

## MENTAL HEALTH AND THE INCREASED RISKS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Advice and suggestions for how Catholics can protect their mental health during the challenging time we face due to Coronavirus may be found on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales website at: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/health-social-care/coronavirus-guidelines/what-can-catholics-do-to-protect-their-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus/>

Since the UK-wide COVID-19 lockdown began on 23 March 2020, there has been a 49% increase in calls and online requests for help relating to domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Group of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has issued guidance on how Catholic parishes can support victims of domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance includes information about how parishes can raise awareness of the issue, including a list of helplines and information about how to safely get help. It also contains a step-by-step starter guide for how parishes can support their local domestic abuse services. The guidance can be found on the CBCEW website at: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/health-social-care/coronavirus-guidelines/domestic-abuse/>.

In addition to this guidance, Breda Theakston, our Diocesan Parenting Co-ordinator, has requested that I share with you the information that one immediate source of help for victims of domestic abuse can be accessed through Boots Chemists: <https://www.boots-uk.com/our-stories/boots-pharmacy-consultation-rooms-become-safe-spaces-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse/>. Breda has said that "All Boots Chemists shops which have a pharmacy counter and consulting room are now able to help. All domestic abuse sufferers have to do is go to the pharmacy (not the till) counter where trained staff can help. Of course the moment that someone who suffers domestic abuse is most at risk is the moment they try to get help, which is why calls, texts and online searches for help can be very risky if the abuser finds them. So the Boots option may be better in those cases".