

Domestic Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Covid-19

27 March 2020

We know that COVID-19 (Coronavirus) will have a serious impact on the lives of women, children and men who are experiencing domestic abuse.

This is a difficult and stressful time for everyone. If you or someone you know are experiencing domestic or sexual abuse it will be even harder. This is because for most of us it will mean:

- Increased time at home
- Increased time in close proximity to the person causing harm
- Increased emotional and financial stress.
- Increased isolation
- Reduced family and social support
- Increased risk of debilitating illness

Rotherham Helpline:

Rotherham Rise Confidential Advice Line: 0330 2020571

National Helplines:

Freephone 24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247

(run by Refuge)

Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327

Respect helpline: 0808 802 4040

(for anyone worried that they may be harming someone else)

Galop: 0800 999 5428

(national helpline for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people experiencing domestic abuse)

Forced Marriage Unit: 0207 008 0151

If you suspect that an abuser is monitoring your internet usage, find out how to hide your browser history:

Women's Aid also provides webchat <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/>

Monday to Friday 10am – 12pm

Safety Plans:

If you have a safety plan review it with your support worker or consider creating one and sharing with a trusted friend or family member – You can use the Women’s Aid Survivors handbook <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/>.

You may want to consider:

- **Setting up code words** for safe contact – so that you can text or message someone to let them know if things are difficult without alerting the person who is abusing you.
- **Save the your support worker’s number under a pseudonym** or different name e.g. as the health visitor, your manager, a friend – anything that is realistic and safe.
- Think about who you are having contact with – a worker, friends or family who can raise the alarm if you need emergency help.
- Think about where you can flee to if needed e.g. is there a neighbour or friend you can rely on?
- Have you got a health visitor, do you know the local neighbourhood police officer? Is there another worker you can keep in touch with?
- Think about what action you / your children can take if the situation gets worse at home – in an emergency how would you get out or raise the alarm?
- Chayn (<https://chayn.co/>) have set up a Telegram channel which survivors can sign up to – they’ll be sharing supportive notes and helpful info every day
- There are also useful apps e.g. the **Hollie Guard** app which can also offer reassurance
- **Bright Sky app** is currently available in English, Urdu, Punjabi or Polish and is free to download.
- If you are worried about your **finances** and the abuse making things worse at this difficult time there is advice and a new resource that you can access from Surviving Economic Abuse <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/economic-abuse-and-the-covid-19-outbreak/>
- Safelives has published safety planning guidance for victims – <http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safety%20planning%20guide%2C%20victims%20and%20survivors%2C%20COVID-19.pdf>

Housing issues: Housing advice services, and refuges and other emergency accommodation are operating as normal. 01709 336009. Emergency out of hours 07748 143170

Sexual Assault or Abuse

If you have recently been sexually assaulted you can ring 999 and report to the Police and they will refer you to Hackenthorpe Lodge, the **South Yorkshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre** <https://www.hackenthorpelodge.org/>.

Or you can ring Hackenthorpe Lodge direct to make an appointment on **0330 223 0938**.

If you want support and advice please contact The Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy Service **01709 835482** info@rothacs.org.uk

The Rotherham Abuse Counselling Centre cannot offer face to face counselling while the situation continues but telephone support will be offered to people needing support. An Independent Sexual Violence Advisor will also be available to support victims of Sexual Abuse and violence on **01709 835482**.

If it's an emergency always ring 999.