

# COVID-19 – THE IMPACT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

Deidre Cartwright, Private Rental Sector Development Manager at Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), highlights the impact of lockdown and the pandemic on those facing domestic abuse and how agents can help – and potentially save lives – by implementing some simple steps and strategies into their agencies.

**S**tay at home. Stay safe. Save lives' is a slogan we've all become familiar with over the last five months, as the UK Government encouraged us all to do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The slogan implies that home is a place of safety and refuge, where we are sheltered from the threats of the outside world. Yet, for the millions of individuals and families living with perpetrators of domestic abuse, their homes are a place of fear and violence, and we know that those who have been murdered are more likely to have been killed by their perpetrator inside their home.

We also know that during this pandemic, domestic abuse has drastically increased as many individuals and families may be trapped at home with the perpetrator where they are unable to access support or escape from the abuse. The heightened risk of financial insecurities, job loss and physical/mental illness only exacerbate this situation at a time when individuals and their children have very few options to become safe.

As a result, they may feel their only choices are to leave that home, resulting in becoming homeless, or remain with the perpetrator, where the risk of severe harm or death becomes increasingly likely.

Currently 19 per cent, or 4.6 million households in England, are living in the private rental sector. As agents, you are uniquely placed to access people in their homes and offer help in simple yet effective ways. These include:

- Looking out for the signs of abuse and safely asking your tenants the right questions about their experience when they are safe and alone
- Providing tenants with information about local and national support options and helping them to stay safe in their homes through services such as the Sanctuary Scheme, which provides free security measures such as lock changes and additional alarms for private and social housing tenants
- Providing tenants with access to alternative accommodation if they choose to leave.

### > Propertymark joint resource

ARLA Propertymark and DAHA have also produced a fact sheet for members which breaks down the help and advice you could give to tenants if you suspect someone is experiencing domestic abuse.

Log in to the members' area on the ARLA Propertymark website to download: [arla.co.uk/members/fact-sheets](http://arla.co.uk/members/fact-sheets)

For detailed information and guidance on how to support your tenants in each of these ways, refer to DAHA's Guidance for Private Landlords during COVID-19. There are many more resources on the DAHA COVID-19 advice and resources section of their website too.

With your help, individuals and families may not have to choose between a life free of abuse and a safe home.

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