

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND COVID-19

Information for front-line professionals

Tackling Domestic Abuse during the Corona Virus crisis

As a result of Coronavirus outbreak, many victims of Domestic Abuse face additional challenges and barriers to accessing support. While self-isolating, families will spend extended periods of time together and it is recognised that controlling behaviour and/or tensions may rise, escalating the risk of abuse and violence. It is vital that in this difficult time agencies from voluntary and statutory sectors continue working together to safeguard vulnerable families. Identification of domestic abuse cases through routine enquiry is paramount, as is providing advice to victims on where to seek help as well as making timely referrals to support services. Our key services are open.

Definition of Domestic Abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This abuse can encompass but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional, controlling and coercive behaviour, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Role of Professionals - **RECOGNISE. ENGAGE. RISK ASSESS. REFER.**

1. RECOGNISE signs of domestic abuse

Be alert to a possibility your client might be experiencing domestic abuse and recognise the trigger signs of domestic abuse:

- Symptoms of sadness, depression and anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, sleep disorders, suicidal tendencies or self-harming, vaginal bleeding or sexually transmitted infections
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Injuries with vague or implausible explanations, chronic unexplained pain, bruising
- Individual is frequently or always accompanied to appointments by partner or a family member, who may speak on your client's behalf or be abusive to staff
- Your client has restrictions placed on phone use, travel, money
- Your client appears physically afraid / fearful to go home or stay at home

2. ENGAGE and enquire

- Be confident to ask your client relevant questions. Research shows that survivors want to be asked and given an opportunity for disclosure. Be empathetic and reassure the person you believe them. You could start by saying: "Because controlling behaviour and domestic abuse is common in our society, we encourage clients to talk about it."
- How are things going at home?
- Do you feel controlled or isolated by your partner?
- Does your partner ever try to control you by threatening to hurt you or your family?
- How do you feel about the relationships in your life? How does your partner treat you? Do you feel safe in your relationship?
- Have you been physically hurt or threatened by your partner? Has your partner forced you to engage in sexual activities that you didn't want?
- Has anyone close to you ever threatened or hurt you?

continued overleaf

3. RISK ASSESS and establish level of risk

- Complete a SafeLives Dash Risk Identification Checklist (RIC) with your clients if domestic abuse is disclosed. Which will help identify those who are at high risk of harm and those cases that should be referred to MARAC meeting in order to manage their risk.
- Before you start, establish with your client if it is safe to talk now and their safe contact details, explain that information is confidential and that asking questions helps to assess risk. The Risk Identification Check (RIC) list and guidance [click here](#)

4. REFER or signpost to relevant services

- Always offer to refer your client for support to their local IDVA service.
- Initiate child protection or adult safeguarding procedures where appropriate.
- Provide your client with useful contact numbers such as National Domestic Violence Helpline and their local IDVA service. If your client is assessed as being at High Risk of harm using the RIC or your Professional Judgement, make sure you complete a MARAC referral. See below for referral forms :
 - Richmond MARAC [click here](#)
 - Wandsworth MARAC [click here](#)

If in doubt, contact a MARAC Coordinator for advice RichmondMARAC@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk in relation to Richmond cases

WandsworthMARAC@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk in relation to Wandsworth cases

Services to refer or signpost victims to

The main domestic abuse services to contact

- **Richmond borough - Refuge** Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) and Outreach Service **020 8943 8188** Monday – Friday 9am-5pm
- **Wandsworth borough - Safety Net** IDVA service **020 7801 1777** Monday – Friday 9am-5pm

Referrals to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

MARAC meetings continue to take place via teleconference calls, it is essential that agencies continue to refer cases. If in doubt, please contact MARAC Coordinators on the below email addresses. Should you identify a high-risk case of domestic abuse, please refer

- **Richmond cases to** RichmondMARAC@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk
- **Wandsworth cases to** WandsworthMARAC@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

Other services

- **Metropolitan Police** - if in an immediate danger, always call **999**. For non-emergencies, dial **101**.
- **One Stop Shop service in Richmond and Wandsworth** are closed until further notice, however Richmond residents can contact Refuge on **020 8943 8188** and Wandsworth residents can contact Victim Support service on **020 7801 1777**, or email vs.wandsworth@victimsupport.cjsm.net. Both services are open Monday – Friday, 9am -5pm
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline 24/7** **0808 2000 247**
- **Richmond Foodbanks** **020 8940 0274** [click here](#) and **Wandsworth Foodbanks** **020 7326 9428** [click here](#)
- **Women's Aid Live Chat online service** Monday to Friday 10am - 12pm [click here](#)
- **Rape Crisis Live Chat Helpline** – available for women and girls aged 16 + [click here](#). **Opening hours:**
Monday: 2pm-4.30pm, 6pm-9pm;
Tuesday: 2-4.30pm, 6pm-9pm;
Wednesday: 12pm-2.30pm, 6pm-9pm;
Thursday: 12pm-2.30pm, 6pm-8.30pm;
Friday: 9am-11.30am.
- **Housing options** – if you are at risk of homelessness, please contact Housing Information and Advice Team **020 8891 7409** in Richmond, and **020 8871 6840** in Wandsworth
- **COVID-19 Community Hub** - **020 8871 6555** [click here](#)
- **Adult Social Services (Wandsworth)** - **020 8871 7168/8601** and **Adult Social Services (Richmond)** - **020 8891 7971**
- **Children and Family Support Services (Wandsworth)** **020 8871 6622** and **(Richmond)** **020 8891 7969**
- **Age UK Advice Line** **0800 678 1602** Lines are open 8am-7pm, 365 days a year [click here](#)
- **Galop - LGBT+ anti-violence charity** - London LGBT+ Advice Line **020 7704 2040** Monday to Friday between 10am - 12.30pm and between 1.30pm - 4pm
- **Men's Advice Line** - **0808 801 0327** Open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
- **Mankind** Male Victims of Domestic Abuse Monday-Friday 10am to 4pm **01823 334244** [click here](#)
- **Surviving Economic Abuse guidance** [click here](#)