

## **Domestic abuse guidance for professionals in Blackpool during the COVID19 lockdown**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2020**

We know that this is a difficult and worrying time for everyone – but particularly so for adults and children living with domestic abuse, and the professionals working hard to support them. It is imperative that we give the message to victims and families that we are still actively working to support them in this situation and will continue to ensure that protecting them from domestic abuse is a priority. Measures can be taken to help victims and their children feel safe at home, and to ensure we have the appropriate response to enable victims and children to leave home when they are at risk there. Understandably, we need to think differently about how this is achieved and adapt our practice to respond in these exceptional circumstances.

The support and intervention we offer the family, including perpetrators of domestic abuse will be crucial in reducing risk.

Early national indicators suggest that there has been increase in incidents of domestic abuse during the pandemic. Government guidance<sup>1</sup> has made it clear that the household isolation instruction does not apply to those who need to leave their home due to domestic abuse.

It essential that all frontline practitioners with a role in safeguarding victims and families take time to review each of their cases to consider the risk posed to victims of domestic abuse and, where appropriate, their children by:

- Increased time at home
- Increased proximity to the person causing harm
- Increased emotional and financial stress
- Increased isolation
- Reduced family and social support
- Reduced professional oversight
- Increased risk of illness

Practitioners should follow their own agency specific guidance for assessment and recording within case management systems.

Following on from the government's updated advice and measures to enforce lock down measures announced on 23 March 2020, this guidance sets out temporary arrangements in Blackpool for the following:

- 1) Safety Planning and Harm Reduction
- 2) Emergency Housing Options for victims wanting to leave a household
- 3) Statutory and Specialist Safeguarding Services
- 4) Broader Community Support

Appendix A provides a directory of predominantly web based resources and provision that remains available.

We expect that further guidance and temporary amendments to legislation and standards relating to domestic abuse and services delivered to victims and families will be provided in due course, and this guidance will be amended and updated when this becomes available.

### **1) Safety and Harm Reduction Planning**

It may feel like a challenge to consider how to safety plan during the current situation when much of the existing advice needs to be varied to respond the coronavirus pandemic in line with government guidance. However, this is also a real opportunity to think in a different way about how this can be achieved with

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

everyone in the family. Safety planning needs to be creative and flexible, maximising opportunity for safe communication between vulnerable families and as many different services as practical, thereby keeping these families in sight. Safety and harm reduction plans should be reviewed with all victims and families that practitioners are working with, where there is a known concern/risk in relation to domestic abuse.

Safe Lives have produced advice regarding safety planning for victims in the current circumstances:

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safety%20planning%20guide,%20victims%20and%20survivors,%20COVID-19.pdf>

Respect have produced advice for professionals working with perpetrators of domestic abuse: [https://hubble-](https://hubble-live-)

[assets.s3.amazonaws.com/respect/redactor2\\_assets/files/81/Respect\\_Covid19\\_Guidance\\_for\\_DA\\_Practitioners\\_March\\_2020.pdf](https://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/respect/redactor2_assets/files/81/Respect_Covid19_Guidance_for_DA_Practitioners_March_2020.pdf)

## **2) Emergency Housing options for victims wanting to leave a household**

Victims and their children are allowed to leave home to seek safe accommodation or refuge and government guidelines regarding social distancing or self-isolation does not prevent this. It is vitally important that all victims, and families are given this advice and do not feel that they have no other option than to remain in their home with someone who is abusing them.

Blackpool Council Housing Options service will continue to provide a frontline service for those who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, including victims of domestic abuse and their children.

They can be contacted on 01253 477760 or at [housing.options@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@blackpool.gov.uk) with more full information available here: <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Housing/Housing-options/Housing-and-homelessness-advice.aspx> A drop in service, limited to those who are homeless that immediate day and have no access to a phone, is available Monday – Friday 1pm – 4:30pm at the Chapel Street office.

Refuge provision for families and single people remains available and can be accessed through Fylde Coast Women's Aid on 01253 596699 or by completing the referral form here:

<https://www.fcwa.co.uk/adults/refuge/>

Refuge and temporary accommodation will be hard to locate during this period. As such, alternative safe accommodation with family or friends may be the most appropriate outcome during this period.

