

Written evidence submitted by Helen Goodman (COR0086)

1. Impact of Covid 19 lockdown on victims of domestic abuse and response of the courts
2. A case has been brought to me which raises important issues. Given the sensitivity I have anonymised it.
3. A victim of domestic abuse now separated from her former partner had a court case scheduled for a hearing in open court. Because of the lockdown the judge has decided to hold the hearing on skype. This is probably a well intentioned attempt to stick to the timetable and avoid delay.
4. However it does have two downsides, both of which cut across the rights of the victim:
5. The usual screening of victim from perpetrator will not be available and it will not be possible for the victim to call witnesses. It is worth considering whether this is appropriate in this instance: what processes were followed in coming to this decision? And will this be common practice a) during the lockdown and b) thereafter?
6. Because of the cuts to legal aid the victim does not have legal advice in negotiating this situation.

April 2020