

## **#NoExcuseForAbuse – West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner**

**In this document you'll find all you need to support the campaign on social media as well as guidance to send to professionals working in the domestic abuse space on what services are available to victims.**

[Jump to guidance for professionals](#)

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Images to support social media can be downloaded [here](#)

The hashtag is **#NoExcuseForAbuse**

Below are some suggested social media posts

There is #NoExcuseForAbuse

If you are a victim of #DomesticAbuse, there is help available.

Find out more and seek support.

NoExcuseForAbuse.info

Twitter Tags: @CRASAC @coventry\_haven @FWTCov @Kairos\_WWT @CovPartnership

Facebook: @FWTCov @CoventryHaven @relatecoventrywarwickshire @CRASAC @Kairos.Coventry

If you or someone you know is suffering from #DomesticAbuse – isolation rules do not apply.

Get help, support services and @wmpolice are still here to help. There is #NoExcuseForAbuse

NoExcuseForAbuse.info

Twitter Tags: @CRASAC @coventry\_haven @FWTCov @Kairos\_WWT @CovPartnership

Facebook: @FWTCov @CoventryHaven @relatecoventrywarwickshire @CRASAC @Kairos.Coventry

You do not need to stay at home if you are suffering from #DomesticAbuse

There is help to support you. There is #NoExcuseForAbuse

Police and support services are still available – call 999 if you are in immediate danger.

Find out more: [NoExcuseForAbuse.info](http://NoExcuseForAbuse.info)

Twitter Tags: @CRASAC @coventry\_haven @FWTCov @Kairos\_WWT @CovPartnership

Facebook: @FWTCov @CoventryHaven @relatecoventrywarwickshire @CRASAC @Kairos.Coventry

Don't suffer in silence if you are a victim of #DomesticAbuse

Police and support services are still available to help.

Find out more and get the help you need. There is #NoExcuseForAbuse

[NoExcuseForAbuse.info](http://NoExcuseForAbuse.info)

Twitter Tags: @CRASAC @coventry\_haven @FWTCov @Kairos\_WWT @CovPartnership

Facebook: @FWTCov @CoventryHaven @relatecoventrywarwickshire @CRASAC @Kairos.Coventry

Information for victims can be found on [noexcuseforabuse.info](http://noexcuseforabuse.info)

## **Domestic Violence and Abuse Professional Briefing in Response to COVID-19**

This briefing has been prepared in response to the potential increase in domestic abuse incidents as a result of the lockdown caused by COVID19. It is aimed at professionals working to prevent and support people experiencing domestic abuse. We would like you to promote the key messages to your frontline staff and to promote via social media.

### **KEY MESSAGES**

- Domestic abuse services are still in operation
- Police response is business as usual
- Businesses can support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse by referring them to appropriate services and maintaining contact
- Victims are not alone and help is available

## **Definition of domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is defined across Government as any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

## **Prevalence of domestic abuse**

The Crime Survey in 2019 estimated that 2.4 million adults in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the preceding year (5.7% of the adult population)<sup>1</sup>. This equates to around 160,000 adults across the West Midlands region, each year. Violence with Injury (with a domestic abuse marker) comprises 36% of West Midlands Police violence with injury incidents.<sup>2</sup> These statistics are only the tip of the iceberg as the majority of domestic abuse incidents go unreported. Behind every statistic is a person and often a family which suffers.

## **The impact of COVID 19**

The challenge of dealing with the COVID 19 pandemic brings with it extreme measures including lockdown, social distancing, infection control and transmission reduction which requires us to stay in for long periods and reduces our contact with others, even though where we live may not be a safe place. The consequences of COVID-19 infection control measures, whilst challenging for all of us, can pose extra difficulties and risk for those who are living with domestic abuse. Staying indoors is even harder for people whose home is not the haven it should be. Enforced isolation may increase abusive behaviour. It reduces victim's ability to access help and support. Isolation may be used as a tool of coercive and controlling behaviour by perpetrators, as they attempt to shut down victim's routes to safety and support.

