

Top Tips for responding to Domestic Abuse – Different ways of working April 2020

We know that COVID-19 will have a detrimental impact on the safety and lives of children and families affected by domestic abuse. Home may not be a safe place for those affected by domestic abuse. Weeks or months of self-isolation may be a dangerous and deeply difficult time for many, as their routes to support and safety will be shut down or limited.

Practitioners play a vital role in addressing domestic abuse in the current COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown. Usual routes of enquiring about and supporting children and families experiencing domestic abuse may prove challenging. Phone and video conversations are currently being used by practitioners in addition to face to face contact.

This guidance aims to inform safe telephone and video discussions with victims who are known to be at risk of domestic abuse, when you suspect domestic abuse or concerns have been raised in relation to domestic abuse. It is important to consider the added pressures and increased risk that the current situation brings to children and families.



- Prior to conducting any conversation around domestic abuse, ask the victim if it is safe to talk, saying a simple “yes” or “no” will do. If it isn't then ask for a suggested safe time to call back. Be aware that situations change quickly, and that risk is dynamic
- Ask if the victim is alone to ensure that the perpetrator isn't in the same room. Be aware that the perpetrator may be in the house or enter the house and ask the victim to terminate the call if the perpetrator comes into the room or act as though they are talking to someone else.
- Ask if they feel safe and if there is any immediate danger. Always advise calling **999** if there is any immediate danger. If the victim is unable to talk, they can **text 55** which will allow them to be transferred to the relevant police force. If they are unable to do this, offer to do this instead.

- Consider use of ‘closed’ questions when asking about safety – questions with ‘yes/no’ answers may help them share that they are being harmed, even if they cannot talk freely.



- Validate the victim’s experience with phrases like ‘I believe you’ or ‘This is not your fault.’ A victim will be in an extremely vulnerable situation if self-isolating with the perpetrator.
- Ask about what support the victim has and what support they might need.
- Think about the children in the home, is there a service we could offer the child/young person, community based or online, that would provide the children with an opportunity to explore what they see, hear and feel?
- Are there services involved with the family who could provide additional support, this includes agencies focused on the perpetrator as well as the victim and the child/young person.
- Is the young person in the home the perpetrator of the abuse, how can we reduce conflict in family relationships? Can we support the young person to access services to understand what a healthy relationship looks like, to spend time outside of the home or support the parent to explore alternative methods of parenting through online services?



- Ask the if the abuse is getting worse. Consider the DASH questions as prompts for conversation/understanding risk and



DASH 2009-2016
with quick reference c

how we can support the victim.

- Ask if they feel unsafe to stay in the home/are in immediate danger, If the victim says yes, they feel unsafe to stay in the home/are in immediate danger, support them to call the Police on 999 or in an emergency seek Police support.
- Some victims may not want to leave the family home. In this instance consider safety planning with them, many victims have their own plan on how to reduce

risk, listen to this as part of the process and ensure you recognise its worth. The Safe Lives guide is a good tool to use

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safety%20planning%20guide,%20victims%20and%20survivors,%20COVID-19.pdf>

- Think about using code words for older children and young people so they can disclose without having to specifically tell you what has happened in front of the adults or for fear of repercussions i.e. have you had donuts today - donuts meaning has there been any incidences today? Or have you done homework today, homework meaning has there been any incidences today.



- Make victims aware of online support; you can either signpost them to relevant websites or text/email the details if safe to do so.
 - All domestic abuse services in Essex continue to provide support, the .Compass Essex Domestic Abuse helpline is available 24 hours a day <https://www.essexcompass.org.uk/>.
- Compass also offer online chat facilities Monday to Friday from 9am to 2pm

Changing Pathways and Next Chapter offer an online chat facility.

<https://www.thenextchapter.org.uk/>

<https://changingpathways.org/>

- Some perpetrators may also want support to change their behaviour. The Change Hub is also available and offers free support for perpetrators who consent to behaviour change work . www.thechangeproject.org



- If you feel victims are at high risk of harm, you will need to refer the case to MARAC for a multi-agency approach to safeguarding for the victim

<https://setdab.org/resource/multi-agency-risk-assessment-conference-marac/>