

Covid-19 Update Safeguarding advice for professionals supporting domestic abuse victims

Supporting domestic abuse victims & families through Covid-19

Self-isolation and Social Distancing mean more people are staying at home. It's a stressful time, people are working from home and children are off school. This is an extremely risky time for victims of abuse. As well as supporting people with their health and social issues at this incredibly difficult time, you as professionals are likely to be supporting service users who are experiencing higher levels of domestic abuse. Isolating/distancing guidelines mean this could be even more difficult than usual. It is likely that more perpetrators are going to be in the home when we try and contact the victim, or the victim calls in for support. There are things we/you can do to try and minimise the risk to the victim:

- NEVER leave a voice message if you believe the victim and perpetrator share a home
- If you think the perpetrator has answered the phone, ask for somebody else - a made up name - and pretend you have dialled the wrong number
- Call from a withheld number so the perpetrator cannot trace it/call you back
- If you do manage to speak to the victim, ask them yes/no questions
- Help the victim to think of a false reason for the call in case the perpetrator asks - for example, 'it was the bank' or 'it was a Nurse calling about xyz'
- Agree on a code word for the victim to use if they need your help but can't say explicitly
- If the victim uses the code word, or you feel they are in need of assistance/are in danger, call 999
- Victims can self-refer for professional support through the GDASS website: [gdass.org.uk](https://www.gdass.org.uk)
- If the victim wants to refer, but can't access the internet safely, offer to make the referral for them

The police are still prioritising and dealing with reports of domestic abuse in an emergency call **999**.

[GDASS](https://www.gdass.org.uk/) are working remotely to support victims of domestic abuse on **01452 726 570** or for professionals wanting advice - **01452 726 561** / <https://www.gdass.org.uk/>