

COVID-19 Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Frequently Asked Questions

FOR PROFESSIONALS

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are designed to help support any professional working with someone experiencing domestic abuse.

The FAQs are updated on a weekly basis with key questions we hear from professionals.

If you have a question that is not on this page, please email this to strategicpartnershipsteam@hertfordshire.gov.uk

If you are working with a service user who has questions around domestic abuse during the Coronavirus pandemic, we also have a page for the public [here](#)

Question	Response
How can we support a person safely when the victim is still in a Domestic Abuse situation?	<p>Victim safety remains priority. Adapting service delivery and establish alternative – more discrete and creative – ways to offer support, such as planning safe means and time of contact, and use of technology or other opportunities to reach victims at places they may still visit; such as supermarkets, pharmacies, food banks, schools and parks. A national 'Safe Space' campaign is in place to enable disclosure and provide support in consultation rooms at Boots throughout the country.</p> <p>It is important to remain victim and family focused, prioritising the needs of victims whilst balancing the risk to workforce and service delivery capabilities to adapt responses in a proportionate and collaborative manner. Remain professionally curious and trust your gut instinct.</p> <p>We have produced a range of briefings and service updates for professionals that may help. Nationally there are guidance and resource documents available from specialist organisations and government departments. You can find more information about some of the national resources here and the government dedicated guidance including specific guidance for children's social care, adult social care, social landlords, domestic abuse safe accommodation, and LGA guidance for local authorities.</p>
Can I still refer in to specialist domestic abuse services?	<p>Yes. All specialist domestic abuse services continue to run and offer a service to victims. For a directory of services, including their contact details please click here. This directory is updated on a weekly basis with any changes to the way in which services are run.</p>

<p>I'm not sure which specialist domestic abuse service to refer to, what should I do?</p>	<p>Refer to the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (Idva) service run by Refuge. Ordinarily the service only supports victims at high risk or homicide. For an interim period during the Coronavirus pandemic, the Idva service will accept referrals for any victim and conduct an initial risk assessment. This means they can begin work with those at the highest risk immediately. They will be able to signpost victims that are assessed as standard or medium risk of harm, to other specialist services as per the directory.</p>
<p>Will specialist domestic abuse services still meet with victims face to face?</p>	<p>Yes. The safety of staff working in specialist services is paramount, and where possible contact will be done virtually. If that is not possible, some will meet with victims face to face on a case-by-case basis. The Government has set out clear guidance that victims of domestic abuse are able to leave the house to seek support. In instances where this may be difficult due to the proximity of the perpetrator, services will endeavour to be creative in how they conduct face to face contact.</p>
<p>How has the way services work changed during the Coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>Domestic abuse services are doing all they can to remain open. The top priority is to ensure victims get the support they need.</p> <p>The way in which services operate has been impacted but they are still very much available and ready to respond. Many have closed their main offices or sites and are operating remotely with a reduced service – such as no face-to-face or group work – but remain open to referrals. Seeking different ways to reach out to victims - such as increasing the use of telecommunications and on-line technology - services continue to offer the help and support that is needed.</p>
<p>Are there still emergency accommodation options available to victims, such as refuge?</p>	<p>Yes. Safer Places is our lead provider of Refuge accommodation in Hertfordshire. They continue to operate following comprehensive business continuity planning and launched a new live chat service. You can refer to them here</p>
<p>How can I keep up to date with what is happening in relation to domestic abuse during this time?</p>	<p>Over the course of the pandemic the Strategic Partnerships Team at Hertfordshire County Council and wider partners will be developing regular briefings for frontline professionals. If you would like to receive these, please join our mailing list by emailing strategicpartnershipsteam@hertfordshire.gov.uk</p>
<p>Are the police still able to work to full capacity to hold perpetrators to account?</p>	<p>Yes. Domestic abuse remains a top priority for the police and holding perpetrators to account will continue to be business as usual. We recognise that</p>

	<p>during lockdown it may be more difficult for victims to make calls for help. Nationally the police have a 'silent solution' option in emergencies that victims can use to Make Yourself Heard and locally people can report or talk on line here.</p>
<p>I am a professional and experiencing domestic abuse. Remote working is difficult, what can I do?</p>	<p>Our specialist services are available for everyone, including professionals. Specialist services are completely confidential and there to help. They can provide you with advice on how to speak to your employer. You can also check whether your organisation has a domestic abuse policy. These often outline the ways in which your organisation could adapt the way you work to enable you to continue to do your job, and keep safe.</p>
<p>Is there a programme or package that can support the perpetrator of Domestic Abuse?</p>	<p>Yes. Coronavirus is not responsible for domestic abuse, and there are still local and national services and resources that can help perpetrators change their behaviour. National organisations Respect and SafeLives have produced coronavirus guidance resources for professionals working with perpetrators and White Ribbon have produced a toolkit for perpetrators to better manage their behaviour. Locally help is still available through The Change Project</p>
<p>How can I support someone experiencing child-parent abuse?</p>	<p>Government published guidance for professionals. The following resources can help professionals responding to child to parent violence as a result of the pressures of lockdown and coronavirus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect Young People's programme are still operating an online service and you can see the list of providers here • Professionals can learn more about responding to parent to adult violence with Oasis Kent • My CWA in Cheshire, Tandem and Acorns service • Helen Bonnick's blog, Holes in the Wall, is a great resource for learning more about child to parent violence
<p>Are domestic abuse-related court cases still going ahead?</p>	<p>Yes. Many cases are continuing. HM Court and Tribunals Service have implemented business continuity plans. Criminal Courts are prioritising a number of case types including domestic abuse cases. Crown Courts are generally operating remotely.</p> <p>Civil and Family Courts continue to respond to applications for injunctions and orders dealing with issues of care, abduction, emergency protection and debt, as well as breaches of injunctions and Court of</p>

	<p>Protection matters relating to vulnerable people.</p> <p>Any cases where courts and tribunals are closed, parties will be contacted to confirm new hearing arrangements.</p> <p>Locally, high and very high risk cases are being prioritised, using technology where they can. Child and adult safeguarding victims are being prioritised.</p>
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