**Abuse within a domestic context during Covid 19**

**Introduction:**

Due to Government guidance on Covid-19 (for live updates please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>) people are having to stay in their homes for longer period of time with household members and with less opportunities for contact and support by the 'outside world', be that family and friends, colleagues or statutory agencies. For example: people can no longer attend church services, children are no longer having their welfare overseen by schools and there may be a reduction in adult carers for the vulnerable.

The means that the safety and welfare of some people will be compromised and there is a heightened risk for people to be abused within the home, both adults and children. We know that people who already live with domestic abuse there may be an increase and for others, abuse may occur for the first time due to the tensions caused by the current restrictions on leaving the home and being in 'lock down'. Refuge (UK domestic abuse charity) has reported a 25% increase of calls being received since Covid-19 (with a 700% increase on one day). Given we know that there is low report rate of domestic abuse; the number of people currently suffering abuse will be higher.

**What is abuse in a domestic setting?**

Abuse within a domestic setting refers to any abusive behaviour towards someone in your household for example: partner to partner or parent to child or child on child or child on adult. The usual definitions of abuse apply: emotional, physical, neglect sexual. In relation to adult on adult abuse, this can also include demonstrating coercive and controlling behaviours and financial abuse.

**Guidance on how to respond:**

If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police - the police will continue to respond to emergency calls

**Nationally:**

The Government has issued the following national guidance regarding adult on adult domestic abuse and national contact numbers on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse#where-to-get-help>

The National Safeguarding Team (NST) have also produced a guide which can be found at:

[**https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19**](https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19)

**Locally:**

**Diocese Safeguarding Guidance and Team:**

The advice and guidance already set out still applies and can be found at:

<https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org/safeguarding_policy/>

The team can be contacted on:

Tel: 01273 421021. [safeguarding@chichester.anglican.org](mailto:safeguarding@chichester.anglican.org)

Website: <https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org/contacttheteam/>

Please note that all messages left for the team, by email, mobile or landline, are checked during normal office hours only. Messages are not checked during evenings or weekends. Requests for urgent assistance should be directed to the statutory authorities in Sussex. There is also a link on website called: ‘What Do I Do If?’ and Useful Links sections of the above site.

**Child Abuse:**

Children may be the direct victims of abuse by a parent/carer/sibling or be a victim via witnessing domestic abuse between adults in a home. Children will not have their usual external lines of communication to report their experience and worries to, or external oversight e.g. they will not be going to school/nursery, not see extended family or friends. Additionally, if you know a family where a social worker is already allocated please be aware that social workers are not seeing families as regularly during this time due to resourcing. Families may also try to avoid social workers e.g. by stating they are self-isolating, to disguise further abuse being discovered. Likewise, children subject to neglect or who are carers for other family members may not be receiving access to their usual help and support by external household members and care/nursing staff.

It is crucial that any reports of child welfare concerns be taken seriously with the current context considered. If any child welfare concerns are raised, please contact the following:

* WSCC MASH: Tel – 01403 229900. <https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/2016/04/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub-mash/>
* ESCC SPOC: Tel – 01323 464222. <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/professional-resources/spoa/>
* Brighton and Hove Font Doors for Family: 01273 290400. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/a-z/a-z-pages/front-door-families>

**Domestic Abuse (partner to partner):**

The Diocese safeguarding team is already receiving calls of reports regarding domestic abuse. We also know that domestic abuse is under reported. As with children, victims of domestic abuse will not have their usual support network available e.g. victims (and perpetrators) will not be out at work or not seeing friends. Existing factors and new opportunities for perpetrators to abuse have escalated e.g. frustrations over finical pressures, isolation of victims and increased opportunity to control partners in the home.

It is critical that if you have any concerns regarding domestic abuse please contact:

* Brighton & Hove and East Sussex: get help online via the Portal <http://theportal.org.uk/> or ring 0300 323 9985
* Brighton and Hove: RISE helpline 9-5 Mon-Fri on 01273 622 828 and website <https://www.riseuk.org.uk/>
* East Sussex: CGL <https://www.changegrowlive.org/the-portal-east-sussex/info> You can call CGL for Domestic Abuse support on 03003 239985 (Central PORTAL number), 01424 716629 (Hastings and Rother) or 01323 417598 (Eastbourne Lewes and Wealden)
* West Sussex: Worth Services <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/domestic-abuse/local-support-for-people-being-abused/> Call 07834 968539 or 033 022 28181 or email [DomesticAbuseServicesCentral@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:DomesticAbuseServicesCentral@westsussex.gov.uk)
* OUTSIDE OF OFFICE HOURS ANY AREA OF SUSSEX CALL 24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline 08082000247
* Sussex Police also have a useful list of phone numbers here: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/support-helplines/>

**Adult Abuse:**

There are many adults in the community who are vulnerable by virtue of living alone and those with physical and mental health conditions. There are also adults who live with other non-partner adults who abuse them, such as adult children. As above child and partner abuse, this abuse will increase and opportunities for abuse will be increased due to a lack of external support e.g. non-attendance at church, reduction in care staff going to the home non-attendance at regular health checks. Likewise, factors for perpetrators have increased.

It is essential that if you have any concerns that and adult is being abused (or welfare concerns generally) please contact:

* WSCC Adults Carepoint: Tel 01243 642121 <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-support/adults/contact-us-for-adult-social-care-support/>
* ESCC – Tel 0345 6080 191. <https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/worried-about-an-adult/>
* Brighton and Hove: Tel 01273 255555. <http://sussexsafeguardingadults.procedures.org.uk/>