

Domestic Abuse

Managing risk and COVID 19 restrictions



With COVID 19 meaning that couples and families are having to spend much more time at home together the risk to some vulnerable children and adults is likely to increase. Along with other forms harm, an increase in domestic abuse is a real risk. Here are some brief ideas that you can use to help manage risk in families where you are concerned about current or emerging family conflict.

Help families plan how to adjust and cope

Everyone is adjusting to the new restrictions we have to adhere to which is anxiety provoking and unsettling. You will be acutely aware that for some families you work with this presents particular challenges and increased risk. As such having open discussions with families about how they will cope and helping them to plan will be very important. This might include;

- Considering if they are eligible to access childcare provision
- Having a daily family routine which includes agreed time together and apart and out of the house in line with government guidance
- Plan how domestic, parenting, childcare and other responsibilities will be shared
- Where safe to do so, support parents to anticipate times of the day that may be more difficult for them to manage, activities that could present particular risks and other triggering factors that could lead to increased stress and conflict.

Family plans will obviously be specific to individual need however the key aim is to work with parents to anticipate risk and triggers so they can plan in advance about how to cope.

Working with parents and children to draw up a family agreement or weekly/daily planner could be a good way forward. This could be done over the phone, video call or for those at most risk in person while following the government's most current social distancing and hygiene advice.

Specific safety planning

Safety planning (where possible and relevant) should adopt a whole family approach including victims, perpetrators, children or other adults at risk.

Safety planning for victims, children and vulnerable adults

While general advice is to stay at home because of the COVID 19 pandemic, if adults and children feel at risk of imminent harm or are involved in an incident of domestic abuse they should where possible seek help and remove themselves to a place of safety outside of the home, or if not possible within.

Restrictions on social contact and mobility don't mean those at risk shouldn't seek to protect themselves or others. Considering how to do this and where to go will be made more difficult given the current situation but exploring options is still important, even if this means seeking direct help from someone outside of their household.

Child and Adult safety planning templates and guidance is contained in the Safer Relationships Protective Parent and Children's Programmes which are available on the ESCC intranet by following this link: [Safer Relationships Packs](#)

Completing safety plans with those at risk may be more challenging given the current circumstances. Keeping copies in the home where a perpetrator could find it is inadvisable so verbal planning may be the best option. Consideration should also be given to how, where and when safety planning discussion can take place without the perpetrator present.

Safety planning with perpetrators

Where possible perpetrators must be supported to manage their own behaviour. While not relevant for all of those who perpetrate abuse, using a 'Time Out' tool can be an effective emergency strategy to de-escalate risk situations. This is particularly effective when planned and discussed in conjunction with a partner. This is so that they are aware that time out can be used as an emergency tool to avoid conflict escalating and allow space for one or both parties to calm down before attempting to deal with the issue in a more productive way.

A template and guidance for using the Time Out tool is contained in the Safer Relationships Perpetrator Programme. This is available on the ESCC intranet by following this link this link: [Safer Relationships Packs](#)

Separated parents contact with children

Government advice currently is that children under the age of 18 can move between homes in which they spend time on a regular basis, for example between separated or divorced carers.

Advice is that consideration needs to be given to how transitions between homes are managed, so as far as possible not to use public transport and following social distancing advice while moving and on arrival between parents/carers.

If either home is under quarantine because someone is showing symptoms of the COVID 19 virus or because they have come into contact with some one who has the virus, this should take precedence over trying to maintain normal arrangements.

Further advice is available for parents via the Cafcass website on effective co-parenting, child arrangements and family proceedings. This can be accessed using the following link: [Cafcass](#)

Key support for victims

- **The Police** by calling 999
- **The Portal**
01323 417598 (Eastbourne)
01424 716629 (Hastings)
portal.es@cgl.org.uk
- **SPOA** East Sussex Children Services Single Point of Advice
01323 464222
- **MARAC**
<https://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/MARAC-help.html>
- **Women's Aid** website which provides information, victim support and a live chat facility www.womensaid.org.uk
- **National 24hr DV Helpline**
0808 2000 247
- **National LGBT Helpline**
0300 999 5428
- **Men's Advice Line**
0808 801 0327
- **National Stalking Helpline**
0808 802 0300