Initially reports of domestic abuse and the calls to helplines of support providers were lower than normal and this under reporting highlights the difficulty some people may have in reporting incidents and getting help; due to the lockdown situation. However, recently reports have been increasing. Now more than ever it is vital that we all must play our part in keeping victims safe. Services in the West Midlands are still operating, although using different methods of delivery; remote working has replaced face-to-face contact, advocacy and therapeutic support is now offered via telephone/online, MARAC is running remotely, importantly refuges and housing outreach are still open to support victims in crisis. To further manage the risk spreading COVID-19, some providers are looking into securing alternative self-contained properties as many of the properties used are in form of shared accommodation.

## **Guidance for Professionals**

It is important that we all play our part in keeping victims safe and are able to promote ways to report incidents, such as using apps and the silent solution. When you are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.crimesurvey.co.uk/en/SurveyResults.html>

<sup>2</sup> West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit Strategic Needs Assessment (due to be published shortly)

having contact with the public, check how things are going at home, any problems, concerns.

- Set up a system to review cases that you have where domestic abuse is known to be an issue
- Include links to useful resources on your website, social media and other forms of communication
- Take extra care when speaking to individuals by phone, text or video chat. Assume that their calls and communications are being monitored by a perpetrator living in the home until you have checked that they are able to talk openly. Remember that if the perpetrator is checking their phone, a survivor may be abused if they erase their call logs, text messages, or browser history

### **Responding to a disclosure**

- Safety must always be paramount, in cases of immediate risk always risk 999
- Encourage them to contact specialist support, reassuring them it is a free and confidential service.
- Help them to think about things they can do to protect themselves, using a safety plan such as women's aid
- Record what has been said and refer to your organisation's domestic abuse and safeguarding procedures
- Agree how you will or another person can continue to contact them safely
- When making contact by phone, start conversations by using a generic reason, to reduce the likelihood of raising suspicion. If you do get to the speak with the person you are concerned about, check if it is safe for them to talk openly

A multi-agency West Midlands wide campaign will be launched promoting these methods, information resources and these will be promoted through social media, supermarkets, pharmacies and businesses still operating using the [#noexcuseforabuse](#)

If you are a professional working on the front line domestic abuse services are open and it is important to encourage people experiencing domestic abuse to call them and for you to make referrals as you usually would. Refuges are also operating within the COVID 19 guidance and local authorities have a duty to assist individuals and families who are made homeless due to domestic abuse.

### **Resources for Employers**

Businesses have a role in keeping their employees safe. This can be harder when employees are working remotely. The role of the line manager, if domestic abuse is suspected is to offer support by signposting to domestic abuse support services. It is important for line managers to have regular contact with employees, including via video conferencing, at least once a week. Businesses need to have a clear domestic abuse policy in place and promote this within their organisations.

This [toolkit](#) published by Public Health England (PHE) and Business in the Community provides support to help employers support workers affected by domestic abuse. Now more than ever with remote working line managers can give additional support to employees on domestic abuse.

### **Three key actions for employers to address domestic abuse**

- **Acknowledge.** Use this toolkit to help understand the issues, and acknowledge every employer's responsibility to address domestic abuse. Enable colleagues to openly discuss this topic, and provide a supportive workplace.
- **Respond.** Review your policies and processes to ensure you are providing a supportive workplace and can respond to disclosure. Make sure the policies and processes are implemented correctly.
- **Refer.** Provide access to organisations who can help employees affected by the issue.

[Safe Lives](#) have produced COVID 19 guidance for employers to help support employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse.

The [TUC](#) has also published a helpful resource for Trade union representatives.

West Midlands Combined Authority have developed guidance for employees called [Thrive at Work](#)

### **Key Messages for Professionals to Promote**

The government have confirmed that people who are experiencing domestic abuse can leave home to seek help, including refuges, despite rules to stop coronavirus spreading.

**People experiencing domestic abuse should if  
at immediate risk dial 999.**

### **What Can Victims Do?<sup>3</sup>**

Victims of domestic abuse can take the following steps to safeguard themselves and others:

- Keep a mobile phone close and maintain virtual communications with trusted contacts. Develop a way of raising concerns if you do not contact them for periods of time- use coded messages or safe words, leave curtains or blinds open or use any other agreed method to allow them to raise the alarm if you can't.

