



When staying at home isn't safe

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Measures put in place over the past few weeks to limit the spread of coronavirus have seen people's lives significantly change. For those living with a perpetrator of domestic abuse, life may have become especially difficult. You may also be increasingly worried about someone you know who is living with a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

Coronavirus is not responsible for domestic abuse, but the government's advice around social isolation and distancing, has created further opportunities for perpetrators to exert power and control over their victims. The wider consequences of the outbreak, including economically, will make victims even more vulnerable. We also know that the lasting impact on children and young people living in households with a perpetrator of domestic abuse is significant and we are committed to ensuring they are protected too.

Over recent weeks local support services have seen a drop in the number of calls, leading to fears that fewer victims are able to seek help during the lockdown.

Jenny Coles, Chair of the Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership, said: "The message from us is clear – dedicated support is available and domestic abuse continues to be a top priority. There is no need for anyone to suffer in silence because of coronavirus or the lockdown. We recognise that it is more difficult to reach out for support when the perpetrator is in the home, but we are working with services to create more discrete options for victims."

Detective Chief Inspector Ben Wright, head of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit, said: "Evidence from other countries suggests that the number of domestic abuse reports may increase as the lockdown continues.

"While we have not seen a significant rise in Hertfordshire yet, we would like to reassure the public that if we do, we are prepared. We are continuing to respond to domestic abuse reports, provide support to victims and hold perpetrators to account, despite the lockdown and social distancing measures.

"If you are in immediate danger you should still call 999. If you feel you cannot speak, you can alert us silently by dialing 999 then pressing 5 and 5 again. You can also report non-urgent matters silently via our web chat service through [www.herts.police.uk](#)."

David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, said: "My message for anyone suffering from domestic abuse, or at risk of it, is that despite the lockdown there is still help and support you can call on".

How to get support

We are encouraging victims of domestic abuse to contact Herts Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVA) on 0300 790 6772 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) who will conduct an initial risk assessment to signpost to the correct services. Or, if you require emergency refuge accommodation, you can call Safer Places specialist domestic abuse service on 0330 102 5811 (24/7 availability). These services can support anyone 16 years or over.

Alternatively, you can contact Hertfordshire's victim service team at Beacon, even if you don't want to report the incident at a crime. You can call a case manager in confidence on 0300 0115 555 and press option 3 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm and Wednesday 8am to 8pm) or email: info@hertfordshirebeacon.org.

For information and advice for yourself or someone you're worried about, you can go to: www.hertssunflower.org/herts-sunflower.aspx The website is a helpful local resource for anyone who is experiencing domestic abuse or those carrying out abuse who want support to change their behaviour. You can also speak to someone from the Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline, free and in confidence, for help, advice and support on 08 088 088 088 (open weekdays 9am to 9pm and weekends 9am to 4pm).

If you are in immediate danger but are afraid to speak, call 999 then press 5 and 5 to alert the police. There is no need to speak. Or if the matter is less urgent use their webchat service found at www.herts.police.uk.

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