

11 May 2020

Weekly Update from the Domestic Abuse Sector

Background

1. Every week, Nicole Jacobs chairs a conference call with national helpline providers, second tier organisations, and Government Departments to share emerging trends, facilitate cross-sector working, and to escalate issues as required.

Helplines

2. **There continues to be increased demand across national helplines and most support services in comparison to pre-Covid levels, although some helplines reported a small dip in calls in the previous week.** The following key issues were also noted:
 - a. **Calls continue to be complex and average call times are longer than pre-lockdown**, reflecting an increase in emotional support calls rather than those that just provide practical advice, as well as victims calling to make plans in advance for when restrictions ease.
 - b. **Changes in types of callers were noted** -increases in family, friends and neighbours calling on behalf of loved ones. For example, from 6 April to 1 May, Karma Nirvana saw a 19% drop in referrals from police, a 80% drop in referrals from teachers, and a 42% increase in victims self-referring.
 - c. **Continued increase in web traffic and live chat across the board** - confirms trend of victims using more discrete forms of technology to access services. Galop saw a 55% increase in website traffic in the past week.
 - d. **Additional funding from the Home Office has now been received by some helplines**, including Refuge, Respect, Galop and Surviving Economic Abuse.

General Sector Updates and other issues:

3. **There was increasing frustration over continued lack of clarity about different funding streams from across Government and fears that Departments operating in isolation may inadvertently design funding streams that do not reach the organisations they were designed to support.**
4.
5. **Particular issues raised were:**
 - a. **Significant confusion amongst the charity sector about which fund they should be applying into, with limited information from Government about how duplication can be avoided;**
 - b. **Wish for greater transparency from Government as this work develops, including what funding has already been allocated and to whom;**
 - c. **Clarity is needed regarding outcome reporting in any prospectus, which should be as light-touch as possible in order to avoid putting off the smaller organisations that the funding should be designed to reach;**
 - d. **Timescales must take into account the huge pressures the sector are under currently, with sufficient time allowed for bids to be prepared;**
 - e. **A need for greater flexibility on the timescales for the funding depending on need.** The sector anticipate a significant surge in demand as lock-down rules begin to ease, with some populations (such as disabled people) likely to seek support in increased numbers well beyond the 6 month period currently allocated for funding.