

DOMESTIC ABUSE DURING SELF-ISOLATION, SHIELDING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING



CORONAVIRUS MAY NOT BE THE ONLY DANGER IN SOMEONE'S LIFE

At a time when we are all being advised to socially distance and self-isolate, understandably survivors may feel that their options are limited. They are unlikely to be able to go to any social groups which may have provided them with some breathing space. Services will be limiting their face-to-face contact and survivors may not be able to meet with someone who has previously been a support.

Whilst research tells us domestic abuse affects women more often and more severely than men, please be vigilant to the needs of all clients at this time.

It is important we remind survivors that they still have options.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse often use isolation to control their partners and limit their options. During the pandemic, there is more opportunity for perpetrators to use these tactics. Perpetrators may use current fears and anxiety around COVID-19 to further control their partner and to justify their own behaviour. This can be difficult to identify as controlling, at a time when so many of us are being advised to stay safe at home. Therefore it is important we are asking;

How could the perpetrator use the pandemic to limit the survivor's space for

Don't assume that the home is the safest place for them.

Ask:

- What are your fears?
- What feels safest for you just now?

Be clear: If they need to leave, they can. Police Scotland, Women's Aid and Local Housing can assist. Whether they decide to leave or not, it is important we review all safety plans with survivors, incorporating the current situation, and what the perpetrator's pattern of behaviour is likely to look like.

SAFETY PLANNING

Remind survivors to keep their mobile phone with them, charged and switched on.

Ask the survivor to create code words or phrases to alert family or friends if they feel in danger. If using video messaging, i.e. FaceTime or Zoom, consider whether a visual prompt could be used instead of a code word. Ask them to be clear what they would like family or friends to do; phone the police? Make excuse and hang up?

Discuss a safety plan with children – use a code word to let children know when they should leave the house. Be clear with them where they should go.

If possible advise them to keep documents, some money and essentials in a safe place that can be accessed in an emergency.

Discuss formulating an escape plan, think about the quickest routes out of the house.

If the perpetrator's behaviour is escalating advise that they try to avoid danger areas in the home i.e. the kitchen or any room where there is likely to be sharp objects.

Domestic Abuse services are adapting and using more technology to provide support. It is important we are aware of whether the perpetrator monitors any devices and find out the safest way and best times to contact the survivor.

Discuss whether it is safe to have emergency numbers. Can they be saved in the phone under another name i.e. Health Visitor?

Remind survivors that housing options remain available to them. If they are homeless or at risk of homelessness and require temporary accommodation they can contact Housing on the numbers under Local Services.

It is important to remember that during this unprecedented time, anyone experiencing abuse continues to have the right and options to seek support or report a crime.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL SERVICES

Support services continue to be available and are developing their support to ensure they can reach out to those in need.

East Ayrshire Women's Aid:
01563 536 001

North Ayrshire Women's Aid:
01294 602 424

South Ayrshire Women's Aid:
01292 266 482

The Star Centre (Rape Crisis):
01563 544 686

Scotland's National Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline (24hr): 0808 2000 247

Email: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

Scottish Women's Rights Centre: 08088 010 789

Victim Support Scotland: 0800 160 1985

East Ayrshire Housing Options:
01563 554 400
Out of hours: 0345 724 0000

South Ayrshire Housing Options
0300 123 0900
Out of hours: 0808 100 3151

North Ayrshire Housing Options:
01292 314 600
Out of Hours: 0800 0196500