**We are all hearing messages about stay home, stay safe, however for some people, home is not the safe sanctuary that most people associate that word with. I am sure that everyone will be aware now of what domestic abuse is, what I find shocks most people are the statistics around it. Many of us think it will never happen to us, or to a family member, a friend or a colleague or member of staff you are managing. The data would tell us otherwise. Last year there were 732 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the Police in Stirling and 5,026 visits and support calls for over 1,000 women to Stirling and District Women’s Aid.**

**My role is the Gender Based Violence Co-ordinator for Stirling and I co-ordinate a partnership response to dealing with all form so gender based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual abuse and rape, stalking, forced marriage and commercial sexual exploitation. The good news is that there is an increased awareness that this happens, that it happens in all communities and it is completely unacceptable and if this is happening to you, it is not right, it is not your fault and there is support and protection for you and any children.**

**It is complex, as it is not an easy decision to leave someone whom you love, or once loved, but who is hurting or controlling you. By the time you are ready to make that decision you will likely be so low in self esteem that you may feel it is not worth trying to leave. You will also be frightened, and it is important to be aware that anyone leaving an abuser is at higher risk and safety planning is important.**

**CRIB SHEET IF YOU HAVE CONTACT WITH ANYONE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING, OR HAS PREVIOUSLY EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC ABUSE AND ANY OTHER FORMS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

**What is Gender Based Violence:**

* **Can include all forms of abuse perpetrated because of their gender (being female, irrespective of whether the victim was born a women, a man or whether the victim is a trans woman or a non-binary person). This is not saying that men cannot also experience abuse or sexual harm, however the incidences are considerably higher for women.**
* **Domestic Abuse is where one person harms another person with whom they have (or have had) an intimate relationship.**
* **Domestic abuse can involve physical violence, or it may be another form of abuse such as emotional, sexual or financial abuse.**

**What to do if someone discloses to you**

1. **Someone you are talking to may say directly that they are experiencing abuse, or more likely, they may say it indirectly, but you have a sense that something is not right.**
2. **Firstly, show empathy, not judgement, believe them, listen to them, and reassure them that what is happening is not right by making a statement of support. Do not tell them to leave. Leaving is one of the riskiest times for a victim and needs careful safety planning from an organisation like Women’s Aid or Police Scotland.**
3. **You may want to ask if they feel safe. If they, or their children, are in immediate danger, call 999.**
4. **You may be the first person that they have disclosed this to, so your response is critical. You don’t need to solve this. It is important that the victim knows there are options, but it is their choice if they take up these options. Stirling & District Women’s Aid are open and available through phone, email or online. They also have refuge accommodation which can be accessed at this time. Stirling & District Women’s Aid phone number is 01786 469518; www.stirlingwomensaid.co.uk ; info@stirlingwomensaid.co.uk.**
5. **Feelings of isolation may also bring back the pain of previous abuse or rape. Forth Valley Rape Crisis is available to anyone over the age of 13, who is currently, or has previously experienced sexual assault or rape. Forth Valley Rape Crisis phone number is 01786 439244;** [**www.forthvalleyrapecrisis.org.uk**](http://www.forthvalleyrapecrisis.org.uk)**; support@forthvalleyrapecrisis.org.uk.**