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Women's Aid

- If at risk, call 999. Use the Silent Solution system if fearful of being overheard or seen: call 999 then 55 to have the operator transfer the call to emergency services without having to speak.
- Conceal a bag packed with essentials including clothes, money, charger, ID documents/ passport ready to leave quickly, ensure you also have a bag ready for any children too.
- Have taxi numbers in contacts
- Identify someone who is a 'safe space contact' where you can go if there was anything to happen and/or be aware of where police, local services and refuges are.
- Identify areas of the house where there are no weapons and there are ways to escape if an argument occurs.
- Keep weapons such as knives locked away and as inaccessible as possible
- Do not wear scarves or long jewellery which can be used for strangulation

**Asset-Based Approaches – “Make Every “Contact” Count”:** it is imperative within the wider context of reduced face to face contact and social isolation that we all play our part in enabling early intervention to prevent and stop the abuse. Victims will feel particularly alone and suffering in silence therefore robust interagency approaches to provide the best possible care and support across health and social care remains essential. The need for professional and community level vigilance is ever important as normal routes out are reduced. Trust instincts: call the 24-hour free local domestic abuse helpline 0808 800 0340 or 999. Do not talk to the perpetrator as this could escalate the abuse and put people in further danger

### **Support and Advice for Perpetrators**

Those who abuse also need help to control their behaviour and understand why it is happening. Friends, family, professionals should support facing up to how behaviour and violence affects others. The abuse will have serious effects on all involved and those witnessing it, including children. There are helplines offering information and advice to people who are abusive towards their partners and want help to stop 0845 122 8609 and more info can be found at [Respect](#).

### **Resources for Multi-agency teams**

The Government have issued guidance on isolation for domestic abuse safe accommodation settings which can be found [here](#).

Refuges do not need to close unless directed to by Public Health England. If people seeking refuge or children in the refuge show symptoms whilst in a refuge, they should remain in their room and follow the self-isolation guidance for households can be found [here](#).

[Responding to the challenges of COVID -19 Guidance for multi-agency forums](#)

This guidance is to help multi-agency forums flex and respond to the accelerating COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. The potential threat to the health and safety of frontline staff and service users poses a real and immediate challenge for safeguarding families at risk.

### [West Midlands Violence and Abuse Standards](#)

These standards are intended to identify and promote evidence-based, safe and effective practice in working with adult and child victims of domestic abuse, and to ensure perpetrators are held to account increasingly effectively.

The Domestic Abuse and Housing Alliance (DAHA) have produced [guidance and resources for housing providers](#) on responding to domestic abuse during the current crisis.

[IRIS](#) – Resources have been made available through Clinical Commissioning Groups to train GP's so that they can recognise domestic abuse. Women can gain access to services through their general practice. This is currently being offered remotely via telephone consultation. Pregnant women who experience domestic abuse can be referred to services via their midwives in the usual way.

Updated guidance from [HM's Courts and Tribunal Service on applying for a domestic abuse](#) injunction as an unrepresented applicant during the coronavirus outbreak

## Resources

### National Resources

[National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) Freephone Helpline, [0808 2000 247](#)

[Galop](#) - for members of the LGBT+ community [Galop](#) runs the National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse helpline. Telephone: 0800 999 5428 Email: [help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

[SupportLine](#): provide telephone helpline and email counselling service.

[Women's aid](#) provide survivors forum, a live chat Monday to Friday 10- 12pm and emails

[Safelives](#): provides research, training and support to frontline domestic abuse services and professionals

[National Centre for Domestic Violence \(NCDV\)](#): Provides free and fast emergency injunction advice to individuals experiencing domestic abuse

[Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#): National Stalking Helpline

Home Office: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): support for victims of domestic abuse](#)

Department for Education: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for children's social care services](#)

[Rape Crisis England and Wales](#) Rape Crisis Centres provide [specialist support and services](#) for survivors of sexual violence, whether it happened recently or a long time ago. Tel : 0808 802 9999

[Men's Advice Line](#) is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and those supporting them. Telephone: 0808 801 0327

### **Useful Apps /info for victims**

[Hollie Gazzard Trust](#): Free downloadable personal safety app available

[BrightSky App](#) Free downloadable app: providing support and information for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or someone concerned about a friend or family member. In addition, the app is available for use by employers and service providers.

### **Support if you are worried about hurting someone**

If you are concerned that you or someone you know may be an abuser, there is support available. [Respect](#) is an anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are harming their partners and families. The helpline also takes calls from (ex)partners, friends and relatives who are concerned about perpetrators.

