

COVID 19/ CORONAVIRUS – DOMESTIC ABUSE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND OTHER FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

ADVICE FOR FRIENDS, FAMILY,
NEIGHBOURS AND COMMUNITY
MEMBERS.



Domestic abuse, sexual violence, and other forms of gender-based violence will increase during the COVID 19 crisis. Home is not a safe place for everyone, and our vital services are under pressure. As friends, family, neighbours, and community members, you can be a vital lifeline for survivors.

We must let survivors know they are not alone. It is also important that we send out a clear message that there is no excuse for abuse. We have already seen the power of communities coming together during this crisis. We know many of you want to do more to support survivors. We have outlined some basic guidance on how best to do this. It is important to always remember that survivors are the experts in their own lives.

What are the different forms of Gender-Based Violence and Abuse?

- Sexual violence, abuse and exploitation;
- Domestic abuse including coercive control;
- Female genital mutilation;
- Forced marriage;
- So called 'honour' based violence;
- Stalking;
- Trafficking.

Intersecting Forms of Oppression

People who experience these forms of abuse may experience multiple forms of oppression. Different types of oppression impact how someone experiences abuse and how they get support. They also overlap ('intersect') and include **sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination against disabled people**. To better understand the experiences and additional barriers for:

Migrant women – [click here](#).

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) survivors – [click here](#).

Black and minoritised women – [click here](#).

Disabled survivors – [click here](#).

Deaf survivors – [click here](#).

Women facing multiple disadvantage – [click here](#).

Prevalence of violence against women and girls in the UK – [click here](#).

The Impact of COVID 19

Why are we worried about the impact of COVID 19 for those experiencing abuse?
[Click here.](#)

Male Victims

Domestic abuse can affect men too, and there is advice and support available. It is also important to remember that the prevalence of domestic abuse in same-sex couples is similar to opposite-sex couples. For advice on how to support male survivors – [click here](#), or for LGBT survivors – [click here](#).

Common Myths

There are many myths around domestic abuse and sexual violence. These include damaging victim-blaming attitudes such as ‘why doesn’t she just leave’ and suggesting that a survivor’s behaviour encouraged the abuse. It is important that we challenge these myths in our communities.

To learn more about domestic abuse myths click [here](#).

To learn more about sexual violence myths click [here](#).

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

IN AN EMERGENCY

Encourage survivors to **call 999 in an emergency**.

- Let them know about the **Silent Solution** system for situations when someone calling 999 is unable to speak. For more information [click here](#).
- If the survivor can’t call because they are d/Deaf or can’t verbally communicate, let them know about the **emergency text service**. For information [click here](#).

If you are worried that someone is in danger you should call 999.

- It’s important to remember that someone could be experiencing abuse from a partner, ex-partner, family member or carer.
- We understand that neighbours can feel reluctant to call the police. It is important to remember that your actions could provide a vital lifeline for a survivor.

- You may also feel worried about what will happen if the perpetrator suspects you reported the abuse to the police. Ensure you take steps to protect your own safety, and never confront the perpetrator.
- You can also report a crime by calling the police on 101, or anonymously report a crime by calling Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111 or [online](#).

The police have a duty to protect everyone. No one should be discriminated against for any reason, including their immigration status.

STAY CONNECTED

- It is important that we find ways to stay connected during this crisis. If you can, keep in regular contact with your friends, family members and neighbours, and ask how they are. It is essential we create safe spaces and opportunities to ask for help.
- It is also important to be aware that people may be in public spaces despite the lockdown measures as their homes are not safe places - this includes children and young people. The Government has confirmed that **if someone is experiencing abuse they can leave their home to seek help**.
- Survivors may look for opportunities to reach out for help when doing the activities we are still allowed to do i.e. food shopping, medical appointments, essential work, and exercise.

HOW TO RESPOND

If someone tells you they are experiencing abuse it is really important that you:

- Listen to them without judgement.
 - Never blame them for the abuse, excuse the perpetrator's behaviour, ask them why they have not left or tell them to leave.
- Believe them.
- Validate what they are telling you.
 - For example 'I'm really glad you told me,' 'this isn't your fault,' 'you are not alone'.
- Ask them what they need, and be guided by them.
 - The survivor is always the expert in their own lives. It is important to be patient and allow them to set the pace.

