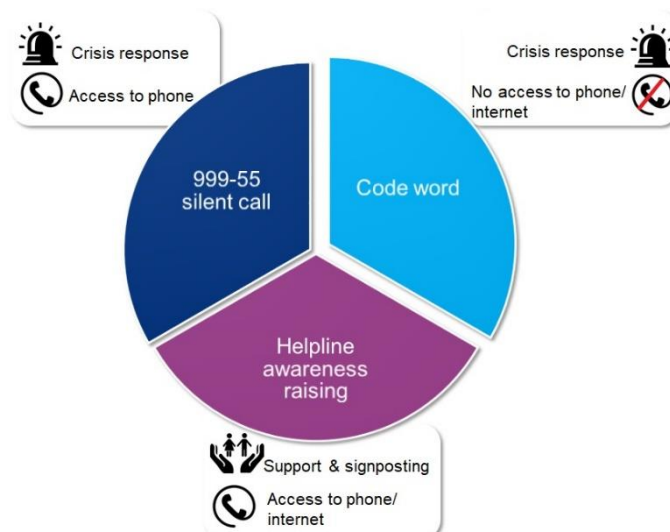


SafeLives position paper on the use of a code word (ANN – Action Needed Now) for domestic abuse victims during COVID-19

The concept for a code word during COVID-19

During this period of lockdown, domestic abuse victims may not be able to call the police for help. Many abusers will restrict a victim's access to ways of communicating, by phone or online. Their trip to the supermarket or pharmacy may be the only chance they have to access emergency support to save their lives. The staff who work in supermarkets and pharmacies are a potential lifeline. SafeLives is proposing that a code word ANN (Action Needed Now) should be used in these settings for victims to request immediate police attention. Staff will need basic training in how to respond and a campaign developed by the Government to widely publicise the scheme. Campaign materials should be visible around the shop, including at cashier desks and on receipts. The basic approach would be:

1. Victim uses code word to staff member.
2. Staff member accompanies victim to a 'safe space' in the supermarket/chemist.
3. Staff confirm with victim that they are asking for help as someone is harming them, staff member calls 999 and waits with the victim for the police to attend.



In situations where the victim reaches out for support but is clear they do not want the police to be called, they will be supported to call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

For this to work, all the major supermarkets and pharmacies would need to sign up to this initiative and agree that their staff can receive light touch training so that the scheme is effective. The training would need to consider what protection there is for the victim and staff if the perpetrator is present. We would propose that a manager is given extra training and is nominated a champion for the scheme in each supermarket so that they could respond to staff queries and support code-word requests wherever possible.

The scheme would need to be publicised through government networks which are already part of resilience planning because of the centrality of food and medicine supply, including through the new NHS Army of volunteers. The messaging would need to be the same across all platforms and in all spaces. For customers who can't leave home because they are self-isolating, we propose that there is a pop-up screen on online shopping facilities and for delivery companies which enables victims to access online help. For example, by providing a screen asking "are you experiencing abuse at home, click here for information and support" on apps and online web pages.

As we know many forms of abuse interlink or overlap. As the code word we recommend is generic there is the potential for this scheme to be used by victims of any type of abuse such as:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Modern slavery
- Elder abuse
- Child Abuse
- Vulnerable adult abuse
- FGM
- Sexual abuse

Feedback on the proposal

We have informally consulted with SafeLives' Pioneers, a group of survivors whose voices inform everything we do, CEOs of frontline DA services which are part of SafeLives' weekly call and a number of domestic abuse sector partners. They have helped us identify the benefits and risks, see below.

Benefits:

- A route for victims who have no other way to save their life to ask for emergency help
- More community safe spaces 'gateways' for people to go and to seek help
- More awareness will lead to the general public 'reaching in' rather than relying on victims to take that step
- More people understand and talk about DA and are more aware of support options (whether for themselves or family/friends)
- An army of trained supermarket, pharmacy and NHS volunteers who know about domestic abuse and what to do if they are approached by a victim

Essential to make the scheme work:

- Wide government-backed publicity & marketing using the current lockdown situation to amplify the voices of victims of DA. Now more than at any other time we have an opportunity to reach a vast number of people.
- Infrastructure to include simple e:learning on signs of abuse and the 1.2.3 steps to respond with a framework in place for continued refreshers delivered by a consortium of specialist domestic abuse organisations.
- DA champion within store who receives wider training and can trouble-shoot any issues
- Continued & creative marketing to sustain the campaign and prevent audience fatigue, which includes a diverse range of survivors/experiences
- Broadcast/print media/social media/posters so victims are aware of who is signed up to the scheme and where they will get a positive response to disclosure
- Online campaign raising awareness of the scheme and how it is accessed in pharmacies/supermarkets but with an online help seeking option.