Telephone: 0808 802 4040

## **West Midlands Resources**

[Victim Support West Midlands](#) **0300 303 1977**

**West Midlands Forced Marriage** 24hr helpline **0800 953 9777**

### **Birmingham:**

[Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid](#) **0808 800 0028**

[Bharosa](#) is a domestic abuse service for ethnic minority women living in Birmingham. The service is confidential for women and young girls over the age of 16. Tel: 0121 303 0368.

Birmingham Housing Options Hub: 0808 169 9604

Birmingham Council Housing: 0121 303 7410 or 0121 303 2296/4806

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk>

Adult Social Care: 0121 303 1234 or 0121 675 4806

Children's Social Care: 0121 303 1888 or 0121 675 4806

## **Coventry**

[Safe To Talk](#) helpline: 0800 111 4998

[Coventry Haven](#) Tel: 02476 444 077

[Panahghar](#), an Urdu word for "safe house," is a charity based in Coventry that aims to help Asian woman and their families in the region who have experienced domestic abuse.

Coventry Council Housing: Housing Options 02476 834 025. Homelessness

Adult Social Care: Telephone: 024 7683 3003 Adults

Children's Social Care: 024 7678 8555 or out of hours: 024 7683 2222.

## **Dudley**

SPOC: 01384 455411

[Black Country Women's Aid](#) Tel: 0121 553 0090

Dudley Council Housing. Tel: 0300 555 2345 or email [dutytorefer@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer@dudley.gov.uk)

Adult Social Care. Tel:0300 555 0055

Children's Social Care. Tel: 0300 555 0050

Out of hours adults & children) 0300 555 8574

## **Sandwell:**

[Black Country Women's Aid](#) Tel: 0121 553 0090

Sandwell Council Housing Solutions. Tel: 0121 368 1166 or 0121 569 6883

Adult Social Care. Tel: 0121 569 2266 Out of hours: 0121 569 2355.

Sandwell Children's Trust. Tel: 0121 569 3100

## **Solihull**

[Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid](#) Tel: 0808 800 0028 .

Email: [info@bswaid.org](mailto:info@bswaid.org)

Adult Social Care: 0121 704 8007 or 0121 605 6060

Children's Social Care: 0121 788 4333 or out of hours 0121 605 6060

Solihull Council Housing. Housing Options – Homeless Services

0121 717 1515 . Text: 07781 474 722

Email: [info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)

## **Walsall:**

[Black Country Women's Aid](#). Tel: 01922 649569

Walsall Council Housing. Tel: 01922 652250

Adult Social Care. Tel: 0300 555 2922.

Children's Social Care: 0300 555 2866

## **Wolverhampton:**

[The Haven Wolverhampton](#) Tel: **08000 194 400**. Online chat (Mon–Fri 9am- 5pm)

E-mail: [info@havenrefuge.org.uk](mailto:info@havenrefuge.org.uk)

[St Georges Hub for support for male victims](#) Tel: 01902 421904

Wolverhampton Council Housing. Housing Options - Homeless Services 01902 554747 Homelessness

Adult Social Care. Tel: 01902 551199

Children's Social Care. Tel: 01902 555392

## **Sexual Violence Support**

National

[The Survivors Trust](#):

[Rape Crisis England and Wales](#)

Regional Resources

[Black Country Women's Aid](https://blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk/): <https://blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk/>

[RSVP, Birmingham and Solihull](#):

[CRASAC, Coventry](#)

## **Support for Children**

Rights of Women have produced [guidance on COVID-19 and child contact arrangements](#)

[Children's Commissioner Guide to coronavirus](#)

[childline](#) :Tel: 0800 1111

**If you are interested in finding out more, here are some useful links**

For useful information about safety planning and domestic abuse support, read The Women's Aid Handbook at: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/>

If you are in a refuge, the Government have issued guidance on isolation for domestic abuse safe accommodation settings which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-provision/covid-19-guidance-on-isolation-for-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-settings>

Refuges do not need to close unless directed to by Public Health England. If you or your children show symptoms whilst in a refuge, you should remain in your own room and follow the self-isolation guidance for households as follows: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

*This is not an exhaustive list, if you can't find the support you need here please contact one of the national support services who hold directories of local services*

