

## WELLBEING: DOMESTIC ABUSE

We have been reviewing our wellbeing strategy in light of the current situation, where we find ourselves in lockdown with many restrictions placed on our day to day lives. With this in mind, we have been working on identifying potentially vulnerable groups of employees that we may have where the current restrictions may lead to further challenges at home. We are mindful that this may include anyone who is suffering from domestic abuse.

We note that there is evidence that the current restrictions could heighten domestic tensions and prevent escape routes. The National Domestic Abuse helpline recently reported a 25% increase in calls and online requests for support during the lockdown. We recognise that anyone suffering domestic abuse may be feeling more vulnerable during lockdown.

We would urge anyone in this position to not suffer in silence. There is help and support available to you such as police response, online support, helplines, refuges and other services. You are not alone and the services on offer remain operational during lockdown.

Domestic abuse is not always physical violence. It can also include coercive control; economic abuse; online abuse; verbal abuse; emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

The government has published guidance on the support available to victims of domestic abuse: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

Please note that the household isolation instruction does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse.

In the event that you are in immediate danger and require assistance, we would advise that you contact the police using the silent call option if necessary. Silent call is part of the 999 system which allows people who are unable to speak, but are able to make a noise such as tapping the handset or coughing, to press 55 on a mobile handset, which alerts the operator that you need help. The call is then connected to the police. There is further information on this facility in the government guidance.

### HEALTH ASSURED

Please also remember that our Employee Assistance Programme which is provided by **Health Assured** remains available to all our employees. Health Assured can provide support on domestic abuse and a wide range of wellbeing issues.

We recognise that currently, most of us are still adapting to the changes and that is not always easy. Health Assured can be contacted 24/7 on **0800 030 5182** where professionally trained counsellors are available to take your call and provide confidential advice and support on any issue that may be concerning you. There is no cost to you for accessing the service.