

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline launches new materials for British Sign Language users

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline is reaching out to British Sign Language (BSL) users to raise awareness about the support that is available for anyone experiencing domestic abuse or forced marriage.

The national Helpline service has created three new videos for BSL users:

- [What is domestic abuse?](#)
- [What is forced marriage?](#)
- [What you can expect when you contact the Helpline.](#)

BSL users can contact the Helpline confidentially using [Contact Scotland BSL](#), Scotland's national BSL video interpreting service.

Zara Gilmour, Helpline Manager, said:

"Our Helpline is for everyone in Scotland and we want to make sure that anyone experiencing domestic abuse or forced marriage knows that we are here to speak to them in the language they are most comfortable using. Reaching out for support can be daunting for anyone and we know that BSL users can often experience additional barriers in accessing support due to a lack of services delivered in their first language.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has not caused domestic abuse – abuse is an abuser's choice, always. However, it has given abusers more tools to control and isolate their partners and children. And that prolonged isolation and increased control has made seeking help much more difficult for survivors. Now more than ever it is vital that we make sure our service is as accessible as possible so that anyone who wants support can access our expert advice when and where they need it.

"If you contact us using a BSL video interpreting service, your call will still be confidential. We will listen to you, believe you and offer you advice and information. We are here for you."

Background for editors

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline is available 24/7 for anyone, of any gender or sexuality, who wants to talk about their own experiences, or for those who are concerned about someone else.

The Helpline is available by phone on 0800 027 1234 and this number can be contacted using the Contact Scotland BSL Service. The Helpline is also available via email and web chat at www.sdafmh.org.uk

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a significant increase in calls to the Helpline, with call volume up 24% compared to the year pre-COVID.

Any story about domestic abuse should point to appropriate sources of support, such as the Helpline or local Women's Aid services.

For free, survivor-sensitive images to use in any story about domestic abuse, [see here](#).

For any further information please contact Megan Gordon media@womensaid.scot