

COVID 19 – GUIDANCE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHERE DOMESTIC ABUSE IS KNOWN OR SUSPECTED

COVID-19 means that we are being asked to stay at home and isolate ourselves as much as we can. This will have very real consequences for people experiencing domestic abuse and can be very frightening, particularly if they are living with someone who is harming them. The usual ways in which we ask about abuse and support people who are experiencing it are no longer an option. Phone and video consultations are being used by most health professionals in place of face-to-face consultations. We have used 'she' in this guidance as the vast majority of domestic abuse survivors are women. However, it applies equally to any men you may be supporting.

This guidance aims to inform safe telephone and video consultations with people who you know or suspect to be experiencing domestic abuse.

If you suspect someone is experiencing domestic abuse, you should start gently by saying that, given the reduction in face-to-face contact, you are calling to check in and make sure they're ok. Reassure them that you take their safety and wellbeing very seriously and that you are there to help.

ASK

- Ask if it is safe to talk – a simple 'yes' or 'no' will do.
- If it is not safe to talk, ask if there is a safe time to call – you might need to offer suggestions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'. Remember that situations can change quickly.
- Ask if she is alone and make sure the perpetrator is not in the same room. Ask her to terminate the call if the perpetrator enters the room.
- Ask if she feels safe and if advise calling 999 if there is any immediate danger. Offer to do this for her.
- Use 'closed' questions when asking about safety which will allow her to share information with you even if she cannot talk freely.

RESPOND

- Validate her experience and let her know that you believe her and that her situation is not her fault.
- Try to find out what support she has and might need.

RISK ASSESS

- Ask the if the abuse is getting worse.
- Ask if she feels unsafe to stay in the home/is in immediate danger.
- If she says yes, she feels unsafe to stay in the home/is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

REFER/SIGNPOST

- Consider whether an adult or child protection referral is needed and follow your own procedures. Discuss with your Team Leader, colleagues, or other professionals if you need further advice and guidance.
- Consider whether you, or one of your colleagues, can call again, to offer support and agree what timeframe for this is realistic and appropriate.
- Make sure you are aware of and can share contact details for local services in your area and the national helpline – details are at the end of this document.
- Make her aware of online support; you can either signpost them to relevant websites or text/email the details if safe to do so. Links are provided below.

RECORD

- Make sure you document all enquiries, disclosures and referrals on the appropriate record(s).
- Document any concerns that you have, even if she does not disclose domestic abuse.

EAST AYRSHIRE WOMEN'S AID

Telephone: 01563 536001

Email: info@eastayrshirewomensaid.org.uk

Website: www.eastayrshirewomensaid.org.uk

NORTH AYRSHIRE WOMEN'S AID

Telephone: 01294 602424

Email: admin@nawomensaid.co.uk

Website: www.nawomensaid.com

SOUTH AYRSHIRE WOMEN'S AID

Telephone: 01292 266482

Email: support@sawamail.org.uk

Website: www.southayrshirewomensaid.org.uk

NATIONAL HELPLINES :

SCOTLAND 24 HOUR DOMESTIC ABUSE AND FORCED MARRIAGE HELPLINE

– 0800 027 1234

MEN'S ADVICE LINE – 0808 8010327

USEFUL LINKS:

<https://womensaid.scot/covid-19/>

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/making-a-safety-plan/#1447928982294-e2f74007-ab73>.

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/SafeLives%27%20Dash%20Risk%20Checklist%20-%20Scottish%20Version.pdf>