

DeafHope – SignHealth Domestic Abuse Service

Priority 2: Tackling Sexual and Domestic Violence

2.2 Sexual and Domestic Violence: Advice, counselling, outreach, drop-in and support for access to services

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'Monia' was referred to SignHealth by a Deaf organisation. She had disclosed that she was experiencing verbal, emotional, coercive control and physical abuse at the hands of her husband and has done for many years. Monia also has two children (under 16) by her husband and was explained her housing options by her allocated IDVA. The IDVA suggested that she could go to a refuge but she declined this option as she felt the move into a refuge will have an impact on her mental wellbeing and disrupt her children's education. She did not wish to interfere with the children's education or cause any difficulties for them to attend school i.e. refuge too far from school to still be able to attend daily. Monia and her IDVA agreed to go to the housing office in February 2020. The IDVA had been made aware that Monia had already turned down an offer of a three bedroom property in other borough. This was turned down due to the travel required between the two boroughs; travel affects Monia's anxiety but the travel would be necessary as she wanted her husband and herself to have 50/50 parental responsibility over the children. Monia did not return to the family home after this appointment. After securing emergency accommodation, she picked the children up from school and went straight to the hostel.

The family was placed into emergency accommodation in February but have since been moved between hostels and hotels five times. They have been staying in a hostel since March but Monia's relationship with her children has deteriorated due to their unstable housing situation and prolonged level of stress. The pandemic and current restrictions of COVID-19 has made the struggle more complicated. They needed to leave the safety of the hotel and had to return to a hostel due to the closure of the hotel in the pandemic.

The father has complex health issues and has regular contact with the children. They sometimes stayed with him to allow for easier travel to school and the children want to see him as they know he is unwell. Monia is the main care giver of the children. Monia and the children are struggling with personal space within the hostel during the pandemic as they have only one room between them including a kitchen and 3 beds. Their relationship has altered to the point where they are always arguing due to lack of privacy, sufficient space and nowhere discreet to get changed. The mother knows their behaviour and mental health will be much improved once they are able to gain sufficient accommodation for them all. The IDVA has sent weekly emails to her housing officer to gain updates to support the distressed family. This is ongoing. The IDVA is in daily contact with Monia to support her emotionally in this tough time.

Although the circumstances are currently difficult, Monia has said that she feels better having left the family home with the children.
