

**18 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 the weekly increase is slowing and some helplines have seen a very small dip 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 provide practical advice, as well as victims calling to make plans in advance for when restrictions ease. WWA reported call duration doubling since March.
  - b. **Changes in types of callers were noted** -increases in family, friends and neighbours calling on behalf of loved ones. Karma Nirvana saw an 80% drop in police referrals, and a 33% drop in social care referrals, whilst self-referrals to the helpline increased by 42%.
  - 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 noted a 57.4% overall increase in web traffic since before lockdown, whilst Rights of Women saw a 53% increase in the last week.
  - d. **There was an increase in contacts from and on behalf of young people in the last week**, particularly from LGBT+ people already at high risk. There was concern that this could be impacted by the change in lockdown restrictions, and exacerbated by school closures.
  - e. **Helplines have been receiving a significant number of harassing calls**, with Rights of Women noting a particular increase in recent weeks to average at around 1 call per hour. Other services confirmed a generally high level of harassment, but not yet clear whether this is higher than normal.

**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. **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;