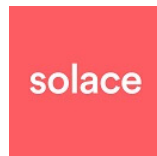


# COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS - DOMESTIC ABUSE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND OTHER FORMS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

## SAFETY AND WELLBEING ADVICE FOR SURVIVORS



**Many survivors will be feeling unsafe isolating in a house with an abusive person, and isolated from their support networks.**

**We want to reassure you we are here for you. We will be doing everything we can to support you during this challenging time.**

**We have put together some advice and information about support available. Remember that you are an expert in your own situation and only take on advice that feels safe and relevant to you.**

**Always remember that the abuse you are experiencing is not your fault.**

It is important to think through what steps you can take to keep safe. How might you respond in different situations? How will you get help if you need it?

- **Try to keep your mobile phone on you at all time.** Try to make sure your mobile phone is charged.
- **Family, friends and neighbours can support you.** Can you safely keep in touch with people you trust over the phone or online? This could be a friend, family member, neighbour, carer, or support worker. You can use the opportunities when you can leave the house to make these calls e.g. when you go to the supermarket.
  - Can you talk to them about what you are experiencing?
  - Can you have a code word with a trusted person that lets them know it is not safe to talk or to ask them to phone the police?
  - Could you agree a regular time and day for them to check-in?
  - Let them know if there are safe times to call you.
  - Get familiar with how to delete messages quickly. If the abuser is monitoring your phone - delete your messages or call records

afterwards. You can also try apps that allow for more secrecy. For example, Telegram and Signal.

- The **Police** are a key service when in immediate danger. **Do not be afraid to call 999 in an emergency.**
  - **Silent Solution**

When you call 999, the operator (the person on the phone) will ask which emergency service is required. If you cannot say 'police' or 'ambulance', you will be transferred to the Silent Solution system. You will then hear an automated message which will ask you to press 55. If you press 55 your call will be transferred to your local police force. [Click here](#) to find out more.
  - **Emergency Text Service**

If you can't call because you are d/Deaf or can't verbally communicate, you can register with the police text service. Text REGISTER to 999. You will get a text which tells you what to do next. Do this when it is safe so you can text when you are in danger. [Click here](#) to find out more.
  - **Reporting a Crime**

If you need to report a crime but you are not in immediate danger, you can call the police on 101 or [report online](#).

**The police have a duty to protect you and your children. You should not be discriminated against for any reason, including your immigration status.**

## **HELP AND SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE**

Support services can help you think through your safety options and provide emotional support. You can access support by calling a national helpline or accessing support online. Local support services are also still open, and are adapting the way they work to ensure you can still get the help you need.

## **NATIONAL HELPLINES**

All national helplines are free to call and can provide interpreter services if English is not your first language.

## ENGLAND

### **24h National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247**

The Helpline can be accessed using the BT Type Talk Service for d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing callers. You can also contact the helpline [online](#).

### **Rape Crisis National Helpline – Sexual Violence 08088 029 999**

Open between 12-2.30pm and 7-9.30pm every day. Accessible by Minicom on 0208 239 1124.

### **Karma Nirvana - Helpline for 'Honour'-based abuse and Forced Marriage 0800 5999 247**

You can also contact them online [here](#).

### **The National Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender + Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 999 5428**

[help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

### **Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327**

[info@mensadviceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadviceline.org.uk)

## WALES

### **24h Live Fear Free Helpline for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse, & Sexual Violence: 0808 80 10 800**

Text: 07800 77333

[info@livefearfreehelpline.wales](mailto:info@livefearfreehelpline.wales)

## SCOTLAND

### **24h Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline 0800 027 1234**

You can call the Helpline using a text relay service [helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk)

### **Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline 08088 01 03 02**

Text: 077537 410 027

[support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](mailto:support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

## NORTHERN IRELAND

24h Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline 0808 802 1414  
[help@dsahelpline.org](mailto:help@dsahelpline.org)

### ONLINE SUPPORT

Accessing information online may feel like the best option for you at this time. If you do access any information online you may need to delete your browser history or use 'private browsing' as a way to hide your searches. For more information on how to stay safe online click [here](#).

**Live Chat Services – 1-1 support via online instant messenger service.** Please check opening times on the relevant webpage.

