

15 April 2020

Dear Colleague

The current extraordinary circumstances are difficult for us all as we try to cope with restrictions on our normal lives and interactions. They are even more difficult for those people for whom home is not a safe place because of unseen and hidden crimes like domestic abuse and child sexual abuse; those offences that typically take place behind closed doors, in the shadows and which often go underreported.

As we pull together and look across our society at how we can help and protect one another, I want to send a strong message to victims of violence, abuse and exploitation that they are not alone, forgotten or abandoned. We must be clear to perpetrators of these abhorrent offences that our brilliant police and law enforcement agencies will not relent in bringing them to justice. This letter outlines the urgent steps the government is taking, and how you can support us in this vital work.

Whilst we have not yet seen a significant rise in police recording of hidden crimes, other data and expert insight indicates these crimes are increasing, including some UK helplines seeing a significant uptick in calls. We also know from the National Crime Agency (NCA) that child sexual abuse offenders are discussing online increased opportunities to prey on vulnerable children during this time. The police, NCA and GCHQ are doing a remarkable job of redoubling their efforts to safeguard the most vulnerable in response to this threat. In partnership with these agencies, we are closely monitoring trends to understand the changing threat picture, so we can act swiftly to prevent and tackle offending.

On Saturday I announced an ambitious suite of actions my department is taking at a national level to address these areas of increased risk. The £750 million boost for charities announced by the Chancellor on 8 April will include services for victims of domestic abuse and child protection charities. On top of this I announced an additional £2 million to enhance online support services and helplines for domestic abuse, so that anyone who is cut off from their usual social contacts or personal support can still seek help from their homes. Last week, together with the Ministry of Justice, my department also launched a new fund for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. This will provide £1.2m per year for key services, including helplines and resources.

To help bring these crimes out of the shadows and show our support and compassion for those trapped in a cycle of abuse, I have also launched a new, national domestic abuse communications campaign. I have been absolutely clear that whilst our brave police are out on the streets playing a crucial role in enforcing the restrictions and defeating this deadly virus, they will continue to support vital safeguarding work and ensure the most vulnerable in our community are safe and get the help they need. The campaign #YouAreNotAlone will be promoted through social media to help ensure routes of support for victims, including children, are highly visible and accessible. It will signpost them to these resources and provide essential reassurances that the police and other support services remain on hand to protect them. Everyone can play a part in this campaign, and I am asking for your support in doing so through a few simple steps.

- Please post a picture or video of yourself with the symbol of a heart drawn on your palm. Tag five or more people asking them to do the same to spread the message. Please use the hashtag #YouAreNotAlone in your post.

- Alternatively, please post the attached campaign asset or animation on your websites and ask visitors to reshare, using the #YouAreNotAlone hashtag in your message.
- Share the gov.uk/domestic-abuse [address where people can find out more information, including helplines. Again, please include the #YouAreNotAlone hashtag.](https://gov.uk/domestic-abuse)
- You may wish to use the following text with any social media posts:

At home shouldn't mean at risk. If you or someone you know is suffering from #DomesticAbuse, isolation rules do not apply. Police response & support services remain available. Find support at gov.uk/domestic-abuse or call 999 if you are in immediate danger. #YouAreNotAlone]

With the majority of children out of school and spending increased amounts of time online, we are also working across government, with law enforcement, the charitable sector and industry to promote online safety messages and guidance. The NCA's #OnlineSafetyAtHome campaign and ThinkUKnow resources provide essential support and advice to children and parents on keeping children safe online which have been disseminated widely; 1.5 million users received a link to the resources via Yubo and data for early April indicates the campaign has reached almost 3 million people via Twitter. We are also continuing work to prevent offending by supporting the Lucy Faithfull Foundation's *Stop It Now!* campaign, signposting people concerned about their own behaviour, or the behaviour of others, towards effective and anonymous help provided by the Foundation.

Across Government we are ensuring schools, parents and carers, and the general public have access to the guidance and advice to keep children safe. DfE's interim safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges aims to support staff to keep children safe, including online, and encourages schools to disseminate messages and resources to children and guardians regarding support and online safety. This has been supplemented by the development of Government guidance (available on Gov.uk) for parents and carers on keeping their children safe online. I would encourage you all to engage with schools in your constituencies to help to ensure the resources cited in this guidance are being made available to children and their carers.

We are working too with the charity sector to understand changing demand and ensure helplines remain open for victims and survivors. Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline continues to be available 24 hours a day, every day of the week, and this and other domestic abuse helplines provide invaluable support for victims. Those with concerns about the welfare of a child can contact the NSPCC's dedicated helpline, and children can continue to seek advice via Childline and the 'For Me' app. Our Forced Marriage Unit's helpline, Karma Nirvana's "Honour"-Based Abuse Helpline and the NSPCC's Female Genital Mutilation helpline continue to operate as normal and promoting these services will be key to supporting victims to seek the help they require.

We want all the messages and resources that I have outlined to reach far and wide. They are intended to mobilise the eyes and ears across our communities, ensure no victim suffers isolated and alone. I have attached a full list of resources referenced within this letter at **Annex A**, which can be promoted alongside other local and national initiatives.

Together we can make a profound difference to the lives of those currently vulnerable and living in fear and send a clear message that they are not alone.

Thank you.

Rt Hon Priti Patel

Annex A: list of referenced resources for victims and survivors of certain hidden crimes

Vulnerability	Resource	Website	Contact
Child safety	Guidance for parents and carers on keeping children safe online	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online	
	Interim safeguarding advice for schools	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers	
	<i>ThinkUKnow</i> child online safety campaign and resources	https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/ ; https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets/	
	Lucy Faithful Foundation <i>Stop it Now!</i> Campaign and confidential helpline	https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/how-we-prevent-child-sexual-abuse/the-lucy-faithfull-foundation/	I&S
Domestic abuse	Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse	
	Refuge - National Domestic Abuse Helpline	https://www.refuge.org.uk/	I&S
	Galop - National Lesbian, Gay,	www.galop.org.uk/	I&S

	Bisexual and Trans Domestic Violence Helpline		
	Respect - The Men's Advice Line	http://respect.uk.net/	I&S
	Respect – Phoneline for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse	http://respect.uk.net/	I&S
"Honour"-Based Abuse	HBA Helpline	https://karmanirvana.org.uk/help/	I&S support@karmanirvana.org.uk
	HMG Forced Marriage Unit	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage	I&S fmu@fco.gov.uk
	NSPCC Female Genital Mutilation Helpline	https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/	I&S fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk