

Police circulate advice to people living with an abusive partner or family member

Lockdown is difficult for everyone. For those living with an abusive partner or family member, it is dangerous, traumatic and relentless. Opportunities to get support are more limited than ever and Police Scotland has circulated the following advice.

If you believe someone is in immediate danger please call 999 and ask for the police. Silent calls will work if you are not safe to speak – use the Silent Solution system and call 999 and then press 55 when prompted. If you can't use a voice phone, you can register with the police text service – text REGISTER to 999. You will get a text which tells you what to do next. Do this when it is safe so you can text when you are in danger.

It's hard to reach out for help from behind closed doors. We need someone outside to



As a friend or family member or neighbour, it's not your responsibility to stop the abuse. But you can do a lot to help

by following a few simple steps.

1. Prepare

Think of safety first and don't put yourself or your friend at risk.

Think about safe ways to meet or contact them when they're alone

Know what help is available locally – try searching your local council website for 'domestic abuse'

Have the numbers for the relevant national helplines to hand

Be led by what they think is safe

2. Ask

Start conversations gently, conveying your concern.

"You haven't been in touch much lately. Is everything OK?"

"I've noticed you seem a bit down. Has anyone upset you?"

"I'm worried about how you're doing during lockdown. Should I be?"

3. Listen

A common concern is feeling like you don't know enough about domestic abuse to respond well. But simply listening can help someone to break the silence around their situation.

"Go on..."

"How do you feel about that?"

"Thank you for telling me."

4. Reassure

If someone tells you they are being abused, the important

thing to convey is that you believe the person. And to let them know what's happening to them is wrong.

"I believe you."

"It's not your fault."

"Thank you for telling me."

5. Offer help

Make suggestions, not demands. It's important not to pressure the person who is experiencing abuse. They need to make their own decisions in their own time.

Offer to ring a helpline to find out about support.

Offer to make a plan together on how to stay safe – take a look at our safety planning guide

You could offer a place to stay if needed, or keep an emergency bag. Remember leaving an abusive partner can be dangerous. It should be done with the support of a specialist domestic abuse service.