

Domestic Abuse during coronavirus

April 2020

The OMG on Domestic Abuse can be accessed here <https://www.portsmouthscp.org.uk/>
This guidance is for professionals to consider alternative support options during coronavirus lockdown.

For victims of domestic abuse; self or household isolation could mean they are at additional risk of abuse, trapped in their homes with their partners who use abusive or unhealthy behaviours and isolated from the people and the resources that could help them.

Government guidance is clear that the household isolation instruction as a result of coronavirus does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse.

What to do if a victim, or anyone else, is in danger?

In an emergency the police should be called on 999.

If someone is unable to talk on the phone, dial 999, listen to the questions from the operator and respond by coughing or tapping the handset if they can. Then follow the instructions depending on whether they are calling from a mobile or a landline.

- If calling 999 from a mobile
If prompted, press 55 to [Make Yourself Heard](#) - this will transfer the call to the police. Pressing 55 only works on mobiles and does not allow police to track your location.
- If calling 999 from a landline
If only background noise can be heard and BT operators cannot decide whether an emergency service is needed, then they will be connected to a police call handler. If they replace the handset, the landline may remain connected for 45 seconds in case they pick up again. When 999 calls are made from landlines, information about the person's location should be automatically available to the call handlers to help provide a response.

Contacting families and clients over the phone

During coronavirus, many contacts with families and clients are over the phone. This is a good opportunity to check how things have been because of lockdown and whether any risks have increased, including because of misuse of alcohol or worsening mental health and is an opportunity to ask if there are any changes in their relationship. In preparation for this:

- Adjust your communication style depending on the individual's needs (e.g. if they have a learning disability).
- Check who else is in the house / room where the person is.
- Ask about what support they have, how they are managing with isolation/schools closing/social distancing.
- Ask if they feel safe.

- Consider use of ‘closed’ questions when asking about safety – questions with ‘yes/no’ answers may help a victim of abuse share that they are being harmed
- Encourage and promote ongoing social support and contact with their friends and family through virtual means e.g. by phone, video chat.
- Know who your local domestic abuse agencies are and how you can refer clients to them at this time so you can get agreement.
- Think "whole family" and follow local safeguarding procedures. The PSCP has developed [guidance](#) for those making calls to families.
- Refer to MARAC if you feel the victim is at high risk of domestic abuse.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Support for victims and those who use abusive or unhealthy relationships

Support for the victim is dependent on the level of risk. The Safe Lives DASH¹ risk assessment should be used to consider risk with high risk victims being referred to the MARAC and Portsmouth IDVA Project, medium risk victims to Stop Domestic Abuse Service and standard risk victims to Victim Care service.

Referral information for victims and those who use abusive or unhealthy behaviours in their relationships and want to change is available on the [PSCP](#) website. All support is available but currently being offered virtually.

If you are **unsure who to contact**, either yourself or the victim can contact Stop Domestic Abuse

- on 023 9206 5494 from 9am – 9pm Monday to Friday and 10am – 6pm weekends and bank holidays.
- They have also started to offer a virtual drop in service for victims who cannot access a phone. Victims can contact a support worker via messenger on 09:30 to 11:30am, 3pm to 5pm and 6pm to 8pm Monday to Friday. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Southerndas/>

Aurora New Dawn have introduced a **24 hour telephone support service** during the coronavirus lockdown (02394 216816). This is not an emergency number.

National agencies who offer advice, help & support include:

- **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** Freephone 24hr 0808 2000 247. Online support: www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Contact-us
- **Rape Crisis** National Helpline 0808 802 9999 12.00 -14.30 and 19.00 – 21.30 every day. Online support: www.rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/want-to-talk
- **LGBT+** Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 999 5428
- **Men’s Advice Line for male victims** of domestic abuse: 0808 801 0327 or www.mensadviceline.org.uk
- The Mix, **free remote counselling** and help for under 25’s: 0808 808 4994
- **Rights of Women** legal advice lines: www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice/advice-lines
- For **domestic abuse perpetrators and those supporting them** Respect Phone line provides a confidential helpline, email and web chat service: 0808 8024040 or www.respectphoneline.org.uk
- **Childline** - call 0800 1111 or access online: <https://www.childline.org.uk>

¹ Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence