



Every woman deserves  
respect and support

## **Leeds Women Aid (LWA) Position Statement in relation to COVID-19 Updated 12 November 2020**

We continue to provide most of our services whilst protecting our staff, stakeholders and partners.

We are following Government and Public Health Guidance and working with Leeds City Council and other commissioners.

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.

### **What we are doing**

We are regularly updating our plans and risk assessments in line with the latest information and advice. Briefly:

1. We are currently operating all of our services, taking referrals as usual, despite the 2<sup>nd</sup> lockdown, but some are being delivered in a different way (see below).
2. We are being updated by Adult Commissioning and Public Health teams and tap into other forms of information and advice as it becomes available.
3. We have reviewed our policies and procedures including our contingency plans and Home Working policy.
4. We continue to provide briefings to staff and residents in all areas of our organisation.
5. We will update the Board immediately of any significant occurrences.
6. We are in regular contact with commissioners/funders & will inform them immediately of matters that impact individual clients, staff or jeopardise service delivery.
7. We are continuing to pay staff if they are sick or they are having to self-isolate.
8. We offer staff an Employee Assistance and Health Plan through Simply Health which offers mental health support and access to GPs.
9. We have equipped our teams with technology, so they can work remotely, and we have increased additional measures in our offices and at refuge sites to reduce the risk of infection we have stopped all non-essential business travel.
10. All of our sites are COVID-Secure.

### **Our Services:**

We are continuously reviewing our contingency plans and Risk assessments 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 sites are fully operational and are staffed by at least one member of staff, but following social distancing with at least a 2-metre distance
- LDVS community services are continuing remotely apart from Drop-in services which are suspended until further notice. We are making every effort to liaise with the venues where we hold drop-ins to attempt to re-start some. In some circumstances we are doing face to face work where a full risk assessment is completed. See LDVS position statement.
- The WLL services are continuing to operate with support being provided mainly remotely, through internet-based platforms, via telephone catch ups and in some instances where

full risk assessments have been completed, through socially distancing walks and one to one work.

- The Women Friendly Leeds movement too is continuing in momentum, with all social media platforms being used to the best of their advantage. (Twitter, Facebook, What's App, Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc.)
- The LWA Online chat service increased delivery hours and is available from 1.30pm - 3.30pm Mon-Fri and 7.30pm to 9.30pm on Tuesday and Thursday evening. We have supported over 150 women since it was launched in April.
- Children & Young People's workers have developed packs for the children and face time is being used with those who are self-isolating. All refugees have CYP workers on site parts of the week.
- The GP appointment services are continuing remotely mainly, however some people have been seen at GP surgeries and we are working hard to increase the numbers that are seen face to face.
- Fundraising & Marketing is continuing and we are coming up with innovative ways of promoting our work and fundraising. We are excited that for the first time ever we have our own charity Christmas cards that we are now selling through eBay, with original designs from some of the children in our refugees, ranging from 3 years to 11.
- Our popular LWA charity shop did re-open in July with detailed plans and risk assessments in place, however due to the second national lockdown, as a non-essential retail, we had to close again on 4<sup>th</sup> November. We are still selling some items on our eBay shop and we have some events celebrating our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including a 2-week on-line silent auction.
- Forced Marriage Training still suspended.