

COVID-19 HR Factsheet

Support for Domestic Abuse



1. Introduction

Measures announced to tackle Coronavirus (COVID-19) have seen people's day-to-day lives drastically altered. These changes are essential to beat coronavirus and protect our NHS. The government acknowledges that the order to stay at home can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse.

Employers have an important role to play in society's response to domestic abuse. Employers owe a duty of care to employees and have a legal responsibility to provide a safe and effective work environment. Preventing and tackling domestic abuse is an integral part of this (see the domestic abuse [toolkit](#) for further information).

We, as a compassionate NHS organisation, want to make sure that all staff are well supported during this time of unusual working arrangements and would like everyone to know that the CCG and our managers are here to support them in whatever way possible.

(See the list of organisations supporting people who experience Domestic Abuse at the end of the document)

2. What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviour on the part of the abuser designed to control his partner. It can happen at any point in a relationship, including after you have split up. Anyone forced to change their behaviour because they are frightened of their partner or ex-partner's reaction is experiencing abuse.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of age, background, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity. However, statistics show most domestic abuse is carried out by men and experienced by women.

Domestic abuse is never the fault of the person who is experiencing it. Domestic abuse is a crime.

3. What Are the Types of Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is not always physical violence. It can also include, but is not limited to:

- coercive control and manipulation by psychological means of someone into doubting their own sanity
- [economic abuse](#)
- online abuse
- verbal abuse
- [emotional abuse](#)
- sexual abuse

4. What Are The Signs to Look For?

If you believe that you or someone else could be a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs that you can look out for including:

- being withdrawn
- having bruises
- controlling finances
- not being allowed to leave the house
- monitoring technology use such as social media platforms

5. Practical Steps for Line Managers

A. Recognise the problem

- Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record
- Look for changes in the way an employee dresses, for example excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn

B. Respond

- Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse – do not ask for proof
- Reassure the employee that the organisation has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered.

C. Provide support

- There may be a need for the employee to have [safe accommodation](#). In some instances it may mean providing hotel accommodation by NHS Partnering Organisation (seek HR advice on this).
- Some NHS staff may experience problems with their landlord. Make sure they have access to appropriate advice and help regarding their [tenancy agreement](#).
- Make sure they have adequate resources for remote working including telephone calls - and are able to maintain regular contact with their line manager.
- If a manager believes there is an immediate risk of harm to someone, or it is an emergency, s/he should always call 999.
- Refer them to appropriate help.

6. Where to Get Help

Domestic abuse victims are still allowed to leave home to seek help at refuges, despite rules to stop coronavirus spreading. Anyone, who is at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse, is still able to leave and seek refuge. Refuges remain open and the police will provide support to all individuals who are being abused – whether physically, emotionally, or otherwise. Many pharmacies have safe spaces where you can get information about support and make calls.

You can find help and support for domestic violence through the following:

A. Employee Assistance Programme

The service is available 24/7 and is completely free and confidential. Our specially trained legal and information team can help to resolve issues around: debt, legal concerns, consumer and care etc. whilst our counsellors are on hand to manage any emotional concerns. Our manager support team can provide invaluable support to managers to maximise their team's performance and their own personal impact. [Click here for further information.](#)

B. National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Refuge runs the [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#), which you can call for free, and in confidence, [24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247](#). Its website provides guidance and support for potential victims, as well as those who are worried about friends and loved ones. It also has a form through which you can book a safe time for a call from the team.

Refuge's website includes a range of resources on identifying the signs of domestic abuse, and a safety guide for women and children who are living with a perpetrator. It also features a tech abuse chat-bot with step-by-step instructional videos on how to secure devices such as phones and laptops. Look for the pink button in the bottom-right corner.

C. Women's Aid

[Women's Aid](#) has a range of direct services for survivors, including a live chat service and an online Survivors' Forum. They have developed additional advice specifically designed for the current coronavirus outbreak. You can also find your [local domestic abuse service on their website](#). They also provide information on the support helplines available in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Additional information on help and survivor tips available during the Covid19 pandemic can be found [here](#).

D. Men's Advice Line

The [Men's Advice Line](#) is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and those supporting them.

Telephone: 0808 801 0327

E. BME Specialist Services

[Imkaan](#)

Imkaan is a women's organisation addressing violence against black and minority women and girls.

[Southall Black Sisters](#)

Southall Black Sisters offer specialist support, advocacy and information to Asian and Afro-Caribbean women suffering abuse.

F. Disability Specialist Services

These services are run by deaf and/or disabled people.

i. [Stay Safe East](#)

Stay Safe East provides specialist and holistic advocacy and support services to disabled victims and survivors of abuse.

ii. [SignHealth](#)

SignHealth provides domestic abuse service support for deaf people in British Sign Language (BSL).

WhatsApp or Facetime: 07970 350366

Telephone: 020 3947 2601

Email: da@signhealth.org.uk

G. Economic abuse

If you are concerned about how coronavirus may affect your finances and leave you vulnerable to economic abuse, please see the advice provided by [HM Treasury](#) on what support is on offer.

The charity [Surviving Economic Abuse](#) has also provided additional guidance and support.

H. Hestia

[Hestia](#) provides a free mobile app, Bright Sky, which provides support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know.

I. Support Available For - “If You Are Worried About Hurting Someone”

If you are worried about hurting the ones you love while staying at home, call the [Respect Phone line](#) (0808 802 4040) for support and help to manage your behaviour. This is an anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are harming their partners and families. It takes calls from partners or ex-partners, friends, and relatives who are concerned about perpetrators.

A [web chat service](#) is available.