- If possible, share information about how to get specialist support.
- If possible, offer to keep in touch by phone or online, and ask them the safest way to do this.
- If you have an established and trusting relationship with the survivor – you can discuss a code word with them. This code word can be used if they need you to call the police on their behalf.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

- It is also important to recognise the impact this can have on you. Looking after yourself is key when providing support to others.
- Do not take on too much or put yourself at risk – there is specialist support available.

NATIONAL HELPLINES

Friends, family, neighbours, and community members can also call national helplines if they are concerned about someone. All national helplines are free to call and can provide interpreter services if English is not your first language.

ENGLAND

24h National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247

The Helpline can be accessed using the BT Type Talk Service for Deaf or hard-of-hearing callers.

You can also contact the helpline [online](#).

Rape Crisis National Helpline – Sexual Violence 08088 029 999

Open between 12-2.30pm and 7-9.30pm every day.

Accessible by Minicom on 0208 239 1124.

Karma Nirvana - Helpline for 'Honour'-based abuse and Forced Marriage

0800 5999 247

You can also contact them online [here](#).

The National Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender + Domestic Abuse Helpline

0800 999 5428

help@galop.org.uk

Male Survivors

Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

info@mensadvice.org.uk

WALES

24h Live Fear Free Helpline for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse, & Sexual Violence: 0808 80 10 800

Text: 07800 77333

info@livefearfreehelpline.wales

SCOTLAND

24h Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline 0800 027 1234

You can call the Helpline using a text relay service

helpline@sda.fmh.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline 08088 01 03 02

Text: 077537 410 027

support@rapecrisis.scotland.org.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

24h Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline: 0808 802 1414

help@dsahelpline.org

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND NEIGHBOURS

For more useful resources on how to support someone experiencing abuse:

- Rape Crisis – [Supporting a survivor of sexual violence](#)
- Safe Lives Blog - [Advice for Friends and Family](#) [domestic abuse]
- Safe Lives Podcast – [How can family and friends help?](#) [domestic abuse]
- Women's Aid - How to spot signs of [domestic abuse](#), and [coercive control](#)
- Women's Aid Survivor Handbook – [Worried about Someone Else](#) [domestic abuse]
- Karma Nirvana's frequently asked questions about [forced marriage and so called 'honour' based abuse](#)
- Spotting the signs of [Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery](#).
- Surviving Economic Abuse - [Spotting the signs of economic abuse during the coronavirus outbreak](#) – for family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

RAISE AWARENESS

As a community we can help break the silence around abuse. We must send a clear message that there is no excuse for abuse, and that survivors are not alone.

Share Information about the Support Available

You can help ensure survivors are aware that national helplines, refuges, online support, and local support services are still available. You can raise awareness by posting information about services on your social media, in your window, in public spaces and other visible places. You could also share this information in different languages if you speak them, and inform survivors that national helplines are able to provide interpreter services. For more information about the support available – please [click here](#). For government guidance click [here](#).

Break the Silence

You can share information and resources with friends, family, colleagues, and community groups. You can also share public awareness raising campaigns on your social media.

No Excuse for Abuse - Perpetrators

Care should be taken when approaching a perpetrator as it can increase the risk to the survivor, and you should not put yourself at risk. Help exists for people who are worried about the impact of their behaviour on others. Respect runs a helpline for anyone who wants help to manage their behaviour. This helpline is also open to friends, family, community members, and professionals who are concerned about someone's behaviour.

- **Respect Helpline 0808 8024040**

Webchat service also available.

Further information is available on their [website](#).

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT

- Donate to local support services.
- Donate to your local [foodbank](#).
- Contact your MP (UK), AM (Wales), MSPs (Scotland) or MLA (Northern Ireland) and ask them to ensure the governments are prioritising survivors of abuse in their response to COVID 19.
 - You can find out who your MP is [here](#), AM [here](#), MSP [here](#), MLA [here](#).
 - Read an open letter to the Prime Minister from the women's sector [here](#).
- Learn more about Gender-Based Violence, and what more you can do to combat it in your community:
 - E-learning course
 - [Understanding Violence Against Women](#)
 - [Rape and Sexual Violence](#)
 - For specialist Rape Crisis training on sexual violence and abuse please contact training@rapecrisis.org.uk
 - Become a Women's Aid 'Ask Me' Community Ambassador.
 - [England](#)
 - [Wales](#)
 - Become a Women's Aid [Campaign Champion](#).