

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and Domestic Abuse in Guernsey, Alderney and Sark



This guide is for victims and survivors of domestic abuse in Guernsey, Alderney and Sark during lockdown due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus). If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic abuse you are not alone Safer can help you.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger from domestic abuse phone **999** and the police will respond.

If it is not an emergency Safer can help. Call us on **01481 721999**, which will be answered by a person trained and experienced in helping victims of domestic abuse, who is based in Guernsey. This helpline number is available 24 /7. Alternatively you can contact Safer by emailing **enquiries@safer.gg** and we will get back to you during normal office hours.

We help any victim of domestic abuse in the Bailiwick regardless of age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, impairment, disability or any other characteristic or status. We cover all of the islands in the Bailiwick including Alderney, Sark and Herm.

# Our message to victims and survivors of domestic abuse

We know that if you are currently experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse you will know what being isolated and frightened will feel like. You might be worried about self-isolating with someone who is harming you.

The following advice is to help you think about what you might do over the coming weeks to stay safe.



You are a survivor, equipped with the knowledge, strength and tools that help keep you and your family safe every day.

Below are some things you can think about if this is happening to you. Remember that you are an expert in your own situation and only take on advice that feels safe and relevant to you. It is important to try and think about the things that may change or make you more unsafe, especially thinking through now how you might get help if you need it. We also know that, like everyone, you could be worried about contracting the virus and the States of Guernsey website can give you up to date advice around this –

<https://www.gov.gg/covid19guidance>

Always remember that the abuse you are experiencing is not your fault.

## General points to consider

As of 24th March 2020 strict new rules on staying at home and away from others came into force in the Bailiwick. You can find guidance on the three main Islands' websites



<https://www.gov.gg/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=124183&p=0>



<http://www.alderney.gov.gg/article/176928/Alderney-in-Covid-19-Lockdown>



The Government of Sark

[https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/5ff82f30-38d7-4ae5-98f1-e93b4ee65820/downloads/Covid%2019%20emergency%20measures%20\(2\).pdf?ver=1585249426661](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/5ff82f30-38d7-4ae5-98f1-e93b4ee65820/downloads/Covid%2019%20emergency%20measures%20(2).pdf?ver=1585249426661)

These measures were put in place to protect the Islands , medical infrastructure and save lives. They require people to stay at home except for very limited purposes.

It means you are only able to leave the house for essential reasons. Unfortunately, this means you and the person harming you could end up spending more time together in the same space.

In this guide we talk about Safer workers, but instead you may have a social worker or other professional that you trust. Think about who this trusted person is for you. Below are things you might want to think about:

# Support from family, friends and neighbours

Family, friends and neighbours can be another way to get support that you need.

- Can you FaceTime message or call someone you trust? Can you talk to them about what you are experiencing and what your concerns are? Do you have a code word/phrase to let someone know that it is not safe to talk or to ask someone to phone the police?
- Could you set up with someone you trust a check in call so you know that someone will contact you at certain times of the week?



Keep your phone charged and with you at all times if it is safe to do so. If you need a second phone Safer can help you with this.

## Self-care

How can you look after yourself?

- As much as possible stick to usual routines. Maintaining basic self-care like eating, showering, sleeping and exercising can all help your mental health.
- Take whatever breaks you can, walk around any outside space you might have, read a magazine, get the kids involved in an online exercise class.



Up to two hours exercise a day, to include walking, cycling, running or sea swimming or other open sea activities alone or with members of your household.

The States of Guernsey has published some suggestions for keeping well during isolation at

<https://www.gov.gg/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=123957&p=0>

## General safety planning



With the schools out does your personalised safety plan cover your children's safety when they would normally be at school?

- Do you have a personalised safety plan? Think about what needs updating or changing because of what is happening now.
- Is it safe to contact your Safer worker help you do this?

- It is ok to tell your Safer worker that the person harming you is living in the property, they will not judge you and can better help you think about your safety.
- If you can't see or speak to your Safer worker, are there other professionals you trust and can talk to?
- Do you have a supportive employer? Can you talk to them about what is happening?