- [Women's Aid Federation of England Live Chat](#)
- [Wales Live Fear Free Live Chat](#)
- [Scottish Women's Aid Live Chat](#)
- [Northern Ireland Domestic and Sexual Abuse Live Chat](#)
- [Rape Crisis England & Wales Live Chat](#)
- [Men's Advice Line Webchat \[for male survivors\]](#).
- [Galop online chat \[for LGBT survivors\]](#)

### Support via email:

Please see emails provided for national helplines above. Women's Aid Federation of England also provide support for domestic abuse survivors via email: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk).

### Peer support and survivor forums for example:

Wales – [Welsh Women's Aid Survivor Forum](#).

England – [Women's Aid Federation of England Survivor Forum](#).

### Apps for example:

[Hollie Gazzard App](#) - turns your smartphone into a personal safety device.

[Brightsky App](#) – mobile app providing support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know.

## SPECIALIST SUPPORT

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Survivors

- **Galop 0800 999 5428**  
[help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

### Black and Minoritised Women

- **Imkaan's Directory of Services**.
- **Southall Black Sisters Helpline** - a national helpline for black and minoritised women and migrant women, including women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) **0208 571 9595** - Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm  
Online outreach advice surgery - every Wednesday 10am-12pm
- **Latin American Women's Right's Service** - Domestic Abuse Helpline  
**0771 928 1714** (Monday to Thursday 10 AM - 1 PM)  
**0759 597 0580** (Monday to Friday 10 AM -1 PM)  
[referrals@lawrs.org.uk](mailto:referrals@lawrs.org.uk)

### Deaf and Disabled Survivors

- **Sign Health** – supports d/Deaf people experiencing domestic abuse, including a pilot online support project.  
**07970 350366** (Text or WhatsApp/Facetime)  
Call **020 3947 2601**  
[da@signhealth.org.uk](mailto:da@signhealth.org.uk)
  - **Stay Safe East** – supports d/Deaf and disabled people experiencing domestic abuse and hate crime (London only)  
[enquiries@staysafe-east.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@staysafe-east.org.uk)
  - **Respond** – support for people with learning disabilities and/or autism who have experienced trauma and abuse  
**020 7383 0700**  
[admin@respond.org.uk](mailto:admin@respond.org.uk)
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## LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES

You can still access support from your local support service, most likely by telephone or online. To find out about the local support services available in your area:

- Your Local Authority website should include information on where to get help in your local area. You can find out who your local authority is [here](#).
- **Women's Aid Directory of Services**
  - [Women's Aid England Directory of Services](#).
  - [Welsh Women's Aid Directory of Services](#).
  - [Scottish Women's Aid Directory](#).
  - [Women's Aid Northern Ireland Directory](#).
- **Rape Crisis**
  - England and Wales - [Local Centres](#).
  - Scotland - [Local Centres](#).
  - [Rape Crisis Northern Ireland](#).
- **Imkaan's Directory of Services** [[specialist support services for black and minoritised women](#)].

## GPs

You can still book an appointment with your GP. This will probably be carried out over the phone or via a video link. GPs have been sent guidance on how to best support you if they know or suspect that you are experiencing abuse.

If it isn't safe to talk when they ring you, you can ask them to call back. Make sure that you are alone and cannot be overheard if you accept the call.

Let your GP or nurse know if you don't feel safe, are frightened, in immediate danger or if the abuse is getting worse. If it's not safe for you to ring a support service or the police, you can ask the GP or nurse to do this for you.

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## SAFETY PLANNING

A personal safety plan helps you to think about how you can increase your safety. It's important to think through how you might respond in different situations, including crisis situations.

Support services can help you put a safety plan in place. There is also useful advice online

- Women's Aid's [Survivor Handbook](#) – [Making a Safety Plan](#)
- [Safety Planning Guidance from Safe Lives](#)
- [Chayn](#)
- [Refuge's Tech Abuse Advice](#)

Some questions to think through:

- Think through the layout of your house. Which rooms are safest? For example, where you can more easily leave the house. Which rooms should you try and avoid during an incident? For example, the kitchen.
- If your children are old enough – can you teach them how to call for help?
- If you had to leave in an emergency do you know where you would go?
- If possible pack an emergency bag for you and your children and keep it somewhere safe. Try to include essential things such as medication, identification, money or cards, and essential clothing for you and your children.

## DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE?

It may feel particularly difficult to leave at the moment. Your abuser may tell you are not able to leave because of self-isolation. But the [Government has confirmed](#) that **you can leave your home if you are experiencing abuse.**

There are four other reasons people can currently leave their homes– food shopping, health reasons, essential work, and exercise. These could provide opportunities to seek help.

