

Southampton District and Channel Islands District Safeguarding Newsletter

March 2020

Following government and church guidance safeguarding training has been cancelled. Courses will be rebooked as soon as we are able but we recognise this may be some time in the future.

I am continuing to work from home and you can get me via mobile or email as usual.

Some news which may help us in the coming weeks / months:

DBS:

Update from GOV.UK – COVID-19: Changes to standard and enhanced ID checking guidelines

We have received this new temporary guidance from the DBS which has been introduced to overcome problems during the current restrictions in having face to face meeting to verify documents:

Currently, when validating ID documents, it is best practice to carry the examination out face-to-face with a live video link as an alternative method. Under the current guidance, the ID checker must be in physical possession of the original documents so they can be checked for indicators of fraud.

As the public is being advised to work from home where possible, this is causing difficulties in receiving the physical documents and is delaying applications, and in some cases, preventing applications from being submitted.

To ensure that the necessary DBS checks can still be carried out, the DBS standard and enhanced ID checking guidance will be changed for a temporary period.

The change will enable:

- ID documents to be viewed over video link
- scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted

The applicant will be required to present the original versions of these documents when they first attend their employment or volunteering role.

The change came into effect on 19 March 2020.

Circuit verifiers will be able to take people through the process.

Scams

As you may have seen on the news recently, the activities of the scammers continues and increases – please do try to ensure the vulnerable you are in touch with are aware of this behaviour. I have received 2 scam emails this week – the first informed me the Amazon order I had placed was out of stock and I needed to provide my bank details for a refund. The second a couple of days later said they were still waiting for my bank details.

I have ordered a couple of things from Amazon recently. However, when I looked at the emails a number of things confirmed it was a scam:

- the Amazon logo and name wasn't quite right
- it didn't specify the product which was out of stock
- they name of the company purported to be from wasn't the one on the Amazon website
- Amazon doesn't ask for details – Amazon just refunds money direct to the card

Below is some helpful information on the risks for those who may be experiencing domestic abuse at this time.

Coronavirus lockdown is a dangerous time for victims of domestic abuse – here's what you need to know

Emphasis is currently being placed on people to self-isolate from their places of work and leisure, posing the home as a place of relative safety during the coronavirus pandemic. However, there is growing concern about what impact this might have on those trapped in intimate relationships with people who use violence and abuse.

For some people, home is not a safe place to be, so the prospect of large parts of the population being confined to prevent the spread of the coronavirus opens the potential for increased incidents of domestic abuse.

Of course, COVID-19 cannot cause domestic violence, just as alcohol, drugs, unemployment etc. do not cause it. However, a heightened state of anxiety and stress – including medical anxiety and the stress many of us will feel around being in such close proximity for such extended periods of time with our families – is likely to make this a more dangerous time - especially but not just - for women and children.

This is in line with existing research that highlight that natural disasters and diseases are factors in increased reports of domestic abuse.

Perpetrators may attempt to deal with extra stress and anxiety by imposing stricter and more unrealistic regimes on their families' activities and behaviours. It's a moment when the net of coercive control can be tightened. In fact, "social distancing" and "isolation" are core tactics of a coercively controlling partner.

The majority of us are in contact with domestic violence victims, survivors and perpetrators, even if we do not usually recognise it. We are their lecturers, their medical professionals, their carers, their teachers, their social workers, their line managers and so on. If we are working in any kind of support role or direct contact role during the COVID-19 crisis it is important to remember that "working from home" brings with it very different challenges for different people. We need to be aware of how this may impact victims and perpetrators of domestic violence as well as children in the home.

Here are a few things that might be useful for people to consider during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Understand that stress and anxiety does not cause domestic abuse but it may increase it in families where it is already being perpetrated. Acknowledge that this is an extremely unsafe time.
- Check in with someone who you are personally worried about. If making a phone call to a suspected domestic abuse victim or survivor, always assume that the perpetrator could be listening in. The same goes for instant messaging services.
- Also consider the issues for children who in a high percentage of cases observe the abuse.

Taking a time out

At the time of writing, in the UK helpline services are still available.

- Respect run a phonenumber for people concerned about their use of violence and abuse (0808 802 4040),
- a webchat available through their website and also a specialist helpline for male victims of domestic abuse (0808 8010327).
- The National Domestic Abuse helpline is open 24 hours a day on 0808 2000247.

There may well be services still offering support in your area.

If you are concerned about someone who may be at risk or you feel unsafe yourself do seek help. Please do call me for more information.

A range of resources and advice is available on the Methodist Church website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/coronavirus/>

Final thought:

Perhaps now more than ever we need to remember Paul's words to the Philippians in chapter 4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.