

This learning has been collated by the Fulfilling Lives South East project. People with lived experiences of multiple and complex needs interviewed local client-facing staff and researched organisations' responses to Covid-19 to bring together in this document the variety of ways people and organisations were trying to support women with complex needs who were at risk of, or were, experiencing domestic abuse (DA) during the global pandemic. For further information please visit [www.bht.org.uk/fulfillinglives](http://www.bht.org.uk/fulfillinglives).

# GOOD PRACTICE DURING COVID-19

Supporting Women with Multiple Complex Needs who experience Domestic Abuse



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## SUPPORTING CLIENTS



Asking the client how they would like to stay in contact with the worker to help develop and maintain trust. For example, using Whatsapp or messaging services where possible. Some workers made extra efforts to check in with clients on the phone.

Giving people access to and supporting people to use technology. Providing women with tablets, smart phones, mobile credit and data and showing them how to use this and how to email, if they struggle with technology.

Continued reflection and learning on how to keep new ways of communicating as safe as possible. For example, a local domestic abuse service developed a guidance document for staff around phone contact during COVID-19 with prompts and advice around how this can be done safely. See link below.

Setting up online peer support groups because face to face meetings were not possible - keeping spaces available for women to come together to chat and support each other.

Press 55 Option when calling 999:  
Workers sharing this information with clients so they are aware of this option.

TECHNOLOGY

FACE TO FACE

Some services have been able to continue their face to face work using PPE and maintaining social distancing rules. Workers shared how PPE had been provided to both clients and staff.

Using safe words with agreement beforehand about what they indicate and actions staff are to take in event they are used.

Worker and client going for a walk.

Meeting the client when the perpetrator is at an appointment of their own (e.g. their support worker, probation.)



Putting together and giving out well-being packs to women. Locally, several workers put together colouring pencils, colouring books, useful phone numbers, jigsaw puzzles in packs to give to women during COVID 19.

WELLBEING

# GOOD PRACTICE

## DURING COVID-19

Supporting Women with MCN who Experience Domestic Abuse



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### WORKING TOGETHER

#### TRAINING & SUPPORT

To access and provide training. For example, specialist domestic abuse services preparing and delivering training for non-specialist services online, such as emergency accommodation providers.

Services offering up their expertise to support frontline workers. For example, locally domestic abuse service workers in East Sussex have been able to call on the Mental Health trust for guidance and support for their own wellbeing during COVID-19.



If supporting someone experiencing DA, collaborating with other agencies that do see the client face-to-face can be useful to help check in and support the person, especially during COVID-19. For example, substance misuse services doing prescription drop offs, probation doing doorstep visits. This is a useful way to share information.

Working with other support services to schedule calls with client across a week, avoiding agencies all calling one client on one day and instead a client having the opportunity to speak to services throughout the week

#### COORDINATION OF SERVICES

#### NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Some services who were testing new partnership models have become particularly relevant during this time, we spoke to two of them:

**RISE:** An initiative covering 8 London boroughs; in each borough there is a specialist DA advocate, with expertise in women who have experienced multiple disadvantages, doing assertive outreach support and working in partnership with other organisations. Small caseloads and good knowledge of the impact of multiple disadvantages has enabled them to continue supporting (even if remotely) women who otherwise would not have accessed other DA services.

**The WiSER Project:** Is an assertive Outreach Navigators provide consultancy around DA to hostel and homeless services in B&H, this is done via a network of 'champions' who meet monthly to share best practice, offer training and advice. During COVID-19, meetings have been online and weekly. An online drop in has also been set up for all homeless organisations.



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### NEW INITIATIVES

#### NATIONAL RESPONSE

In response to COVID-19, the "Safe Space" initiative where Boots, Superdrug and Morrisons Pharmacies have allowed their consulting rooms to be a safe space for women experiencing domestic abuse. Their consultancy rooms are open, ready for women to use and display information on how to access specialist domestic abuse services.

<https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/>

A new Government awareness raising campaign was launched during COVID-19 - "At home shouldn't mean at risk" - to build public awareness of the issue and to promote the message that victims of domestic abuse could still seek help from the police and leave their homes to seek support during COVID-19.



Locally in East Sussex, prescription bags were printed with information about domestic abuse support on them.

The National Domestic Abuse helpline was added to the bottom of Tesco's shopping receipts.

Specialist DA Services supporting the Coronavirus Community Hubs by providing them guidance for how to start the conversation about DA if they suspect abuse.

Workers we spoke to were pleased that the media were sharing facts and stories about domestic abuse and many workers felt that attitudes were shifting, feeling that the issue was being seen as more of a community problem where we could all play a part in helping keep people safe from domestic abuse, we hope this will continue.

#### LOCAL COMMUNITY

### USEFUL LINKS

**Domestic abuse and sexual violence guidance for homelessness settings:**

<https://www.shp.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=0adfb4e9-d68f-4dfa-ad23-dbb8f891b5d3>

**Local advice for professionals working in Brighton & Hove and East Sussex:**

<https://theportal.org.uk/>

**RISE Link**

<https://www.riseuk.org.uk/professionals>