, the courts expect alternative arrangements – such as video calls – to be made.

## **Financial Abuse**

Many women experience economic abuse within the context of intimate partner violence. Surviving Economic Abuse can provide information and resources: <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/>

## **Digital Safety**

- Choose a strong email password with multiple characters, capital letters and numbers.
- Change your password regularly, particularly if you become concerned it has been compromised.
- Do not open links from senders you do not recognise in case they contain malware, and always run anti-virus software on all your devices.
- If you are being harassed via email: do not reply, block their email address, and/or consider creating a new email address.
- Limit who you accept as a 'friend' or 'follower' on your profiles. Change your privacy settings on all social media profiles to ensure that only those you choose can see your updates, photos and location.
- Be wary of revealing your location when posting images which may use geo-tagging.
- Turn off location services, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on your device when you do not need them.
- If your partner or ex-partner set up your phone or registered the app store account, they can see what you have downloaded without needing access to your device. If you think this is the case, change your app store registered email and password.
- You can use the 'My Shadow' tool ([myshadow.org](http://myshadow.org)) to discover other areas where you may be vulnerable online.

## **Concerns around Stalking**

- Tighten up security at home, to and from home, and at work. Change the locks to your home and if you can, install a burglar alarm or camera.
- Vary your daily routine if walking or driving to work or other places.
- Be careful when giving out personal details when on the phone, dealing with credit card services, social networking sites and people you meet.
- Tell people what is happening to you, particularly at work and at home

## **Safety at Home**

- Plan an escape route from every room in the house.
- Put your bag, keys, documents and money in a safe accessible place so that they can be grabbed in a hurry.

- Let friends/neighbours that you trust know about your situation and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises.
- Teach your children if and when appropriate to call for help. They should never use a phone in front of the abuser as this may endanger them further.
- Talk to children about what is happening and encourage them to call for help and not to intervene.
- Create "code words" for friends and children so that they know when to call for help and/or leave danger areas.
- Plan where to go in an emergency and have an alternative route.

### **You may also be able to do some of the following**

- Keep a record of the perpetrator's violence and controlling behaviour to support any future action, civil or criminal. Log incidents with the police even if you do not wish to press charges at present.
- Increase your financial independence by: opening a separate bank account/transferring your money (including benefits) into your name.
- Seek legal advice (some solicitors offer an initial free appointment).
- Keep important documents in a safe place, either hidden in the home or at a friends or relatives house (e.g. birth/marriage certificates, national insurance card, passport, driving licence etc. You may also want to hide items that have a sentimental value to you or your children.

### **Suggested items to be included in an emergency bag**

- ID - Passport, birth/marriage certificate, NI number, driving licence, insurance documents etc
- Money - cheque book, bank cards, credit cards, benefit books etc.
- Medical - prescribed medicines, prescriptions, medical cards, vaccination certificates
- Legal - injunction/divorce papers, mortgage documents
- Special Items - child's favourite toy, photos, jewellery etc.
- Basic/essential clothing

## Useful Contacts

### Useful Contacts and Hyperlinks :

1. 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline – 0808 2000 247
2. [East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services](#): 01737 771350
3. [Your Sanctuary](#): 01483 776822
4. [North Surrey Domestic Abuse Services](#): 01932 260690
5. [South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Services](#): 01483 898884
6. [Safelives](#)
7. [Cyber and Online safety | Veritas Justice](#) some good advice round staking and staying safe
8. [Surviving economic abuse](#)
9. [womens aid](#)[Women`s aid](#)
10. [Government advice concerning Coronavirus domestic abuse support for victims of DA](#)
11. [Judiciary guidance on compliance with-family court child arrangement orders during Covid-19](#)
12. Use this hyperlink to access safeguarding advice –DA & Stalking in the home and online [DA safeguarding advice and tips during COVID-19](#)
13. Silent Solution 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. [Click here to find out more.](#)
14. RASASC – 0800 0288022
15. National Stalking Helpline – 0808 802 0300
16. PALADIN – 02038664107
17. Citizen’s Advice National Line – 03444 77 20 20
18. Men’s Advice Line – 0808 801 0327
19. Samaritans – 116 123

**Remember to always keep your safety information safe and never leave it where it could be found by the perpetrator. Share this safety advice with a trusted friend or family member, and also with trusted agency workers you are in contact with.**

### Support for potential perpetrators

The Respect Phone line is a confidential helpline, email and web chat service for perpetrators of domestic violence looking for help to stop. They help male and female perpetrators, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. Partners or ex-

partners of perpetrators, as well as concerned friends and family and Frontline Workers are welcome to get in touch for information, advice and support.

**Call - 0808 8024040**

It's Free from landlines and mobile phones within the UK. Your call will not appear on itemised bills. You can also call free from BT pay phones.

**Sailesh Limbachia**  
**Detective Superintendent**  
***Central Public Protection***