<https://hollieguard.com/>

- If you can, download the Hollie Guard phone app <https://hollieguard.com/> which will help you. This turns your smartphone into a personal safety device.
- What is the usual pattern of abuse? e.g. is it worse when the kids are around or not around? This might help you think about times when things might be calmer.
- What are your main concerns and worries?
- These are the things you need to share with your Safer worker, trusted professional and if you need to ring 999 for help, the police.
- Will the person who is harming you be out of work or working from home?
- Will your family income be affected? How could this affect things
- Does the person harming you use drugs and/or alcohol?
- How could their use change and what could this mean?



- Do you know how they might respond to self-isolation?
- Think about whether this might increase the sexual violence/ coercive control/ physical abuse?
- Do you think there is software on your IT? Any listening devices? Cameras in the home
- How will this change the way you might get help
- Do you know what your options are if you want to leave? Or what your options are if you want to stay but want the person harming you to leave?

The Safer worker can help you think this through, as can any other professional you are working with.

## **Safety planning suggestions:**

– Have you talked your Safer worker through the layout of your house so you can think about any places of safety?



– If you had to leave in an emergency do you know where you would go? Remember many shops/restaurants/pubs will be shut. Food shops, pharmacies and doctors surgeries will stay open.

– If someone you trust is doing your shopping for you could you write a message on the shopping list asking for help?

– Have a bag packed ready and if you can, leave this at a trusted friend/family/neighbour's home:

- This should contain medical essentials, important documents including passports/driving license. Maybe the service you are in touch with could keep copies of these documents?

– Have a code word/sign to signal you are in danger – set this up for family and friends to let them know by text/FaceTime/Skype. The code will need to alert them to contact the police if you are in danger.

– Teach the code to children who are old enough to understand what you are asking of them and why.

- Do you need a separate mobile which you can use just to call for help? Safer will be able to supply this.
- If there are times you know you can talk, share this with your Safer worker and agree how you will reach each other.

- Use the fact that there are no online shopping services available to go to the shop and speak to someone.

– Now would be a good time to consider whether there is someone else you could move in with e.g. a vulnerable family member who will need your support. Consider that you may be self isolating for long periods

## **If tension is rising:**



Alarms can be provided by Safer

- Use your judgment and intuition with your abuser's mood. Keep a close eye on their body language. Nobody knows them better than you know them. If a situation is escalating, try to leave the room.
- If there is a chance that the situation will escalate, stay out of the kitchen, bathroom, garage or rooms where there are possible weapons. Stay away from the top of the stairs.
- If you can't get out of the house, go to a safe room that you can lock. Consider purchasing a Howser Quick Lock from Amazon or Ebay. They can be slipped into a pocket and they will give



you enough time to call 999. Alternatively, put a door wedge under the door once you are in the room. Safer can provide wedges door braces window alarms and personal alarms.

- Think about the quickest route out of your house. Consider risks that are unique to your home. Make sure children's toys or other belongings are not blocking routes and exits.
- Keep your bank card and car keys (if you have them) in a safe place where you can access them quickly. Or have a little bit of money hidden away in case you need this to leave.

## Children

– The person harming you may use child contact to further control and abuse you. If you have court orders in place which are not being followed please contact your Advocate or the police to enforce them.

## Resources

If you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police.

### Telephone and email

If you are not in immediate danger, the following numbers might be helpful:

**Local Domestic Abuse Service – Safer** – For support and advice around domestic abuse. Safer can also provide emergency refuge accommodation. Email: [enquirers@safer.gg](mailto:enquirers@safer.gg) telephone: 01481 721999/

**Holly Guard App** <https://hollieguard.com/>



<https://www.hestia.org/brightsky>

**Bright Sky App** <https://www.hestia.org/brightsky>

**UK Live Chat and Survivor Forums**

**Women's Aid Live Chat – <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/>**