**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & ABUSE: COVID 19 CONTINGENCY PLAN**

Early evidence from the lockdown in China suggests that reports of domestic abuse have doubled in some areas and we know previous crises have led to an increase in perpetrators abusing their victims. We also know that for some of our families living with abusive perpetrators, where home is not a place of safety, but a place where they will face a potential increase in violence and psychological and economic abuse as well as even greater isolation.

We are aware that perpetrators will use infection control measures as a tool of coercive and controlling behaviour. Social distancing and isolation measures (such as working from home) that are necessary to control the spread of the virus may reinforce the power that an abuser has over a victim and their family. We anticipate that access to support may become more difficult due to social isolation thus further increasing their risk.

**Silent Solutions** is a system for victims of domestic abuse who might be afraid of further danger and escalation of harm if they are overheard when calling 999 in an emergency.

When somebody calls 999, an operator will ask which emergency service is required. If the caller is unable to audibly signal to the operator, the call will be forwarded to an operating system.

If 55 is pressed by the caller, the system will detect this. The operator will then transfer the call to the relevant police force as an emergency.

National helplines, email, text and live chat support services, and local specialist services, are currently open for business as usual, although their delivery is likely to have to adapt over the coming weeks.

**Camden Safety Net** is providing additional support such as more frequent contact with those at risk and developing dynamic safety plans. We know that victim / survivors and families of domestic abuse might feel more unsafe during this time, especially if they are self-isolating and staying at home with an abuser. This could include guidance such as enlisting help and support from trusted friends and/or neighbours, asking them to check in regularly if safe to do so and setting up code words or phrases with them, which would indicate police, should be contacted.

We are aware of the significant impact that the reduction of any service can have upon those who are at risk. Consequently, we continue to plan with our partners for different eventualities to ensure the continuation of this essential service. Please be aware that we are finding it very challenging to access refuge space for our clients.

Following Public Health England and NHS guidelines, our priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our service users and our staff. It is our aim to keep our service functioning. In doing so, there will need to be changes in how the service is delivered:

* We have suspended our training offer
* All our advocacy and safety planning will be done by telephone, email and / or text
* All counselling services will continue remotely
* IDSVAs will no longer be co-located throughout the community services
* Our duty service will continue to operate providing immediate advice and support via telephone or email

Survivors can access support and advice around domestic and sexual abuse by contacting:

Camden Safety Net

Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

t: 0207 974 2526

e: Camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk or camden.safetynet@nhs.net

**In an emergency call 999.**

For non-emergency matters requiring police assistance please call 101.

Some other helpful numbers:

The National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

North London Rape Crisis: 0808 082 9999

The Haven: 0203 312 1101

Accessing information online may feel like the best option for you at this time. If you do access any information online you may need to delete your browser history or use ‘private browsing’ as a way to hide your searches.