

Childrens Scrutiny – Domestic Abuse and Covid 19 –

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Context –

- Written from the perspective of specialist service – working with people who fall in the Govt. Definition of DVA – 16plus

The presentation covers -

- The service position as lockdown was imposed
- Changes in demand and need
- Service and wider system response
- Learning and lessons for the future

Pre Covid 19 position from specialist service for the year 19/20

- Splitz Support Service received 3946 referrals via the Helpdesk in 19/20 (average 80.5 per week)
- Number of high risk cases – 1038
- Average Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate case loads – fte. Av 30 at any one time – average 128 over a year.
- Industry recommended (Safe Lives) – 20-25 case load (60-80 per year)
- Professionals line – average incoming calls per week – 3-4 per week

COVID-19 Domestic Abuse Devon and Cornwall Overview (30th March to 4th May 2020)

Average- black text, increase in red text and below average in green text

	Pre - lockdown weekly average	30 th March 2020	6 th April 2020	14 th April 2020	20 th April 2020	27 th April 2020	4 th May 2020
Devon – figures from Splitz and NDADA (includes all high and medium risk referrals from both organisations)							
Referrals, including repeats	80.5	57	96	181	164	177	145
NDADA (includes all non-ARAC high and medium risk referrals)	57.75	41	81	158	141	154	128
ARAC	22.75	16	15	23	23	23	17
Professionals Line	3-4 per week			16	33	38	50

Increased demand on Helpdesk since lockdown (to w/c 11th May 2020)



Feedback from MASH

- In April 132 contacts where primary concern was domestic abuse (18% of all contacts – 718)
- In May (to 20/05/2020) 101 contacts where DA was the primary concern – (15% of all contacts 675)
- Domestic abuse (approximately) composes twice as many contacts as any other area of concern.
- The Police in MASH are not seeing a significant increase in DA reports but are seeing more instances of serious/high risk incidents over this period (primarily more intense and prolonged episodes).
- Police are concerned that victims are reluctant to report at this time as they may feel that such reporting could increase risk

Booked calls for professional advocacy and support

- A new service of has been established to support those working with families and young people to identify and engage around family conflict and abuse.
- In the three days the service operated between 18th and 21st May 12 consultations were held with schools staff, health visitors, social workers and Children's Centres
- Consultation themes included-
 - How to ask questions and offer support around DV
 - Supporting a family where the children report DV but parent denies it
 - How to safely and effectively engage with people perpetrating abuse

Compounding Challenges and Increasing Complexity

- Issues that are being reported include:
 - The pressure of lockdown exacerbating mental health and drug and alcohol issues
 - Increased number of 'incidents' for existing clients living with perpetrators.
 - Cases are being held open longer than average
 - Increased incidents (both existing clients and new referrals) around child contact. (Both victims and perpetrators using lockdown and fears around contagion as a reason for stopping contact or refusing to return the child to the parent that the child/ren resides with).
 - Perpetrators moving back in to the family home, escalating risk and trauma for both victims and children.
 - Increased numbers of victims looking to flee
 - Increased proportion of male victims (from 7% to 12% with Splitz)
 - Increasing numbers of calls from perpetrators looking for support
 - Impact of increased complexity, volume of cases and new ways of working on staff

Feedback from staff

- “Taking longer to get in touch with allied professionals”
- “...intensity of the work has increased. Struggling to keep up with amount of calls and emails”
- “I am working more and longer hours trying to deal with it [caseload]”
- “Phone calls taking longer as client anxiety gets higher”
- “I have 10 clients I cannot make contact with at this time”
- “again another intense working week. Main issues are housing and breaches of bail”

Developments in response to the pandemic

- New ways of working –
 - Telephone and online support
 - Moving MARAC online
 - Communication campaigns to try and reach into people's homes / lives
- Increased capacity of 'professionals line' to provide support and guidance
- Booked clinics for case discussions
- Better working relationships and a less siloed approach
- Strategic housing response agreed by Devon Home Choice
- Pilot to remove 'perpetrator' from the family home
- £400k from Pandemic Response Fund to increase capacity to respond to high risk victims of abuse