



## **COVID-19- GUIDANCE NOTES FOR CALEDONIAN SYSTEM MANAGERS**

**Version 1.0 - 19 March 2020**

### **Background**

There is a significant body of evidence that domestic abuse increases during large scale emergencies, for example Australian bush fires and Hurricane Katrina. Reasons for this include increased isolation, anxiety, trauma and bereavement, and financial pressures.. Added to this are potential issues related to enforced contact between partners in homes having to self-isolate, women feeling trapped and unable to leave, changing family dynamics and challenges to gendered role expectations, increased drinking at home, children being more present and complications over child contact arrangements, stretched police services and reduced access to women's support services.

There are also likely to be increasing pressures on teams delivering all aspects of the Caledonian System, particularly as teams' capacity is reduced by self-isolation or sickness.

This guidance is intended to assist Caledonian operational and system managers to reach decisions on how to prioritise cases and workload with due regard to risk and vulnerability. We know that reviews of business continuity plans and service prioritisation arrangements are ongoing locally as they are nationally, and that you will already be actively considering how you will move available workforce, skills, capacity and resources in relation to all criminal justice social work services. All authorities will be prioritising high risk and high vulnerability cases. It is intended that this guidance provides assistance in relation to domestic abuse cases, particularly those subject to or being considered for the Caledonian.

The pressure on teams may also be affected by future disruption to court services. We will monitor communications from SCTS and issue further guidance should there be any further developments in relation to court business. An update on the current position is available at: <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/coming-to-court/attending-a-court/coronavirus/coronavirus---coming-to-a-court-or-tribunal/coronavirus-criminal-business> .

This situation is constantly evolving and the Central Caledonian Team will continue to update all Caledonian managers by email. Gill McKinna and I are available to discuss any concerns as they arise. Astrid Shearer remains available to discuss data issues. If you want us to phone you just email us and we will return your calls as soon as possible. We are also available via Skype for face to face contact.

### **Managing Impacts on Capacity and Accessibility**

In considering how to respond to increasing demand and reduced staffing capacity you may wish to consider the following points in relation to the Caledonian Programme.

### **New referrals for assessment**

1. Use the pre assessment screening tool (attached), particularly Part 1, to help you make a decision around risk. I'm aware that our current guidance in relation to this tool has been to use it in a way which is likely to include rather than exclude possible cases for full assessment. In the current crisis if your capacity is reduced significantly, use the tool to prioritise the highest risk cases:
  - In considering the questions in part one take particular note of strangulation, threats to kill, smothering, use of weapons, severity of assault, evidence of stalking or of a sexual element to the offence.
  - Any convictions under the Domestic Abuse Act 2018 with evidence of a pattern of coercively controlling behaviour should also be prioritised.
  - Record your decision.
  
2. Ensure that partner contact is still attempted in all cases that you complete reports on.
  - It is most likely that this will have to be done by phone rather than a home visit. When speaking with the women, use the behaviour checklist to frame your questions and ask if her partner is adhering to bail conditions/advise her of any bail conditions you are aware of.
  - If you don't have a number for the woman either write and ask her to phone or text, or contact your Police Scotland risk and concern hubs. The advice from Police Scotland is that they can disclose contact details of victims including phone numbers under data protection rules – although I am aware that until the Information Sharing Agreement is finally signed off by all local authorities some areas are reluctant to share this information. Inform Rory Macrae or Gill McKinna if this is the case.
  - Any home visit at this stage should still ideally be done by the assessor and the women's worker, if such visits are still being authorised by your Local Authority. If this is a phone call it should ideally be undertaken by the women's worker if such a worker is available and the assessment information passed to the report writer. Use the opportunity to plan with the woman how ongoing safety planning sessions will happen. In planning ongoing contact consider use of smart phones to allow Skype or Facetime (if the woman has access to a smart phone and your authority allows it). This should only be considered if you are still working from an office. Do not use video calling from your own home
  
3. If undertaking the report complete as much as possible of the SARA v3.
  - Formulation and risk management are obviously particularly vital in the cases that you have already identified as high priority.
  - Although scenario planning is not usually carried out at Court report stage, it would be prudent to complete scenario planning in relation to the current Covid-19 situation and outline risk management measures for the court.
  - Acknowledge in the report that your information gathering may have been restricted by the current situation and undertake to continue to review the SARA under any CPO that is imposed.

