



Every woman deserves  
respect and support

## **LWA Position Statement in relation to COVID-19**

We want to update you on how we're responding to the challenges of Coronavirus (COVID-19). The outbreak means we're facing unprecedented times. We'd like to reassure you that, we at LWA are making every effort to continue to provide all of our services whilst protecting our staff, stakeholders and partners.

We are following Government and Public Health Guidance and working with support from Leeds City Council and other commissioners. We recognise that guidance and advice are changing regularly and we are keeping up to date with the situation on a daily basis.

LWA delivers a range of face to face and telephone support services and is the lead partner in the local authority commissioned Leeds Domestic Violence Service (LDVS) and the Women's Lives Leeds (WLL) Partnership. Both have position statements.

All staff with underlying medical conditions have been identified and various actions discussed and agreed, including: Working from home, self-isolation with pay, sick pay if ill. Some staff have chosen to work within isolated places – ie be the only person in the office, taking all health and safety advice

### **What we are doing**

This is a dynamic situation and, as such, our plans will and have been changing according to new information and advice. Briefly:

1. We are currently operating the majority of our services, taking referrals as usual, but some are being delivered in a different way.
2. We are being updated by Adult Commissioning and Public Health teams and will tap into other forms of information and advice as it becomes available.
3. We have been advised that the police have plans to continue to deal with reports of domestic abuse.
4. We will take the advice of Public Health authorities should a case develop that might be impactful to the service – e.g. a staff member, client or colleague becomes infected.
5. We have reviewed our policies and procedures including our contingency plans and Home Working policy and will provide refresher training for all staff and volunteers.
6. We have and will continue to provide regular briefings and training to staff and residents in all areas of our organisation.
7. We will update the Board immediately of any significant occurrences.
8. We are in regular contact with commissioners/funders & will inform them immediately of matters that impact individual clients, staff or jeopardise service delivery.
9. We are continuing to pay staff if they are sick or they are having to self-isolate. No jobs are under threat and staff are re-assured
10. We offer staff an Employee Assistance and Health Plan through Simply Health which offers mental health support and access to GPs.
11. We have equipped our teams with technology where we can so they can work remotely if possible and additionally increased measures have been introduced in our offices and at refuge sites to reduce the risk of infection and we have stopped all non-essential business travel.
12. Informed our front-line staff of how they are classed as "key workers" in order to access school and nursery provision to allow them to continue to work

## **Our Services:**

We are continuously reviewing our contingency plans to reduce risk and make sure our staff are protected and our services continue. We've already taken a range of steps to maintain our services, including:

### Refuge Services:

- Advice obtained from Public Health, including information on particularly vulnerable groups
- Where possible refuge sites will be staffed by at least one member of staff, but following social distancing with at least a 2-metre distance
- Advice in relation to safeguarding vulnerable groups will be followed
- Posters displayed at entrance and all communal spaces.
- All communal spaces cleaned daily
- Supplies of dried and tinned food/toiletries bought
- Supplies of hand sanitiser/cleaning products/paper towels and tissues bought and provided to residents and displayed in communal areas and for staff
- Staff to observe 2- metre distance advice with residents where face to face contact is required
- Residents are routinely being provided with telephone support with notices displayed
- Residents provided with advice and assistance to access emergency support and services when required
- Referrals are still being accepted, however we have amended our referral and assessment criteria to ask additional screening questions re travel and general health

### Community Services:

- 24/7 helpline still being offered
- Alternative methods of support to clients is made mandatory across the organisation – e.g. helpline, telephone support offered
- Staff from all teams share responsibility for client support and safety of clients prioritised
- Some services are being offered remotely using computers and mobile phones, accessing secure cloud-based case management systems
- Regular updates provided to relevant agencies – police, social care
- Call conferencing used for essential MARAC/FDSH and other multi-agency work as agreed by all stakeholders
- IDVA services still continue, offering telephone support, with some urgent face to face court hearings being offered on a risk assessed case by case basis (being reviewed daily)
- Drop ins and groups are postponed
- Fundraising/awareness raising activities cancelled
- Police control room support and Weekend Domestic Abuse car postponed
- Children & Young People's workers have developed packs for the children and face time is being used with those who are self-isolating

### Other Services:

- Charity and Community shop temporarily closed but on-line eBay services remain
- Donations still being collected and are being offered to refuge and high-risk clients
- Forced Marriage Training postponed
- Our current Staying Safe Programme was almost finished, so final week postponed