

Dear Colleagues,

We are contacting you to tell you about the work that is currently progressing to address domestic abuse here in Oxfordshire and to ask for your support to help address the increased risks for families and individuals during the Coronavirus outbreak.

You will not need us to tell you that while staying at home is incredibly important to reduce the spread of Covid-19 for many home is **not** a safe place. To be trapped at home with someone who harms you can be very frightening. Isolating somebody from their friends, family, and the outside world is already something many perpetrators of domestic abuse do to control their partners. The current restrictions on movement will add opportunities for more extreme isolation and harm also make it much harder for people experiencing abuse to reach out and get help. Further, that Children at home due to school closures will be experiencing increased emotional and psychological harm by witnessing domestic abuse and parental conflict within their home as well as a likely increase in direct abuse which may also include physical harm. Both adults and children experiencing domestic abuse will have fewer opportunities to speak to someone or ask for help. Younger children are less able to express what is happening and therefore at risk of increased harm. Older people who may have less access to support and information online will also be more at risk.

Since movement restrictions began on 23 March, a domestic abuse Covid-19 multi-agency group has been meeting regularly to ensure that services are in place to meet current and changing needs of people in Oxfordshire. The group has focused on:

- ensuring services can offer help using more telephone or online support
- monitoring referrals, incidents and disclosures across all agencies
- developing targeted information to raise awareness of domestic abuse and tell people how to get help

The work around the campaign and publicity around Domestic Abuse has drawn from national materials that they are looking to localise to Oxfordshire and has three strands; all of which have links and resources associated with them:

1. **Speaking out to victims** – ensuring victims and children can get help, which has the following elements:
  - Identifying the Oxfordshire relationship help and support during covid-19 – which are accessed by following this link [here](#)
  - Oxfordshire help and support during covid-19 which can be accessed [here](#)
  - A safety planning infographic from West Sussex County Council available online [here](#)
  - A Thames Valley Police [Domestic Abuse Poster Campaign](#)
  - The Government #YouAreNotAlone [campaign](#) and [information](#)
  - The [Reducing the Risk website](#) which has information about what abuse might look like, how to stay safe, and what to do if you're worried about somebody.



2. **Listening from home** – information for everyone to help them look and listen out for friends and family, neighbours or others in their community with the following elements:
  - <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/get-involved/help-and-advice/crime-prevention-toolkits/domestic-abuse/how-help>
  - [Listening from home](#) national campaign, led by Hestia
3. **Direct access** – guidance for those who may be able to help because they are directly in contact with an adult or child suffering domestic abuse
  - [Safely asking about domestic abuse during Covid-19](#) (for professionals and volunteers already in phone contact with members of the public)

In addition the partnership are working locally, regionally and nationally to deliver the following:

- A media campaign, with interviews on local TV and radio, social media shares and poster campaigns with local retailers.
- A “safe spaces” initiative operating from named pharmacies offering a place where victims can discreetly call for help and support for domestic abuse
- An instant messaging App for victims of abuse to access discreet advice and support from home
- Further support from retailers, delivery companies and volunteers to enable victims to know that help is there and to disclose abuse and get support.

Clearly with such a great range of activity underway and planned, it makes sense for the OSCB and the OSAB to join with and support this fabulous level of activity. So we have asked all OSCB and OSAB members to cascade this letter/information sheet to all of you so that we reach as wide an audience as possible and promote this campaign,

We are also hoping you may feel able to personally share “Domestic abuse during Covid-19” [here](#) (a poster to be shared online and printed out, if printing select ‘shrink to page’ option) on your work/personal social media accounts (if safe to do so).

Finally, we are aware a number of Facebook pages have sprung up around mutual aid and support to vulnerable folks during the current situation. If you are a member of these Facebook groups and would be willing to share the poster on to the group pages that would ensure a much wider audience.

Thank you all for taking the time to read this briefing and please do join with us in this campaign and activity.

Thank you.

Richard Simpson  
Chair of OSCB

Sue Ross  
Chair of OSAB