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline can also provide advice about housing and refuges

Telephone: 0808 2000 247 (24 hours)

Email: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk)

Live chat: <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk> (weekdays 10 am to 2 pm)

Domestic Violence Assist are a registered national charity who can arrange Non-Molestation Orders, Prohibited Steps Orders and Occupation Orders and can be contacted on 0800 195 8699 or

[support@dvassist.org.uk](mailto:support@dvassist.org.uk)

## **3) Statutory and Specialist Safeguarding Services**

### **a) Adult social care**

Safeguarding concerns in relation to adults at risk should continue to be made to Adult Social Care in accordance with standard procedures. They can be contacted on 01253 477592 (office hours) or 01253 477600 (out of office hours). If the person is in immediate danger the Police should be contacted on 999.

Under the Care Act 2014 safeguarding duties apply to an adult aged over 18 who has care and support needs (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); **and** is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse

or neglect; **and** as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect. Domestic abuse is listed as a specific category of abuse.

Further information is available here: <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Health-and-social-care/Social-care-for-adults/Adult-social-services/Safeguarding-adults.aspx>

## **b) Children's social care**

Safeguarding concerns in relation to children should be referred to the Blackpool MASH in accordance with standard procedures. Initial contact with the MASH can be made on 01253 477299 (weekdays 9am – 5pm), with written referrals submitted to [duty.assessment@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:duty.assessment@blackpool.gov.uk) If you believe a child is at immediate risk of harm the Police should be contacted on 999.

Out of hours the Emergency Duty Team remains available, on 01253 477299, to deal with emergency safeguarding situations for both children and adults.

While some agencies within the MASH are working remotely, all calls will continue to be answered by a qualified social worker and referrals will be triaged by multi-agency partners. It remains the expectation that the person with parental responsibility has consented to the information being shared, unless it is judged that doing so would increase risk of harm to the child.

As has been the case since September 2019, an IDVA and CIDVA, employed by Fylde Coast Women's Aid (FCWA), are based within the MASH and will screen standard and medium risk DA referrals from the Police and any other partner agency referrals with a DA element. They will make initial calls to victims, complete safety planning and refer on to other services as appropriate, including for longer term IDVA support (male victims will be contacted by the male IDVA employed by FCWA). All high risk Police referrals are forwarded to the commissioned provider, Safenet.

The Children's Services and Early Help Hub advice line remains open to provide advice to professionals working with a family about available services and interventions on 01253 478959 (weekdays 9am – 5pm; Friday to 4:30pm).

More full information and forms are available here: <https://www.blackpoolsafeguarding.org.uk/for-professionals/early-help-and-thresholds-for-intervention>

Where a child is already open to Children's Social Care, professionals in partner agencies can submit information to be uploaded on to the Children's Services' case management system, Mosaic, to [children.partners.update@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:children.partners.update@blackpool.gov.uk) This address should not be used for information that requires an immediate safeguarding response.

Children's social care will undertake assessments in accordance with their statutory responsibilities and, where appropriate, will convene an Initial Child Protection Conference, which will be held as a virtual meeting. The conference will be held in accordance with the principles of Blackpool Families Rock.

Social Workers are continuing to undertake home visits to a small proportion of children who are identified as being at the highest risk, with the remainder of children receiving virtual visits or telephone contact according to their specific needs. Given that many of the services that would be included within plans are currently unavailable, families with voluntary plans (child in need or for early help delivered by the Families in Need team) are being contacted to discuss whether their plan should be closed. Where this is agreed they are provided with a pack of resources, information about alternative sources of support and how to self-refer for future support.

### **c) Specialist DA provision**

#### **Safenet**

Safenet is the commissioned provider of IDVA services to victims of high risk DA incidents and will automatically receive a referral following the incident. The Safenet IDVAs have instigated a personal Covid safety plan for all their existing service users and will be maintaining contact with them virtually during this time, with some face to face contact for court hearings or other urgent needs. Service users will be regularly contacted to ensure their safety and welfare.

Safenet has introduced 'live chat' support through their website which is available daily 10am – 12pm, 2pm – 4pm and 8pm – 10pm at [www.safenet.org.uk](http://www.safenet.org.uk) All contacts will be taken by specialist DA practitioners and can provide:

- safety advice and planning,
- emotional support,
- referral to safe accommodation
- access to online resources and interventions to support safety and recovery from domestic abuse.

