

Respect

Men's advice line

Service Review

2020/21

Supporting male victims of
domestic abuse during Covid-19

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She got a knife and started stabbing the kitchen surface, saying she was going to kill me. With everything going on now it's been hard for me to leave...

Managing the Men's Advice Line during the Covid-19 pandemic

March 2020 was an unforeseeable time with the global pandemic and lockdown restrictions impacting the lives of male victims and those supporting them in an unprecedented way.

Amongst the panic and fear stemming from this crisis and with life suddenly changing, particular themes became apparent for increased numbers of male victims contacting the Men's Advice Line: immigration control being weaponised, homelessness and lack of emergency accommodation, mental health needs rapidly increasing with many men discussing thoughts of suicide and desperation. Male victims became unsafe in their home and isolated away from support networks.

The award of additional funding allowed us to increase the helpline opening hours to meet the demand, recruit more Advisors, and create resources offering an added stream of support via the website.

The Men's Advice Line continues to offer support with extended opening hours, working to meet the needs of male victims and those supporting them.

Tanisha Jnagel
Helplines Manager





The Men's Advice Line: Supporting Male Victims of Domestic Abuse.

Respect's Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and those supporting them. We offer advice and emotional support to men who experience abuse, and signpost to other vital services that help keep them and their children safe. The service is offered by phone, email, and webchat.

The Men's Advice Line website is a source of useful information on domestic abuse, with contact details of support services and downloadable factsheets with accessible information about family, child, and civil law.

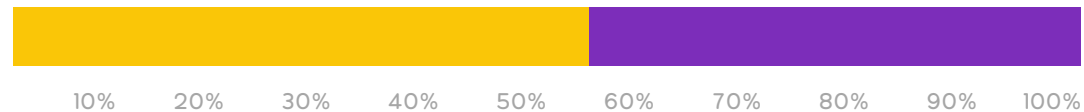
Demand for the Men's Advice Line in 2020–21 was exceptional. We received the highest number of contacts across all channels – phone, email, webchat, and a record number of website visitors.

Even when lockdown restrictions were lifted, male victims continued to contact the service at rates higher than before the pandemic.

The most significant change, however, was in the experiences of domestic abuse and the impact these changes had on male victims. The severity and frequency of all forms of domestic abuse have been unprecedented. Men's Advice Line Advisors have been supporting male victims talking about suicidal ideation, extreme anxiety, stress, and hopelessness with alarming frequency.

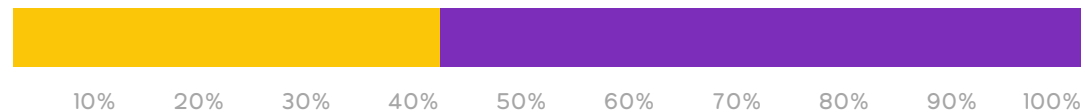
Demand increased by 57%

In 2020–21 we received 47,081 contacts by phone, email, and webchat – a **57% increase** compared to 2019–20 (30,068 contacts).



Web visits increased by 41%

There were 69,378 visitors on the Men's Advice Line website – a **41% increase** compared to 2019–20 (49,232).



37% more calls:

There were 31,711 contacts by phone – a **37% increase** compared with the year before (23,124). During the first lockdown the increase was exceptionally sharp. In April 2020, for example, we received **68%** more calls than in April 2019, in May 2020 **71%** and in June 2020 **57%** more calls.



61% more emails:

We received 7,178 emails – **61%** more than the year before (4,460).

Similarly to calls, the increase in emails during the first lockdown was unprecedented: **86%** more emails in April 2020, **66%** in May, **96%** in June and **80%** in July.



230% more webchats:

There were 8,192 webchat contacts in 2020–21 – **230%** more than the year before (2,484).

The same pattern of exceptionally high increase in demand occurred in April 2020 (**831%** increase compared to April 2019, 447/48), May (**277%** increase, 661/175) and June (**355%** increase, 960/211).



Duration of calls:

In addition to the increased demand across all channels, the number of long calls on the Men's Advice Line (lasting more than 40 minutes) doubled in 2020–21: from **4%** the year before to **8%**, reflecting the severity and complexity of domestic abuse experiences men were calling about.

