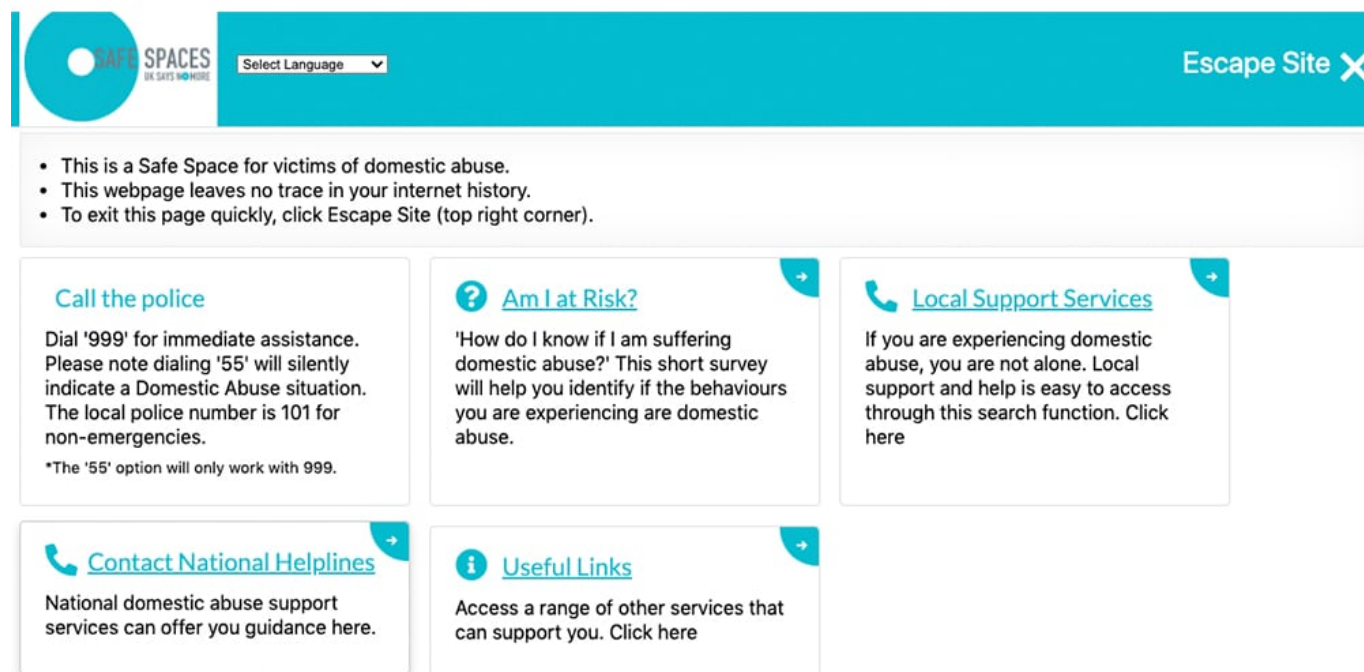


RBD supports victims of domestic abuse with Online Safe Space

February 22, 2021



“UK Says No More – together we can end domestic violence and sexual assault”. That is the message from RBD as we join forces with some of the country’s biggest organisations, including Network Rail, by launching an Online Safe Space on our website.

As part of our commitment we are using our website – www.news.railbusinessdaily.com – as a platform for a discreet portal offering a free service to support victims of domestic abuse.

Online Safe spaces was developed by the Royal Mail Group, in collaboration with Hestia and their UKSAYSNOMORE campaign. It is a virtual portal which can be installed on a website free of charge – providing support, advice and contact services via a pop-up window, and allowing users to access resources discreetly without leaving an online history trace.

It has a short questionnaire to determine a person’s domestic abuse and provides a variety of helpful support, advice and contact information to those at risk or experiencing domestic abuse.

It also includes helplines and features a quick exit button and leaves no internet history, ensuring the

safety of those using the service.

David McLoughlin, Chief Executive of the Business Daily Group, said: “Domestic abuse and sexual assault are unacceptable and we must do anything we can to end it and help protect anyone suffering.

“As an organisation that receives more than four million website views every year we are more than happy to offer an Online Safe Space – an excellent system developed by the Royal Mail. I just hope no-one finds themselves in the situation that they need it.”

Network Rail announced this morning that it had extended its support to domestic abuse victims, after through Women in Rail, being brought together with early adopters including High Speed 1 (HS1) and Southeastern Railway to implement the Online Safe Space on its website. Other organisations across the rail industry are being encouraged to implement the service on their websites.

Since the lockdown began in March 2020, reports of domestic abuse in the UK have increased dramatically, with Refuge reporting on their website a 25 per cent increase in calls and online requests.

In November 2020, Network Rail became a White Ribbon UK-accredited organisation, demonstrating its commitment to influencing collective action to change the behaviour and culture that leads to abuse or violence.

Andrew Haines, Network Rail chief executive, said: “We are delighted to support the Online Safe Spaces portal by making it available on our website. The pandemic is having a huge impact on our country’s most vulnerable and this platform will be a vital resource for those who may be subjected to domestic abuse.”

Dyan Crowther, Chief Executive Officer, HS1 Ltd said: “We are proud to be amongst the first organisations to be driving forward this important initiative in our industry.

“We want to ensure that our stations and the entire passenger journey is a safe environment for those who need it. Through leading by example, I hope we can influence others to take part, support communities and make a greater stand against violence and domestic abuse.”

David Statham, Managing Director, Southeastern Railway, said: “This is an extension to the support we and other train operators have already pledged in this area. The *Online Safe Space* portal could help save a life or offer an opportunity for a way out. It’s simple, it’s discreet and provides information such as national helplines and local support services very quickly, without leaving an online trace.

“Often, a passenger journey starts online, with booking tickets and researching fares and train times. Providing discretion and support at the beginning of that journey could make a difference. And this difference takes an industry effort.”

Network Rail encourages passengers to seek help at its stations if they need it. This is in addition to the *Rail to Refuge* initiative – a joint effort between rail companies and Women’s Aid – seeing train operators cover the cost of train tickets for women, men and children travelling to refuge accommodation. Since April 2020, the scheme has helped almost 1,000 people fleeing abuse, including more than 200

children.