

Dear Colleagues,

We are contacting you to tell you about the work that is currently progressing to address domestic abuse here in Oxfordshire and to ask for your support to help address the increased risks for families during the Coronavirus outbreak.

You will not need us to tell you that while staying at home is incredibly important to reduce the spread of Covid-19 for many home is **not** a safe place. To be trapped at home with someone who harms you can be very frightening. Isolating somebody from their friends, family, and the outside world is already something many perpetrators of domestic abuse do to control their partners. The current restrictions on movement will add opportunities for more extreme isolation and harm. Further that Children at home due to school closures will be experiencing increased emotional and psychological harm by experiencing domestic abuse and parental conflict within their home as well as a likely increase in direct abuse which may also include physical harm. In addition to increasing tension and stress within households, which is likely to increase conflict in the home, social isolation and distancing measures also make it much harder for people experiencing abuse to reach out and get help. Both adults and children experiencing domestic abuse will have fewer opportunities to speak to someone or ask for help. Younger children are less able to express what is happening and therefore at risk of increased harm. Older people who may have less access to support and information online will also be more at risk.

I recently held a meeting with Sarah Carter, Strategic Lead for Domestic Abuse with Oxfordshire County Council and Sarah Breton, Head of Children's Commissioning for Oxfordshire County Council. This followed a discussion with Jane Portman, Interim Director of Children's Services, where we agreed that we should look at the possibility of an Oxfordshire campaign with regard to Domestic Abuse at this time. What impressed me in my meeting with Sarah Carter and Sarah Breton is the work that had already been done regarding such a campaign.

Since movement restrictions began on 23 March, a domestic abuse Covid-19 multi-agency group has been meeting regularly to ensure that services are in place to meet current and changing needs of people in Oxfordshire. The group has focused on

- ensuring services can offer help using more telephone or online support
- monitoring referrals, incidents and disclosures across all agencies
- developing targeted information to raise awareness of domestic abuse and tell people how to get help

The work around the campaign and publicity around Domestic Abuse has drawn from national materials that they are looking to localise to Oxfordshire and has three strands; all of which have links and resources associated with them:

- 1. Speaking out to victims** – ensuring victims and children can get help, which has the following elements:
 - Identifying the Oxfordshire relationship help and support during covid-19 – which are accessed by following this link [here](#)
 - Oxfordshire help and support during covid-19 which can be accessed [here](#)
 - A safety planning infographic from West Sussex County Council available online [here](#)



- A Thames Valley Police Domestic Abuse Poster Campaign [DA Poster Campaign](#)
 - The Government #YouAreNotAlone [campaign](#) and [information](#)
 - The [Reducing the Risk website](#) which has information about what abuse might look like, how to stay safe, and what to do if you're worried about somebody.
2. **Listening from home** – information for everyone to help them look and listen out for friends and family, neighbours or others in their community with the following elements:
- Neighbourhood Watch DA [toolkit](#) and [leaflet](#) with advice on how to help.
 - [Listening from home](#) national campaign Lead by Hestia
3. **Direct access** – guidance for those who may be able to help because they are directly in contact with an adult or child suffering domestic abuse
- [Safely asking about domestic abuse during Covid-19](#) (for professionals and volunteers already in phone contact with members of the public)

In addition, the partnership is working locally, regionally and nationally to deliver the following

- A media campaign, with interviews on local TV and radio, social media shares and poster campaigns with local retailers.
- A “safe spaces” initiative operating from named pharmacies offering a place where victims can discreetly call for help and support for domestic abuse
- An instant messaging App for victims of abuse to access discreet advice and support from home
- Further support from retailers, delivery companies and volunteers to enable victims to know that help is there and to disclose abuse and get support.

Clearly with such a great range of activity underway and planned, it makes sense for the OSCB and the OSAB to join with and support this fabulous level of activity. So can I ask you all to cascade this letter/information sheet to all staff members and volunteers in your organisation so that we reach as wide an audience as possible and promote this campaign as much as you are able internally within your organisations?

Also, looking for OSCB and OSAB partners to organisationally and as much as possible for your staff to personally share “Domestic abuse during Covid-19 [here](#)” (*a poster to be shared online and printed out, right click to save the image and if printing select ‘shrink to page’ option*) – on both your organisational social media pages but also asking your staff members to post it on their professional/personal accounts (if safe to do so). Also, we are aware of a number of Facebook pages that have sprung up around mutual aid and support to vulnerable folks during the current situation, if you have staff members who are members of these Facebook groups who would be willing to post the poster on to the group pages that would ensure a very wider audience. If you are printing off and displaying the poster, please do so in areas accessed by both staff and the public.

Thank you all for taking the time to read this request/briefing and please do join with us in this campaign and activity. Thank you.

Richard Simpson
Chair of OSCB

Sue Ross
Chair of OSAB