Who we supported

Male Victims

60%



Family/friend of victim

12%



Other

10%



Non Domestic Abuse

5%



Frontline Workers

8%



Perpetrators

5%



Family/ Friend
of Perpetrators

0.27%



Who were the perpetrators?

45.5% Current partner – 1.5% of which was current partner with other family member(s)

39% Ex-partner 1% of which was ex-partner with other family member(s)

15.5% Other family member(s)

1 Men's Advice Line Advisors select the most relevant category based on service users' description of the presenting issues that triggered their help-seeking.

2 Non-Domestic Abuse is a category selected when a service user needs support with relationship difficulties, and there is no domestic abuse.

1 in 3 male victims
were from Black
and minoritised
communities

Victims' ethnicity

White British

62%



Asian/ Asian British

17%



Black/ Black British

9%



White Other

6%



Other Ethnic Group

4.10%



Mixed

2.47%



- 3 We use 'Black and minoritised communities' to highlight the specific experience of groups that are often hidden by generalised data sets, but recognise the limitations of grouping diverse ranges of ethnicities together
- 4 Men's Advice Line Advisors ask male victims to provide anonymised demographic information, including what their ethnicity is. Out of the callers who provided information about their ethnicity in 2020–21, 1 in 3 were from Black and minoritised communities



During the first lockdown in 2020, an even higher percentage of male victims identified as from Black and minoritised communities: **40%**. Based on analysis of the domestic abuse experiences they called about...

1/3

1 in 3 male victims from Black and minoritised communities experienced coercive controlling behaviours 5 times or more

1/5

1 in 5 callers were at a significant risk of harm, indicated by factors such as:



the abuse was becoming more often/more serious



they were isolated from friends/family



they were going through child contact proceedings



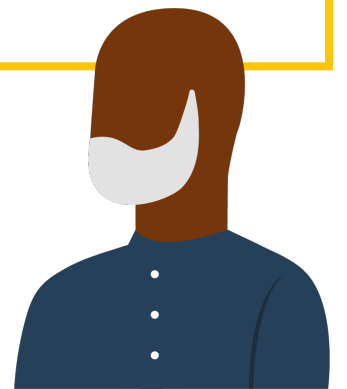
they had immigration and other legal issues

“

I am from a poor family—she controlled money and I have become dispensable, I have no use now; I feel I am a sack of rubbish and not able to do anything and I am not eating. I am struggling with my life.

(Mohammed)

A solicitor called the Men's Advice Line on behalf of an Iranian man who was in the UK on a spousal visa and had limited English. His wife was using coercively controlling behaviours since he came to the UK. He was socially isolated and was only allowed very limited communication with his own family. His communications and interactions with other people were intercepted and monitored by his wife, including with the use of a recording device, which she hid in his jacket. Although he reported this to the police, he didn't want to press charges. His wife is now saying she and her family have decided he must leave the home and she will not support his application for Indefinite Leave to Remain. He is clinically extremely vulnerable for covid-19 because of an auto-immune condition. He was furloughed from his job.



Experiences of male victims

"Living a life by permission".

The experiences of male victims of domestic abuse during Covid-19.

Respect's Men's Advice Line allocated some of the emergency 'Covid-19 response' funding on research to understand the experiences of male victims. Durham University's Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA) carried out the research between June–September 2020.

Nicole Westmarland, Stephen Burrell, Alishya Dhir, Kirsten Hall, Ecem Hasan and Kelly Henderson – the research team – analysed the experiences of 344 male victims who contacted the Men's Advice Line by phone (221) and email (113).

Men's experiences included physical, sexual, financial, emotional violence and abuse. The research report also includes key themes such as policing, housing, mental health, immigration/visa related issues, being a man experiencing domestic violence and abuse, child contact, co-accusations of violence and abuse, and Covid-19 specific issues.

Regardless of the type of abuse men talked about, the experience they all shared was coercive control, including Covid-19 specific forms of it. This left men devastated, with shattered self-esteem, often feeling suicidal, worthless, inadequate and terrified of their partners.