Service users can contact Safenet on 0300 3033581 (24 hours) or [contact@safenet.org.uk](mailto:contact@safenet.org.uk)

#### **Fylde Coast Women's Aid (FCWA)**

The FCWA IDVA service provides floating support to DA victims who do not fall into the criteria for the Safenet commissioned service and also provide a specialist service for male victims of DA. IDVAs are continuing to provide support to service users virtually and the Helpline remains open on 01253 596699 (Monday – Thursday 9am – 8pm; Friday – Sunday 12pm – 8pm). The FCWA office can be contacted on 01253 752014. Referrals are still being accepted and can be made here: <https://www.fcwa.co.uk/adults/idva-independent-domestic-abuse-advisor/>

#### **Empowerment**

CIDVAs from the Den are maintaining contact with children by WhatsApp, either directly for older children, or as part of family groups for younger children. They are also delivering activity packs directly to children's homes on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, which will enable them to check on the welfare of the child (the pack will be branded as if it was from Headstart so as not to increase the risk). Professionals can refer to the service on 0300 32 32 100 (option 3), or [admin@empowermentcharity.org.uk](mailto:admin@empowermentcharity.org.uk) or at <http://www.empowermentcharity.org.uk/the-den/>

#### **Lancashire Victim Services**

LVS provide a service to all victims of crime, including a specialist IDVA service, and can be contacted on 0300 323 0085 (Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm, Saturday 9am – 5pm) or [info@lancashirevictimservices.org](mailto:info@lancashirevictimservices.org) with live chat available at [www.lancashirevictimservices.org/](http://www.lancashirevictimservices.org/)

#### **Nest Lancashire**

Nest Lancashire are the service for anyone who has been affected by crime, bullying, threats or harassment who is aged 8-18. The child does not have to have been the direct victim and the incident does not have to have been recorded as a criminal offence for Nest Lancashire to become involved. They can be contacted on 0300 111 0323 or [info@nestlancashire.org](mailto:info@nestlancashire.org) or at [www.nestlancashire.org](http://www.nestlancashire.org)

### **d) Lancashire Constabulary**

The police are still responding to all domestic abuse incidents and where necessary will consider arresting the perpetrator. Criminal investigations will continue to be investigated and submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service, with consideration given to a Domestic Violence Prevention Order (DVPO), where applicable.

When attending any non-domestic abuse incidents officers will be vigilant for the signs, consider the history at addresses and try to speak with family members separately to see if everything is OK. Officers will continue

to apply the principles of the Lancashire Constabulary Think Child campaign to ensure that the impact of any incident on children in the household is considered.

Operation Encompass notifications will continue to be submitted to schools the morning following a domestic abuse incident, to allow schools to check on the welfare of their children, whether they are attending school or not.

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents will continue to complete DASH questionnaires with victims, signpost to relevant services and share PSR with partner agencies through the MASH.

MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) meetings continue to be held in accordance with existing process, albeit virtually.

Victims can be encouraged to use the Silent Solutions System. If they call 999 from a mobile phone and do not speak, but then dial 55, the call will be diverted to a Police call handler who will respond accordingly, although they cannot trace the location of the call. This does not work from landlines, however silent landline calls will be passed to a Police call handler who is able to trace the call.

## **e) Health**

### **Primary Care**

GP appointments remain available throughout the lockdown and, whether these are conducted virtually or face to face, clinicians will remain alert to the potential of DA. The IRIS DA service will continue, this provides all staff within GP surgeries a quick and direct referral route to a DA advocate who can provide support for victims and signposting for perpetrators of abuse.

### **Blackpool Teaching Hospitals community based services**

The BTH IDVA and ISVA service continues to be available for all BTH patients and staff, with an expanded service to cover the delivery of urgent care services from Whitegate Drive health centre.

Midwifery, Health Visiting, Child Looked After and Awaken nursing services all continue to be delivered and will have face to face contact with children where there is an urgent need to do so, including where there are DA concerns. The Exploitation nursing service remit has been expanded to cover children who experience domestic abuse and other violence during this period.

### **Operation Provide**

Lancashire Constabulary and Blackpool Teaching Hospitals are working together to provide an enhanced police and health response to DA during the current lockdown. This will include the identification and proactive targeting of known perpetrators, while recent victims will be contacted by IDVA services, where it is safe to do so. A police DA car, with specialist police officers and BTH IDVA and ISVAs, will attend all DA incidents to provide early IDVA support to victims (IDVA coverage is not 24 hours, but contact will be made at the earliest possible opportunity when the incident is not attended). Pop up stalls are being used in supermarkets (currently Tesco, Asda and Morrisons) to raise public awareness about DA, but will also be staffed by IDVAs so they can be used as a safe space to point victims toward at times of crisis. Training has also been provided to pharmacies and distributors of food parcels to enable them to spot signs of DA. The IDVAs can be contacted via Michelle Sheridan on 07525804520 or [michellesheridan@nhs.net](mailto:michellesheridan@nhs.net)

## **f) National Probation Service**

All National Probation Services (NPS) cases have been risk assessed since the start of the lockdown, with specific consideration of domestic abuse and safeguarding risks, irrespective of the original offence. NPS will be maintaining required levels of supervision through a mix of office visits, door step visits, video and telephone calls, dependent on risk. NPS supervising officers can be contacted by multi-agency professionals to co-ordinate contact and visits with either the NPS service user, or other household members where it

might be safer to make contact while the NPS service user is out of the address. During the lockdown Blackpool probation office reception can be contacted on 07773184755 (weekdays 9am – 5pm).

#### **4) Broader Community Support**

In addition to a heightened risk of DA, the wider needs of adults and children living with DA are likely to become more acute during a period of lockdown. These needs are likely to be exacerbated by changes and reductions to available support services. The following services do, however continue to be available:

##### **Corona Kindness**

The Corona Kindness helpline is available for vulnerable residents who have either received a shielding letter or who need to isolate for a shorter period (14 days) due to a household member being symptomatic. A wide range of assistance can be provided, with typical requests being around food shopping, collections of medical supplies/ prescriptions, social isolation and loneliness. Households can also be considered for food parcels through the helpline.

The helpline can be contacted on 0808 196 3080 or at [helpneeded@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:helpneeded@blackpool.gov.uk) and is open Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm. More full information is available at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Campaigns/Coronavirus/Corona-Kindness.aspx>

##### **Lancashire Women**

Lancashire Women can provide wide ranging packages of support to women, which could include mental health and wellbeing; employment skills and support; money, benefits and debt advice; etc.

To comply with social distancing guidelines the Blackpool Women's Centre is currently closed and all groupwork is suspended, however they are still able to provide virtual support and are accepting new referrals which can be made as either self or professional referrals here:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=YvQClyHjN0y1SgoJWi-Zcd\\_IRneFHe9DgkEmcNr1XAJUMFc0MVdGNkdIUU85RFpIWVo3V1I5TEhTViQIQCN0PWcu](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=YvQClyHjN0y1SgoJWi-Zcd_IRneFHe9DgkEmcNr1XAJUMFc0MVdGNkdIUU85RFpIWVo3V1I5TEhTViQIQCN0PWcu)

##### **Mental health support**

Details of a range of local organisations that provide mental health and emotional wellbeing support for adults and children are available here: <https://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/MentalHealthSupport>

There are a range of resources for professionals working with children and young people here: <https://www.healthyyoungmindslsc.co.uk/information/professionals>

**The above information is correct at the time of writing. Please notify any changes to [paul.threlfall@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:paul.threlfall@blackpool.gov.uk)**

