

Domestic Abuse

Managing risk during COVID 19

During lockdown the risk to some vulnerable children and adults is likely to increase. Along with other forms of harm, an increase in domestic abuse is a real risk. Here are some ideas that you can use to help manage risk in families where you are concerned about current or emerging family conflict.

Help families plan how to adjust and cope

Having to adjust to the new restrictions in place can be unsettling and provoke anxiety. For some families this can present challenges and increased risk. Talking to families openly about how they are coping and helping them plan is important. This might include:

- Having a daily family routine which includes agreed time together and apart including time out of the house in line with government guidance. IntraQuest are providing free resources on their website: <https://www.intraquest.co.uk/covid-19/>
- Considering if they are eligible to access childcare provision;
- Where safe to do so, support parents to predict the times of the day that may be more difficult for them to manage, for example activities that could trigger risk factors leading to increased stress and conflict. Family plans will obviously be specific to individual need, however the key aim is to work with parents to anticipate risk and triggers so they can plan in advance about how to cope;
- Working with parents and children to draw up a family agreement or weekly/daily planner could be a good way forward. This could be done over the phone, by video call or in person for those at most risk - while following the government's social distancing and hygiene advice.

Specific safety planning

Safety planning (where possible and relevant) should adopt a whole family approach including victims, perpetrators, children and other adults at risk.

Safety planning for victims, children and vulnerable adults

While general advice is to stay at home because of the COVID 19 pandemic, if adults and children feel at risk of imminent harm, or are involved in an incident of domestic abuse, they should where possible seek help and remove themselves to a place of safety outside of the home, or if not possible within.

It's important that the current restrictions around social distancing and mobility don't stop those at risk protecting themselves. You can help them think about options. Discuss where they can flee to if needed e.g. is there a neighbour they can rely on? What if that neighbour is isolating, is there an alternative?

Given the current circumstances creating safety plans with those at risk may be challenging. Where a perpetrator is at home, keeping a written copy is not safe so verbal planning may be the best option. When, how and where the discussion around safety planning takes place should be carefully considered without the perpetrator present. You could establish a code word which can be used to show it is safe to speak.

The IDVA Service are providing online Safety planning advice for professionals from 1 – 1.30pm each weekday. To book a place, email Sue Warren: Sue.warren@oldham.gov.uk

Safety planning with perpetrators

Where possible perpetrators must be supported to manage their own behaviour. While not relevant for all of those who perpetrate abuse, using a 'Time Out' tool can be an effective emergency strategy to de-escalate risk situations. This is particularly effective when planned and

discussed in conjunction with a partner. This is so that they are aware that time out can be used as an emergency tool to avoid conflict escalating and allow space for one or both parties to calm down before attempting to deal with the issue in a more productive way.

Respect Phonenumber - 0808 802 0321

The Respect Phonenumber is a national, confidential and anonymous helpline for anyone concerned about their violence or abuse towards a partner or ex-partner. A team of skilled professionals can offer advice, information and support to help perpetrators stop being violent and abusive to their partner.

Respect is also currently offering a web chat to speak to someone online rather than over the phone.

<https://respectphonenumber.org.uk/>

Separated parents' contact with children

Government advice currently is that children under the age of 18 can move between homes in which they spend time on a regular basis, for example between separated or divorced carers.

Advice is that consideration needs to be given to how transitions between homes are managed, so as far as possible not using public transport and following social distancing advice while moving and on arrival between parents/carers. If either home is under quarantine because someone is showing symptoms of the COVID 19 virus, or because they have met someone who has the virus, this should take precedence over trying to maintain normal arrangements.

Further advice is available for parents via the Cafcass website on effective co-parenting, child arrangements and family proceedings. This can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/parents-and-carers/covid-19-guidance-for-children-and-families/>

Key support for victims

As always, if you or someone else is in immediate danger, please ring 999 and ask for the police. If you can't speak, you can ring 999 then press 55 when prompted. This is called the Silent Solution system:

<https://policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-silent-solution-system>

- Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge on **0808 2000 247**, or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline: **0800 999 5428**
- Men's Advice Line: **0808 801 0327**
- Respect helpline (for anyone worried about their own behaviour): **0808 802 0321**
- Oldham Housing Options service: **0161 770 4605**
- Oldham Independent Domestic Violence Adviser service: **0161 770 1572** (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm)
- Paladin National Stalking Helpline: www.stalkinghelpline.org **0808 802 0300**
- Women's Aid website which provides information, victim support and a live chat facility: www.womensaid.org.uk
- Samaritans are available to listen to concerns 24 hours a day 365 days per year. They can be called free at any time, from any phone on **116 123**. Or email jo@samaritans.org

Bright Sky app by Hestia (may not be safe for a victim at this current time if living with the perpetrator) Bright Sky is a free to download mobile app, providing support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know. The app is also designed to be used by specialist and non-specialist practitioners and for anyone looking for information about issues around domestic abuse such as online safety, stalking and harassment and sexual consent.