If you do decide to leave, it is best to plan this carefully as it can be a risky time. Support services can help you plan the safest way to leave. You can also find further advice [here.](#)



The following information on housing options and legal protection may also be useful.

## Housing and Refuge

We understand that due to self-isolation staying with family and friends might not be an option.

- **Refuge services** could still be an option for you. You can find out about available refuge places by calling one of the national helplines, asking another support service or the police to help you.
  - Refuge services are still open and accepting referrals, though this has become more difficult. There is guidance for refuges on how to provide support during the COVID 19 pandemic including for survivors and children who may need to self-isolate with them.
  - **Pets:** many refuges are unable to accommodate pets. But there are specialist pet fostering services that can provide a solution. For more information please contact the [Dogs Trust Freedom Project](#) or [Paws Protect](#).
- Your **Local Authority Housing Department** still has a responsibility to give you information about your housing options. You will need to contact the department by phone or email. Contact details for your Local Authority Housing Department will be on their website. You can find out who your local authority is [here](#).
- **Shelter** provides free confidential housing information, support and legal advice on all housing and homelessness issues.  
0808 800 4444  
[Webchat](#)  
[www.england.shelter.org.uk](http://www.england.shelter.org.uk)

## Legal Protections

There is also a range of legal protections you can apply for:

- **An Occupation Order** – this order can exclude an abuser from living in a property, even if they are the joint or sole owner of the property.
- A **Domestic Violence Protection Order** – this is a temporary order and can remove an abuser from your residence and from making contact with you for up to 28 days.

- If you are not living with the abuser but are still experiencing abuse, you can apply for a **Non-Molestation Order** which can prevent the abuser from contacting you.
  - You can apply for a domestic abuse injunction online using [RCJ Citizens Advice CourtNav service](#) or you can self-refer to FLOWS for support making an application [here](#).
  - More information is available on the [Rights of Women's website](#), and they also run a [legal helpline if you need advice](#).
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## DISABILITY

Disabled survivors experience specific types of abuse, such as 'carer abuse', and experience more barriers to accessing support. Disabled survivors will also be experiencing more challenges during this time. Support services, social services and the police are still working, and are there to help.

- We understand that you may rely on the abuser for everyday tasks like getting washed and dressed, taking your medication, getting food, communication or paperwork. But you can ask your local social services for help with a care package so you don't have to depend on the abuser. **You must tell social services you are in danger, and need an emergency assessment.** It's important to tell them what help you need with and why the abuser can't help. Your local disability association can help advocate for you to get the support you need from social services.
- All the support services and legal protections outlined above are available to you. There are also specialist support services for d/Deaf and disabled survivors mentioned above ([Sign Health](#), [Stay Safe East](#), and [Respond](#)).
- [Disability Rights UK](#) provides guidance for users of social care and personal assistance - [click here](#).
- Information available in accessible formats:
  - Sign Health has produced accessible videos about COVID 19/ Corona virus in British Sign Language, including updates after the daily government briefings – [click here](#).

- Sign Health has produced accessible short educational films on consent, sexting, so called 'honour' based violence, forced marriage in British Sign Language. Available [here](#).
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## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and Young People are also deeply affected by abuse, and facing real challenges during the COVID 19 crisis. Support available for children and young people:

- [The Hide Out](#)
- [Love Respect](#)
- [Young Minds](#)
- [Child Line](#)
- [The Mix](#)

General resources for children/ families dealing with COVID 19:

- [7 Ways to support kids and teen through the pandemic](#) - The Clay Centre
- [Advice for families in self isolation](#) - Family Lives.

## Child Contact and Family Court

Child contact is often used as a way for abusers to continue their control, and arrangements have become more difficult due to COVID 19.

- Be mindful of sharing details such as your address, phone number or email address with your abuser that could compromise your safety. If your abuser turns up at your property without agreement do not allow him in. Call 999 if you are feeling threatened.
- Rights of Women have developed some useful information about child contact during COVID 19 – available [here](#).
- The President of the Family Division has released guidance on compliance with Family Court Child Arrangement Orders' during COVID 19 – available [here](#).

- If you have concerns around the Family Court
    - CAFCASS are regularly updating their information in regard to COVID 19 – available [here](#).
    - The Judiciary have also released some [guidance](#) on remote access to Family Courts.
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## MIGRANT AND REFUGEE SURVIVORS

We know that migrant survivors and those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) face barriers to accessing support.

