

Resource Summary – The role of technology to help victims of IPV

Background

The widespread use and availability of mobile phones, computers, and the Internet have meant that perpetrators of intimate partner violence have more tools at their disposal to harass, intimidate and, ultimately, coerce and control their victims. As such, while these technologies have enabled people to extend their breadth of connection and knowledge about the world, and to find new ways of connecting with others, in the hands of perpetrators the same tools can become weaponised and turned into tools to oppress, to dominate and ultimately to diminish victims of IPV. However, the same technologies can be harnessed in order to signpost and support victims, to provide emergency assistance in a crisis, and to provide evidence in court.

Bright Sky Mobile Phone App (Vodafone in partnership with Hestia): A free app, providing information and support for victims as well as those concerned about someone they know. Features a UK-wide directory of domestic abuse support services; a tool to log incidents of abuse via text, audio, video or photos function in order to build evidence and without the content being saved onto the device. The app also contains a questionnaire assessing the safety of a relationship, and tips to improve safety online.

<https://www.hestia.org/brightsky>

TecSOS Handset (Thames Valley Partnership): A device which provides immediate connection to the police. Users activate the device which initiates a 999 call. The number is then verified against a known list of TecSOS users. The user's location is then found, and the user's name, details and location are flagged to the police. The calls are recorded and can be used as evidence in subsequent investigations. <http://www.tecsos.co.uk/index.html>

Lifeline (Vodafone in partnership with SafeLives): Mobile handsets preloaded with SIM cards and credit are given out by specialist domestic abuse workers to victims in order to help victims to stay in contact with friends and family. This programme is especially helpful for victims who might have had their phone taken away or who are being monitored or tracked by their abusers. After a successful pilot scheme in the south east of England, the programme is now being rolled out nationally. Frontline health workers in hospitals and GP surgeries have been enlisted to promote the service.

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Vodafone%20Lifeline%20Report.pdf>

WEPROTECT (DA Alliance in partnership with Cambridgeshire Constabulary): A pilot scheme for frontline police officers in Cambridgeshire, WEPROTECT is a mobile phone app which refers victims to the Domestic Abuse Alliance – a domestic abuse legal service. Once a referral is made, a DA Alliance legal advisor contacts the victim in order to offer specialist legal assistance. The advisor can also facilitate the implementation of civil injunctions, such as non-molestation orders, in order to safeguard victims. <https://domestic-abuse.co.uk/weprotect/>