

COVID-19 Interim Domestic Abuse Children, Young People and Babies Pathways

BRIEFING FOR FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS

1. The impact of Coronavirus on domestic abuse

Coronavirus is not responsible for domestic abuse and measures to prevent it spreading heighten the risks and impact of domestic abuse on children, for whom the concept of staying safe by staying at home has a disturbing irony.

For many families, life at home during the pandemic is likely to see harmful patterns of behaviour by those who perpetrate domestic abuse exacerbate. Changes to or closure of schools and services could result in the escalation of risk, in addition to decreased capacity to safeguard and protect the most vulnerable who can cease to be visible.

It is crucial that children, young people and parents know they can reach out without fear of blame, judgement or unwanted consequences. The impact of significant and enduring traumatic responses to domestic abuse in babies, children and young people should never be underestimated.

2. Guidance for Children, Young People and Babies pathways

Nationally, referrals to children's social care have fallen since lockdown. Being seen, being heard and being believed is critical to supporting children, young people and babies experiencing domestic abuse. Children and young people need the opportunity and space to talk about what's going on for them in a way that is best for them, and babies need emotional security; professionals, friends/family/neighbours and the wider community need to be alert to the signs of domestic abuse, watch out for signs and to recognise what they can do to help. It is essential that strong partnership working with the police, housing and health services, the domestic abuse sector and wider agencies are in place.

For social care staff the Department for Education have published guidance and information for [local authorities and partners](#) to follow in supporting vulnerable children and young people and for [children's social care services](#) during the pandemic. National [guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#) is available and SafeLives have published [guidance for children's social care sector](#) and [guidance for NHS volunteers in partnership with IRISi](#) too. This should be followed in-line with [guidance for social workers](#) published by Social Work England and guidance from the [Local Government Association](#) for councils in tackling domestic abuse during the pandemic.

For everyone, the [NSPCC](#) has produced advice and guidance about keeping all children safe during the pandemic and [Barnardo's](#) have a coronavirus advice hub for parents/carers and children and young people. Children and young people can also access support through [The Hide Out](#), [Young Minds](#) and [Child Line](#) or free early years resources on the [Monkey Bob website](#). [For Baby's Sake](#) guidance and blogs illustrate the needs of babies and parents and national guidance.

Locally, the safety and support of all victims remains priority for all partners; domestic abuse services remain operational and the welfare of children, young people and babies remains a top priority for the [Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership](#). The Hertfordshire [Continuum of Need](#) sets out the 'Levels of Need' experienced by children, young people and families and thresholds to safeguarding and specialist services to support those working with them. The [Parental Relationships Spectrum](#) created by the Stefanou Foundation helps to identify conflict and domestic abuse and gauge local referral pathways, including into children and family services.

Our **temporary pathways**, which should be followed – sometimes simultaneously, are:

| Route 1 Apply normal referral pathways | Route 2 I am unsure who to refer to, or do not know what the service user needs | Route 3 The service user need relates to emergency accommodation |
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| All services remain open. If domestic abuse is known refer in the way you usually would. | Where there is doubt about how/where to make a referral or any concern about a child – refer to Hertfordshire County Council . | If there is clear requirements for support with accommodation, such as refuge accommodation, refer to Safer Places . |
| Contact (Always dial 999 in an emergency) | | |
| Information about domestic abuse: www.hertssunflower.org Or call Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline , free: 08 088 088 088 (Mon-Fri:9am-9pm Sat-Sun:9am-4pm) | Hertfordshire County Council Customer Service Centre: 0300 123 4043 (24-hour) Child Protection Contact Referral Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership | Safer Places: 03301 025811 (24-hour) info@saferplaces.co.uk Refer online here . |