The below updates and resources may be useful:

- [Rights of Women](#) immigration information and advice.
- Southall Black Sisters Helpline - a national helpline for black and minoritised women and migrant women, including women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)  
**0208 571 9595** - Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm  
[Online outreach advice surgery](#) including immigration advice- every Wednesday 10am-12pm
- Right to Remain: [changes to the asylum and immigration process due to COVID-19](#).
- For survivors living in asylum accommodation who have been served "Notice to Quit" letters - contact [Migrant Help](#).
- The Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP)'s factsheet about asylum support and Covid-19 [here](#).

The NHS have confirmed that no charges will be made in the diagnosis or treatment of coronavirus (COVID-19). This applies to everyone living in the UK, regardless of your immigration status. No immigration checks are required for testing or treatment for COVID-19, so please access healthcare if you need to. More information available [here](#).

The Welsh Government has confirmed that those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) in Wales will now be eligible for some additional types of government funded support such as housing and refuge support. More information available [here](#).

Also note that if your visa is about to expire or has expired after 24th January and you cannot travel due to #COVID2019, the Home Office has stated that you will be able to extend it until 31st May 2020. More information available [here](#).

### **Information available in different languages**

If English is not your first language, you can find information on Coronavirus (COVID 19) and advice for patients in 21 different languages - available [here](#).

The Muslim Women's Network UK has posted audio safety messages about domestic abuse and COVID 19 in different languages – available [here](#).

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## **FINANCES**

Many survivors experience economic abuse, and many will experience financial hardship during the COVID 19 crisis. There are some useful sources of support and information if you are facing financial difficulties.

- Surviving Economic Abuse has produced [guidance](#) on economic abuse while self-isolating, as well as practical issues including benefits and sick pay. The guidance is updated regularly as the situation changes.
  - Citizens Advice has [guidance on coronavirus](#) outlining what [benefits are available](#), and how to access [foodbanks](#).
  - [Turn2us](#) also helps people to access the money available to them through welfare benefits and grants.
  - The Royal Association for the Deaf can support d/Deaf people to access welfare benefits. You can contact them by email - [advice@royaldeaf.org.uk](mailto:advice@royaldeaf.org.uk). They also have a new Live Chat on their [website](#).
  - Some charities offer grants after leaving your home because of domestic abuse. For example [Family Fund](#) for families with disabled children, and [Buttle UK grants](#) for families in crisis.
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## MENTAL WELLBEING AND SELF-CARE

If you are or have previously experienced abuse, lockdown can be distressing. During this time it is important to prioritise your health and wellbeing.

### Self-Care and Useful Resources

Self-care is always important, but even more so at this time. Here are some useful resources to help you:

- Welsh Women's Aid [Self-Care Guide](#)
- Rape Crisis [Self-Care Guide](#)
- Rape Crisis [Grounding techniques](#)
- NHS [Self-Help Guides](#) including for sleep, anxiety, bereavement, and depression
- Mind's advice around [Mental health and COVID 19](#)
- Mindfulness Apps
  - [Insight Timer](#)
  - [Calm](#)
  - [Headspace](#)

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### Online counselling

If you were accessing counselling that has now been suspended; some counselling services can continue to provide helpline support. For example, [Support Line](#) provide a confidential telephone helpline and email counselling service. [Sign Health](#) are offering online therapy sessions in British Sign Language for Deaf People.

## MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINES

**[Samaritans](#)** 116123

Email: [jo@samaritans.org.uk](mailto:jo@samaritans.org.uk)

**[Mind](#)** 0300 123 3393

Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk) Text: 86463

**[Shout!](#)** – 24hr crisis text service for Deaf people

Text DEAF to 85258

## LGBT NETWORKS AND RESOURCES

[Trans Resilience in Isolation resource.](#)

LGBTQI+ London COVID19 & Social Distancing [Survival Guide.](#)

[LGBT+ London Mutual Aid group](#)

### Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Many survivors use alcohol or drugs as a means to cope with their experiences. All the support services listed in this resource provide non-judgemental emotional support. These services should be able to provide you with information about specialist drugs and alcohol support services. You can also access some online advice from [We are With You.](#)

### Mutual Aid Groups

During this crisis we have seen the power of communities with thousands of local mutual aid groups coming together across the country. These groups are made up of your neighbours who want to help one another with the challenges of current isolation measures. For example doing food shopping for those who can't, and combatting loneliness. You can find your local mutual aid group [here.](#)

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**We hope you have found this information helpful.  
Please remember you are not alone.  
We are here for you.**