## Appendix A

### National Organisations

- National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV); provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence regardless of financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation. Phone 0800 970 2070 <https://www.ncdv.org.uk/contact>
- Respect; help for male and female perpetrators. Phone 0808 802 4040 (weekdays 9am-5pm), webchat (Wed, Thurs, Fri 10-11am and 3-4pm), Email: [info@respectphoneline.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphoneline.org.uk) <https://respectphoneline.org.uk>
- The Men's Advice Line; confidential advice for men experiencing domestic violence. Phone 0808 801 0327 (weekdays 9am-5pm) <https://mensadviceline.org.uk>
- Women's Aid online chat service; (weekdays 10am – 2pm) <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/>
- Rights of Women; advice line providing free legal advice to women in a number of areas of law. See website for phone numbers and hours which vary according to area of law required. <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/getadvice/advice-lines/>
- For Baby's Sake; a programme for expectant parents, whether together as a couple or not, who want to bring an end to domestic abuse and create the best start for their baby delivered in Blackpool as part of the Better Start programme. Phone 01253 951199 [forbabysake@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:forbabysake@blackpool.gov.uk) [www.forbabysake.org.uk](http://www.forbabysake.org.uk)
- Hidden Hurt; website written by a DA victim providing resources for victims and perpetrators to help them understand their experiences. [www.hiddenhurt.co.uk](http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk)
- Victim Support; national support service for victims of all crime offering 24/7 telephone and live chat support. Phone 0808 168 9111 [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)
- Safe Lives; website providing information and resources for people living with domestic abuse and the professionals supporting them including the guide for staying safe during the current lockdown. <https://safelives.org.uk>
- Galop National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline; helpline for LGBT+ victims of DA, sexual violence and hate crime 0800 999 5428 (weekdays 10am – 5pm, Wed and Thurs to 8pm) <http://www.galop.org.uk/>
- Samaritans; providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide. Phone 116 123 <https://www.samaritans.org>
- Survivors UK; support for men who are victims of sexual assault, including DA. Web chat daily 12pm – 8pm <https://www.survivorsuk.org>
- Support Line; Initial emotional support for any issue and details of counsellors throughout the UK. Phone 0208 554 9004, [info@supportline.org.uk](mailto:info@supportline.org.uk) <https://www.supportline.org.uk>
- Women's Trust; mental health charity providing free counselling and therapy for women who have experienced DA. <http://womanstrust.org.uk/>

- NSPCC; collection of resources for professional, parents and children to support the mental health of children during the current period. <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/april/supporting-children-young-people-mental-health>

### Children and Young People

- The Hideout; website created by Women's Aid for children who have experienced DA <https://thehideout.org.uk/>
- Supportline; confidential emotional support for children/young adults Phone 0208 554 9004, [info@supportline.org.uk](mailto:info@supportline.org.uk) <https://www.supportline.org.uk>
- LoveRespect; Women's Aid website for young people providing advice and support on healthy relationships and understanding coercive control <https://loverespect.co.uk>
- Childline; advice and support for children via a confidential 24 hour helpline 0800 1111 <https://www.childline.org.uk/>
- Young Minds; mental health support and advice for children and young people including text based counselling service <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- The Mix; information and support for under 25's. Phone 0808 808 4994 <https://www.themix.org.uk/>

### Other Resources

- End Violence Against Women; The leading UK coalition campaign to end violence against women and girls. Specialist advice and guidance available [www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)
- Bright Sky; free mobile app from Hestia which provides support and information to anyone who is enduring DA or who knows someone in that situation. Download 'Bright Sky' from the app store. <https://www.hestia.org/brightsky>
- Adfam; Charity supporting children and families affected by drugs and alcohol [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)
- Parentline Plus; support for parents under pressure who can refer to local sources of support. <https://www.familylives.org.uk/>
- AADFA: Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse; charity offering help to families after fatal incidences of domestic abuse homicide and near misses. <https://aafda.org.uk>
- Reunite; advice for parents whose children have been abducted or if they fear abduction by a former partner [www.reunite.org](http://www.reunite.org)
- Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service; trauma-informed service established to assist high risk victims of stalking in England and Wales. Caseworkers ensure that high risk victims of stalking are supported and that a coordinated community response is developed locally to keep victims and their children safe. <https://paladinservice.co.uk>



- Network for Surviving Stalking (NSS); Charity dedicated to providing help, information and support for those affected by stalking and harassment. <https://www.scaredofsomeone.org>
- Alert5; location alert service for pre-determined contacts via your mobile phone in emergencies (£4.99 per year) <http://www.alert5.co.uk/>
- Community Legal Service; Free government funded confidential advice service. <https://www.contactlaw.co.uk/community-legal-services.html>
- Karma Nirvana; UK Helpline for 'honour'-based abuse and forced marriage: 0800 5999 247 (weekdays 9am – 5pm) <https://karmanirvana.org.uk>