- Unless told explicitly by the woman that she does not want an NHO reinforce in your report the protection that can be offered by such an order.
4. If a man who you have prioritised for assessment says he cannot attend appointments because of self-isolation or symptoms:
    - Arrange phone/ Skype or alternative interviews with him and ensure that the partner contact still takes place as described above.
    - Use the SARA framework as above.
  5. If recommending a CPO with a Caledonian requirement to the Court:
    - Explain the current position within your Local Authority around office appointments and home visits.
    - Undertake to maintain weekly contact with the man and explain that programme work may be undertaken more gradually than is the norm and that you will concentrate on maintaining contact and reviewing risk management measures.
    - If the man is isolating (or if your council policy moves to one of minimising direct contact with clients) explain that contact will be by phone.
  6. If you are unable to prepare any report you follow local decisions about requesting further deferments but remember in domestic abuse cases the protection offered by continued special bail conditions during the further deferment could be very significant. It would be useful to highlight this in any correspondence to the Court.
  7. In cases where you have decided you cannot undertake a full Caledonian assessment using the screening process above follow your current departmental guidance on CJSWRs. Consider increased use of deferred sentences which would allow bail conditions to continue with a view to undertaking a Caledonian assessment at a later date.

### **New and existing cases**

8. If an order is made with a Caledonian requirement and you are significantly understaffed, prioritise according to risk levels. In making decisions as to how to prioritise work it is better to establish and maintain phone contact with all men and their partners from the first week of the new Order in order to constantly reassess and manage risk manage risk than it is to undertake the programme work.
9. Inform the man of what your departmental position is on acceptable compliance and what your breach policy is in light of the current circumstances.
10. In considering what programme work to prioritise because you are having to reduce the frequency of sessions:
  - Consider those sessions that relate more to immediate risk reduction and practical tools for men such as self-calming and Taking a Breather (if you are able to discuss this with the woman). The basic CBT exercises such as triggers and self-talk, and icebergs are likely to be very important.

- It could be very helpful to invite men to step up to their responsibilities as partners and fathers – asking what kind of man do you want to be in this current situation?
  - Work on a very specific personal plan item around the current crisis.
11. In listening to men be very aware that some will be very stressed by the isolation, or the financial hardship. They may drink or use other substances more heavily.
  12. Also be aware that some men may use the current situation to avoid challenge, justify non-compliance or to reinforce a tendency to blame or criticise their partners.
  13. Maintaining proactive engagement with the women is vital. It is likely that more of this contact is going to be by phone. Agree in your teams what is possible in terms of methods of communication such as Skype and Facetime. If you are working from home rather than an office please use audio calls. Do not use video call functions with service users, men or women, on any platform. Please let us know of any technological aids you have found helpful or share them on the knowledge hub. Explain to women what the nature of the Caledonian's contact with their partner will be during this crisis, what counts as acceptable contact and what your breach policy will be.
  14. It may be the case that your Local Authority has decided to cancel all group work for the foreseeable future. If so, case managers could consider using elements of the group work modules in individual sessions with men, if it would assist in addressing any identified risk/need (e.g. work from the Children and Fathering module. Gill/Rory will be available via Skype/ phone to talk workers through these exercises if required.
  15. Continue to hold Client Liaison Meetings, using phone, teleconferencing, Skype or Whats App, to ensure that all information and concerns are shared by each member of the Caledonian team.
  16. Direct work with children or parenting work with fathers by the children's worker is unlikely to be appropriate (and may explicitly be against your authorities' guidelines). Concentrate on risk. If concerned about a child's immediate safety or welfare, follow local procedures. Discuss your concerns in CLMs.
  17. Remember at all times if you have any concerns about the immediate safety of women, children or men, you should call the police. If doing so, follow normal best practice of informing the woman that you are doing so if it is safe and possible to do so.

### **Data Issues**

18. Data should continue to be gathered if workers are continuing to deliver Caledonian.
  - Inevitably, if clients are isolating then some specific pieces of work cannot be completed or will have to wait.

- Whenever possible data forms should be submitted electronically.
- If data champions are working from home and are able to access the Database, then updating can continue as normal. It's acknowledged that this will not be possible for all areas and so more stockpiling of data will be inevitable.

### **Central Caledonian Team Contact Details**

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**Caledonian National Co-ordinator**  
**19 March 2020**