- Advisory board comprising specialist sector partners, police, relevant government departments and the private sector to help monitor roll out and oversee the operational roll out

Next steps for government

- Agree specialist domestic abuse sector partners and scope of campaign
- Agree which other sector partners ought to be involved with the campaign for example, those responsible for child protection, vulnerable adults etc.
- Agree code word ANN (Action Needed Now)
- Sign up key responders – start with supermarkets & pharmacies and then wider businesses such as Post Office/ foodbanks.
- Develop short online training package to include awareness of signs/how to respond to use of the code word or disclosure of abuse with the 3 step process. To include what to do if the perpetrator is present.
- Develop monitoring/evaluation framework – e.g. reporting on usage – link with DA helpline to monitor increase in use, with a view to publishing independent evaluation after the end of the code word project.
- Create campaign materials which should be in BSL, audio, different languages, larger font, and accessible to people with learning disabilities.
- Roll out campaign materials, alongside media campaign to all supermarkets and pharmacies with guidance for staff on how to use the materials and access training.
- Publicise/market the campaign through key partners – Government/Public Health England/NHS England/traditional broadcast and social media channels/celebrities and influencers etc.
- Continued monitoring of uptake which can then be used to make the case for more funding for the helpline if needed.

Draft key messages

- You are not alone
- If you are experiencing abuse at home and need emergency help to get safe, but cannot call the police or access help online, you can use the code word ANN in major supermarkets and pharmacies
- The shop worker you use the code word with will take you to a safe space in the shop and ring the police on your behalf.
- The code word must only be used in an emergency. If you forget the code word you can ask shop workers to call the police on your behalf as well.

For more information please contact Jess Asato, Head of Public Affairs and Policy, at jessica.asato@safelives.org.uk / 07939 594 634

Appendix 1:

Domestic Abuse Codewords previously used

o Basildon Centre J9

<https://www.basildon.gov.uk/domesticabuse>

<https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/14321406.domestic-abuse-campaign-launches-in-basildon/>

J9 is an initiative to raise awareness and to help victims of domestic abuse. The J9 Domestic Abuse initiative is named in memory of Janine Mundy who was killed by her estranged husband in June 2003.

The Basildon Centre is a J9 reporting centre and displays the logo below. Victims of domestic abuse can attend the Basildon Centre and say "J9" to a member of staff - this code word will ensure that support and advice regarding an abusive relationship is offered. There are also hubs across Essex as well as all Job Centre's

o Pizza (US)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTJT3fVv1vU>

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/domestic-abuse-victim-devises-cunning-4503401>

This came about after a woman called 911 and sounded as though she was ordering a pizza. The operator realised what was happening and stayed on the line and the police were called. However some police departments have pushed back on the pizza tactic, saying they may not identify a food order as a cry for help from someone worried about alerting others. Furthermore, News reports have debunked myths – circulated on social media – that dispatchers are commonly trained to see hidden meaning in a request for pepperoni pizza and then launch into a script of yes-or-no questions. Officials have previously warned that the strategy is not guaranteed to work, as dispatchers are not trained to recognise a pizza order as a genuine call for help.

In the UK callers can dial 55 after calling 999 if they are unable to speak

o Mask-19 (Spain)

https://www.elespanol.com/mujer/al-dia/20200324/mascarilla-grito-auxilio-mujeres-maltratadas-farmacia/477202689_0.html

A call for help through pharmacies, the campaign has the support of the Canary Islands College of Pharmacists and has already spread to Andalusia and Cantabria and plans to expand it to the rest of Spain. The slogan is "Against gender violence, Mask 19" and posters with the information will be put up in strategic places so that women can access it.

The key word is to request a "Mask 19" and the pharmacist will already know that the woman is asking for help and will notify 112, warning that it is a case of "Mask 19" and thus activate all specific resources

o Ask for Angela

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37855009>

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2016/11/128349/ask-for-angela-sexual-violence-code-word>

'Ask for Angela' was originally developed by Lincolnshire County Council and is currently being rolled out across the country. It is supported by Lincolnshire Rape Crisis and many police forces. It's since gone global, having been rolled out in Canada, parts of the US, Argentina, Germany and in Australia.

It has been proven to work in some cases, a case where a potential perpetrator was arrested at the scene after someone asked for Angela in a nightclub

However, some have said that bar staff may not feel confident to help or that helping the woman to leave could escalate the situation.

- Spoon campaign

Karma Nirvana's metal spoon scheme – victims of forced marriage hide a spoon in underwear to alert metal detectors, and airport staff wear a spoon badge to raise awareness. Potentially shop staff could wear a badge for the scheme like the heart included in the govt campaign?
<https://karmanirvana.org.uk/when-is-a-spoon-not-just-a-spoon/>