

**Herefordshire**  
**Community Safety Partnership**

## COVID-19 and Safeguarding

COVID-19 is an extremely challenging situation for everyone. The way we are working has significantly changed and we continue to face staff shortages. All agencies are facing the same challenges. During this time, we need to ensure that we continue to work together to safeguard our most vulnerable individuals.

The role of all agencies at this time is to continue to recognise when children/adults/families are struggling or potentially suffering abuse or neglect, signpost to resources which can help, refer to other agencies as available and appropriate and support those individuals where possible. This may include making safeguarding referrals as you would normally do.

### Some of the implications of COVID-19

Children and adults will continue to be abused and neglected throughout this time. Some may be at higher risk, for example:

Children on Child Protection Plans, Looked After Children or children who are classed as a Child in Need: they and their families/carers may not have their usual support systems to rely on and therefore be at heightened risk of worsening abuse or neglect

Families will be under increased amounts of stress due to new financial pressures, household isolation, school closures and lack of normal outlets for stress and frustrations.

Victims of domestic abuse self or household isolation could be at greater risk as they could be unable to access the people and resources that could help them.

Adults who are vulnerable and isolated may be at increased risk of financial exploitation from somebody offering help under the guise of 'COVID kindness'.

Children, young people and adults who are already at risk of abuse or neglect, may be more at risk as normal support mechanisms are not in place and frontline professionals have less capacity to support and safeguard.

## **Practical tips for safeguarding children families and adults during this period.**

Victims of abuse may be unable to speak freely if being contacted at home and the subtle signs of abuse and / or neglect may not be as obvious during phone / video contact.

Prior to making the call, if there is a safe contact number, consider sending a message advising that personal questions may be asked during the virtual meeting and whether they will have difficulty accessing a space by themselves.

Use of live chat during web calls could also be used, so any general verbal conversation that would appear to be fairly ordinary could have a text exchange occurring at the same time.

For phone or video assessments

Check who else is in the house/room when you are speaking to them

Ask about what support they have, how they are managing with isolation / schools closing / social distancing.

Ask if they feel safe, are they afraid of anyone

Consider use of 'closed' questions when asking about safety – questions with 'yes/no' answers may help someone share that they are being

Encourage and promote ongoing social support and contact with their friends and family through virtual means e.g. by phone, video chat.

And at all times maintain "Professional Curiosity"

Follow local safeguarding procedures if you become aware there are children or adults experiencing domestic abuse.

**For Adult referrals follow [this link](#)**

If you need to speak to someone about your concerns you can contact the Advice and Referral Team (ART) on 01432 260715

**To raise a concern about a child follow [this link](#)**

If you need to speak to someone about your concerns you can contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 01432 260800

Consider a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) referral if there is a significant risk of harm. Further information about this process can be found [here](#)

**West Mercia Women's Aid** have many resources available to help and information can be found here <http://westmerciawomensaid.org/>. You can also contact them on 0800 783 1359

**National Domestic Violence Helpline:** 0808 2000 247

<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>

**SafeLives:** Specific resources for domestic abuse and COVID.

<https://safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19>

**NSPCC** helpline: If you're worried about a child, even if you're unsure, contact NSPCC professional counsellors for help, advice and support. 0808 800 5000

**Childline:** Offers free, confidential advice and support for any child 18 years or under, whatever the worry. 0800 1111.

**MIND:** Mental Health Support with specific advice on 'Coronavirus and your wellbeing'. [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**YoungMinds:** Supporting children and young people and their parents/carers with their mental health and wellbeing. Specific advice on managing self-isolation and anxiety about coronavirus. <https://youngminds.org.uk>

**Kooth** has just launched a new online counselling and wellbeing service in Herefordshire for 11 – 26 year olds. Kooth is:

- Safe, confidential, anonymous
- Free to users
- Available 365 days a year through a smart phone, tablet or computer: go to [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

You can also find more Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Resources for Herefordshire on our website <https://herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk>