Domestic Violence and Covid-19: Information and support for Students

During the current pandemic many people will be feeling unsafe isolating in a house with an abusive person, and isolated from their support networks. This guide outlines key information around the support available for our students both within the University and externally, if you are experiencing violence, feel you are at risk, have concerns about friends, family or neighbours or if you are concerned about your own behaviours.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer.

It is very common and in March 2019, an estimated 2.4 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

- Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:
  - Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
  - Psychological and/or emotional abuse
  - Physical or sexual abuse
  - Financial or economic abuse
  - Harassment and stalking
  - Online or digital abuse

Domestic abuse can include family violence where acts are perpetrated by family members. Acts can include forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so called “honour crimes”.

What should I do if I or someone I know is experiencing domestic abuse?

Women’s Aid have provided updated Guidance Safety and Support Resources in relation to Covid 19 for someone experiencing domestic abuse, concerned friends, family and neighbours.

If you need to report a crime but you are not in immediate danger, you can call the police on 101 or report online.
More detailed information about accessing support through a GP, Access to Refuge services and Legal Protections can be found on Women’s Aid [here](#) and a full [list of helplines and support services](#) are at the bottom of this page.

**How can the University and the Guild provide support to me?**
If there is no immediate threat to you and you wish to talk things over with someone confidentially and/or discuss any options available to you, you can contact:

- **Student Support Services** – Student Services, including Counselling and Mental Health Advisory Service, and Student Welfare Advice & Guidance are available between 09:00 and 17:00, Monday to Friday. If you would like to speak to an Adviser, please email at advice@liv.ac.uk with your name and Student ID.
- **Our Advice Service continues to provide advice to students via email and telephone support**, you can email guiladv@liverpool.ac.uk to request a Microsoft teams or phone call appointment.

You don't have to wait for an emergency situation to seek help. If domestic abuse is happening to you, it's important to tell someone and remember you're not alone.

**How does lockdown and household isolation affect those experiencing domestic abuse?**
If need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse, the COVID-19 household isolation instruction/lockdown does not apply. You can read the full guidance provided by the UK Government to support Victims of Abuse [here](#).

**What should I do If I am worried about a child?**
NSPCC provides guidance for parents and adults concerned for a child during the lockdown period. If you're worried about a child, even if you're unsure, you can contact their helpline to speak to a counsellors on 0808 800 5000, via email help@nspcc.org.uk or fill in their [online form](#). Abuse is always wrong and should always be reported.

For more information on the Universities safeguarding policy [follow this link](#).
I am worried about my housing situation and want to know my options:

The Guild Advice service provides advice around housing for students and you can also contact Liverpool Student Homes. For more specialist advice on homelessness you can access free confidential housing advice from Shelter; 0808 800 4444 / Webchat [https://england.shelter.org.uk/](https://england.shelter.org.uk/)

If you are concerned about your financial situation, you can contact Turn2us. They help people to access the money available to them through welfare benefits and grants. Their website has an income-related benefits checker enabling you to check that you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to.

The University of Liverpool also have a Money Advice and Guidance department. Information on how to contact them can be found [here](#)

I am an International Student and need support:

If you are an international student facing difficulties you can contact Guild Advice or Student Support for guidance. If it is an emergency situation you should contact the emergency services within the country you are staying in. The University of Liverpool also have a International Advice and Guidance department. Information on how to contact them can be found [here](#)

The resources included below are national organisations based in the UK, many of the online resources can provide informative support for students based overseas, such as Womensaid and some pages do have webchat options, however access to certain helplines may be limited.

I am worried for a friend what can I do to help?

If a friend confides in you that they have experienced sexual assault, familial or domestic violence they are showing a great deal of trust in you. There are a few key things you can do for them:

- Listen. You may have lots of questions but don't interrupt your friend. Let them tell you what happened in their own words, and show that you are really listening to them.
- Don't try to investigate, or question aspects of their account.
• Ask them what they want to do - don’t make decisions for them. Sometimes your friend might not be ready to come forward and seek support - don’t force them, just let them know that support is there whenever they are ready.
• Let them know that support is available if they wish to access it - direct them to this web page or talk through the pages together.

If you are concerned about your friend, you need advice or you’re not sure what to do, you should contact Advice and Guidance for confidential advice and guidance. You shouldn’t share your friend’s confidential information with anyone else unless they give you permission, or you have a good reason e.g. you are concerned that they are at immediate or imminent risk.

I am worried about my own behaviour
During the coronavirus crisis, many people in lockdown are feeling isolated, stressed out and under pressure. There is no excuse for abuse. White Ribbon have developed this survival kit for people under pressure which can be found (here).

Anyone who needs confidential help with their own abusive behaviour can contact Respect on their free helpline on 0808 802 4040.

Always remember that you are not alone and there are people available to support you. If you are in an emergency situation where yourself or another person is at risk of immediate harm contact 999.

Information on Local Support Services
• Merseyside Domestic Violence Services - For Assistance: call or text: Mobile 077809 48890.

• For links to support local helplines in Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and other local regions as well as further national helplines click here

• RASA is a charity who supports anyone who has been sexually abused or raped, or who has been affected by sexual violence at any time in their lives. They offer emotional support, counselling, advocacy and other services to help survivors in ways that work for them. RASA offer support regardless of age or gender, and work with both adults, and children. You can contact RASA by call or email.

Specialist Support for Women
Women can call The Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge on 0808 2000 247 for free at any time, day or night. The staff will offer confidential, non-judgemental information and support.

Womensaid provide information and support to women experiencing abuse and survivors who may be experiencing difficulties during the pandemic.

**Specialist lesbian, gay, bisexural and transgender (LGBT) support**

- Galop: 0800 999 5428 / help@galop.org.uk

**Specialist ‘by and for’ support for 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

**Specialist support for Deaf and disabled survivors:**

Sign Health: Supports d/Deaf people experiencing domestic abuse, including a pilot online support project –

Call 020 3947 2601 / (Text or WhatsApp/Facetime) 07970 350366
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

Respond: Support for people with learning disabilities and/or autism who have experienced trauma and abuse – 020 7383 0700 /admin@respond.org.uk
Specialist support for Male Survivors

Men can call the Men's Advice Line free on 0808 801 0327 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) or ManKind on 01823 334 244

Mental Health Helplines
Access to support for your mental health is really important during lockdown.
Samaritans: 116123 / jo@samaritans.org.uk
Mind: 0300 123 3393 / info@mind.org.uk / Text: 86463
Shout! – 24hr crisis text service for d/Deaf people / Text DEAF to 85258