You Are Not Alone – Police launch domestic abuse campaign to victims and survivors to seek help



We are urging anyone who is dealing with domestic abuse, or anyone who is concerned that someone they know could be dealing with domestic abuse, to come forward and ask for help.

The force is supporting the national campaign 'You Are Not Alone', which aims to spread the message that there continues to be support available for victims and survivors of domestic abuse despite the current restrictions in place due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Domestic abuse comes in many forms. It can involve physical violence, but it can also be psychological – something which is referred to as coercive and controlling behaviour – This type of abuse leaves no marks or scars but can cause victims to experience fear, loss of freedom, on a daily basis.

If your relationship leaves you feeling scared, intimidated or controlled, you may be in an abusive relationship. There is no excuse for abuse – it's a crime. We would like to remind victims and survivors of domestic abuse that they are not alone and that the police and specialist support agencies are still here and able to provide help and support.

We are working closely with local domestic support organisations and charities to ensure that services and ongoing support are available to anyone that needs it during the lockdown period, including access to refuges.

Chief Superintendent Deryck Rees comments: "At the moment we are being asked to stay home to keep ourselves and others safe, but we know that for some people home isn't necessarily a safe place to be. If you are living with someone who is hurting you, threatening you, or doing anything that makes you feel worried or scared then you may feel even more isolated and afraid.

"No one should have to deal with domestic abuse alone. We're supporting the Government's #YouAreNotAlone campaign and over the coming weeks we'll be sharing information about how we, and the many local domestic abuse services in your area, can offer help and support."

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens added: "Under the lockdown restrictions, those in domestic abuse environments are confined to their homes and even more isolated from loved ones. It's more important than ever that we are reassuring victims that Avon and Somerset Police, support services and myself are still here to help. Being at home shouldn't mean being at risk.

"I cannot stress enough that help is still out there and you do not need to suffer in silence. Despite these uncertain times, we want victims and survivors to come forward, speak out and be heard. You are not alone."

Carol Metters, CEO at Next Link says: "Victims need us now more than ever in these extraordinary times. We know that victims just physically can't reach out for services and are isolated in their homes or quarantined with their abusive partner. We need to get the message out they are not alone and the police and specialist domestic abuse services are working in partnership to ensure they are safe and given the help they need. We know victims who receive help do go on to have safe fulfilling lives"

Natalie Giles, Team Manager, Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service, part of the You Trust, says: "We're very much open for business at the moment, but we're concerned that calls to our helpline and referrals have reduced.

"We are happy to take calls from victims, anonymous calls, calls from friends and family members and from professionals. We can offer you advice and support. No concern is too trivial. We need to reassure people that the services are there to help, we're there to offer you advice when you need it. We're there to support you and make sure that you are safe.

If you are concerned for your safety, or worried about someone you know then please let us know. You can report on 101 or online, and in an emergency always call 999. If it's not safe to speak, then dial 55 and the operator will put you straight through to the police.

We are here, we can help. You are not alone.

For further guidance and information on what to do if you are concerned about domestic abuse during the COVID-19 outbreak, please watch the following video: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_vI_yETmCk&t=1s**

National advice and support:

www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse

National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247 Mankind: 01823 334244

In Bristol, South Glos and North Somerset: Next Link:

Call 0800 4700 280 (10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)

You can also access a live chat service at: **www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk** (**10-4pm, Monday to Friday)**

In Somerset: Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service:

Call 0800 69 49 999 (8.00am and 8.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.00am – 1.00pm on a Saturday and Sunday)

Or via email at youfirstsidas@theyoutrust.org.uk