The pandemic restrictions resulted in men feeling more isolated than ever. Being trapped with the perpetrator exacerbated the domestic abuse and the subsequent impact on male victims.



Experiences of male victims

"Living a life by permission".

The experiences of male victims of domestic abuse during Covid-19.



She's done stuff with shoving and grabbing before. I've said look this is abuse and she's just laughed at me. She expects me to still sleep in the same bed as her.

(Grant)



She sexually assaulted me... I can't deal with it. I can't trust anyone. I don't want to be here anymore – I feel like I am in the check-out lounge. I can't get over it.

(Anthony)



Read the full report:
Durham University's
Centre for Research
into Violence and Abuse
report is available to
download:

[Living a life by
permission.' The
experiences of male
victims of domestic
abuse during Covid-19.](#)

Taking the lead in responding to male victims' needs

Shortly after the first lockdown restrictions in 2020, the Men's Advice Line Advisors noticed a sharp increase in the quantity and complexity of calls. It became clear that neither the opening hours nor the size of the team was sufficient to meet the demand.

We responded by methodically analysing data on the demand for the Men's Advice Line and used it to evidence the need for additional funding so we could recruit additional advisors and extend the opening hours to meet the needs of male victims.

The Men's Advice Line team increased from 6 to 11 Advisors with support from the Home Office and the Scottish Government. From July 2020 we were able to offer the Men's Advice Line 7 days a week: Monday to Friday 9am–8pm and Saturday/Sunday for a total of 8 hours for email support.

We developed a resource library on the Men's Advice Line website with information on legal matters (Non-molestation order, Child Arrangement Orders, Divorce and Dissolution Proceedings etc).

We worked in partnership with the Child Law Advice Service to provide male victims calling the Men's Advice Line free appointments with legally qualified Advisors, responding to the need to access legal advice.



Domestic abuse during Covid-19 affects men too. #Talk it over.

We launched a social media campaign for male victims during Covid-19.

The aim of the first phase was to raise awareness of the Men's Advice Line and encourage men to get in touch. It focused on four main themes that emerged in calls with Advisors:

- Belief that support services are no longer operating
- Feelings of isolation compounded by COVID-19
- Increased mental health problems, including a greater number of people discussing suicide
- Anxiety about contact with children, money problems and housing issues.'

The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of the Men's Advice Line and encourage men to get in touch.



Respect

Men's advice line

0808 8010327

Talk it over

The second phase of the campaign aimed to normalise help-seeking for male victims recognising the barriers that could stop men from talking about their experience of domestic abuse.

We used the phrase 'The strong, silent type' to challenge the stereotype that asking for help is a sign of weakness, by showing how real strength isn't physical, but having the courage to speak out and talk it over.



Working together to support male victims

We work in partnership with other organisations and services to support male victims and end domestic abuse.

The following are the key partnerships and initiatives in 2020–21:

Rail to refuge

Respect's Men's Advice Line worked in partnership with Women's Aid to book free rail tickets to male victims who needed to travel to a refuge after fleeing domestic abuse

Emergency accommodation for London's male victims

In partnership with Victim Support, Nacro and Shelter, the Men's Advice Line is the main referral pathway for men fleeing domestic abuse in the Greater London area. This is a new initiative funded by MOPAC.

Safe Spaces

This is a scheme set up by UK Says No More, it is offering a safe space in pharmacies' consultation rooms across the country, so victims can call a helpline or other support service without being monitored by the perpetrator. The Men's Advice Line is the key service for male victims accessing the Safe Spaces scheme.



How we are moving forward

Our top priority is to continue offering the Men's Advice Line service on extended hours. We have been working hard to secure funding that will be allocated to the employment costs of the additional Advisors needed to run a 7-day a week service.

It is imperative that male victims can get the help they need when they need it, as many times as they need and in ways and times that are safer for them.

We are committed to meeting these needs.

The Men's Advice Line

0808 8010327

mensadviceline.org.uk

The Helpline for Male Victims of Domestic Abuse. Talk it Over.



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