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'SO SCARED' Domestic abuse charity worker reveals women's cries for help during lockdown

Sharon Hendry

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Only leave home to shop for necessities



Work from home and do not travel



Do not meet others - even friends or family

DOMESTIC abuse charity Women's Aid has launched a campaign to highlight a nationwide increase of the problem in lockdown.

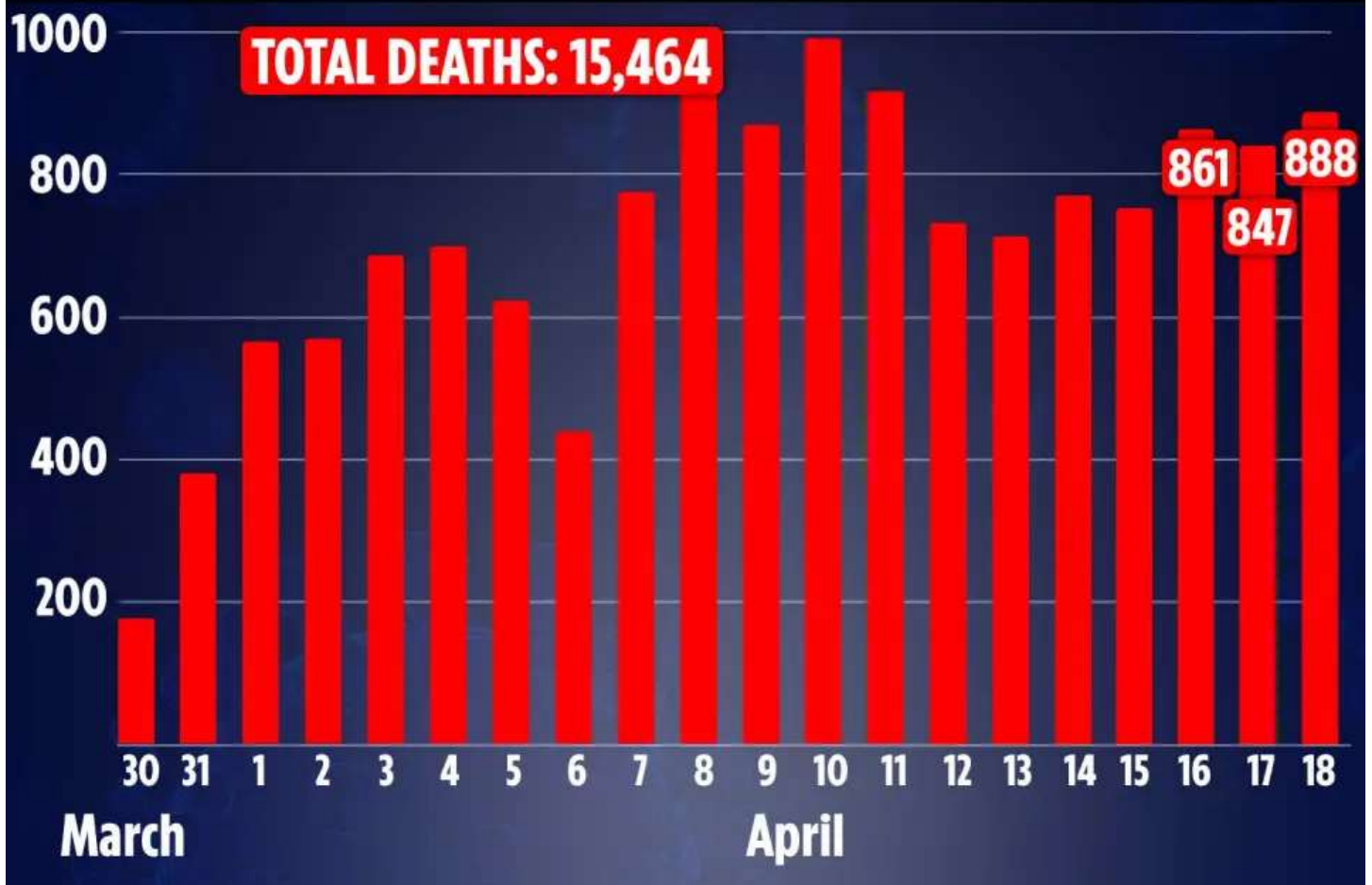
Called The Lockdown, the charity is calling for an emergency cash injection of at least £48.2million to support its national Live Chat service and national network of local domestic abuse services to protect women and children during the crisis.

⚠ Read our [coronavirus live blog](#) for the latest news & updates



Calls from frightened domestic abuse victims have surged since the country went into lockdown Credit: Getty Images - Getty

UK COVID-19 DEATHS PER DAY



The estimated social and economic cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales is £66billion per year.

On average three women are murdered a fortnight by their current or ex-partner in England and Wales and 1.6 million women experienced domestic abuse last year.

The use of Women's Aid's Live Chat service is up by 41 per cent since March 19. With just SIX dedicated Live Chat workers it is struggling to keep up.

Here, Kat describes a typical two hours on the phone front line during the Covid-19 pandemic.

10am: The first message comes in. "I am having to self-isolate with my husband who bullies me.

"It is unbearable. I don't think I can carry on like this any more. I keep having suicidal thoughts."

A common theme in the messages has been among women who want to leave but aren't sure whether it is a bigger risk to escape and get infected or stay and risk injury.

This woman will be at greater risk if she stays. She tells me she'd like to look for a refuge so I start the process of searching for vacancies.

Give now to The Sun's NHS appeal

BRITAIN's four million NHS staff are on the frontline in the battle against coronavirus.

But while they are helping save lives, who is there to help them?

The Sun has launched an appeal to raise £1MILLION for NHS workers.

The Who Cares Wins Appeal aims to get vital support to staff in their hour of need.

We have teamed up with NHS Charities Together in their urgent Covid-19 Appeal to ensure the money gets to exactly who needs it.

The Sun is donating £50,000 and we would like YOU to help us raise a million pounds, to help THEM.

No matter how little you can spare, please donate today here

www.thesun.co.uk/whocareswinsappeal

10.15am: There are more and more women queuing on the lines and I know that some won't even be permitted to join the call waiting system because it is

overloaded.

We have been shown how to hide the “chat waiting” numbers because it can feel completely overwhelming and makes it difficult for us to focus on the call in hand.

10.44am: “My partner has underlying health conditions and has to isolate for 12 weeks.

"He has been getting worse day by day, and he tried to strangle me.

“I have been to A&E because of him before but I am too scared to say anything and he denies it to anyone who asks about my injuries.”

Some women just aren’t ready to speak to anyone official, including the police. All I can do is to reassure her that we are here.

Join our George Cross campaign for NHS staff

SUN readers are today urged to sign a petition calling for our NHS staff to be awarded the George Cross.

Yesterday, we backed a proposal by Lord Ashcroft to honour our health heroes with the gallantry gong given for acts of bravery that did not take place in battle.

A No10 spokesman said: "The NHS is doing a fantastic job and the nation will want to find a way to say thank you when we have defeated this virus."

SAS hero Andy McNab added: "The award of a George Cross would show an emotional appreciation."

We are asking readers to sign the petition online at thesun.co.uk/georgecrossfor NHS.

11.05am: Another message comes in. "I want to check if I can leave to stay with my sister.

"I have to get out of here but am worried I'll get stopped by the police for leaving the house."

This is another really common concern right now. Women are worried they will be stopped by the police and have to turn back if they are not believed.

11.28am: I've only been working on the Live Chat for an hour and half but it's so intense.

Another message: "I am so relieved to speak to you over Live Chat. I can't wait until he goes back to work again.

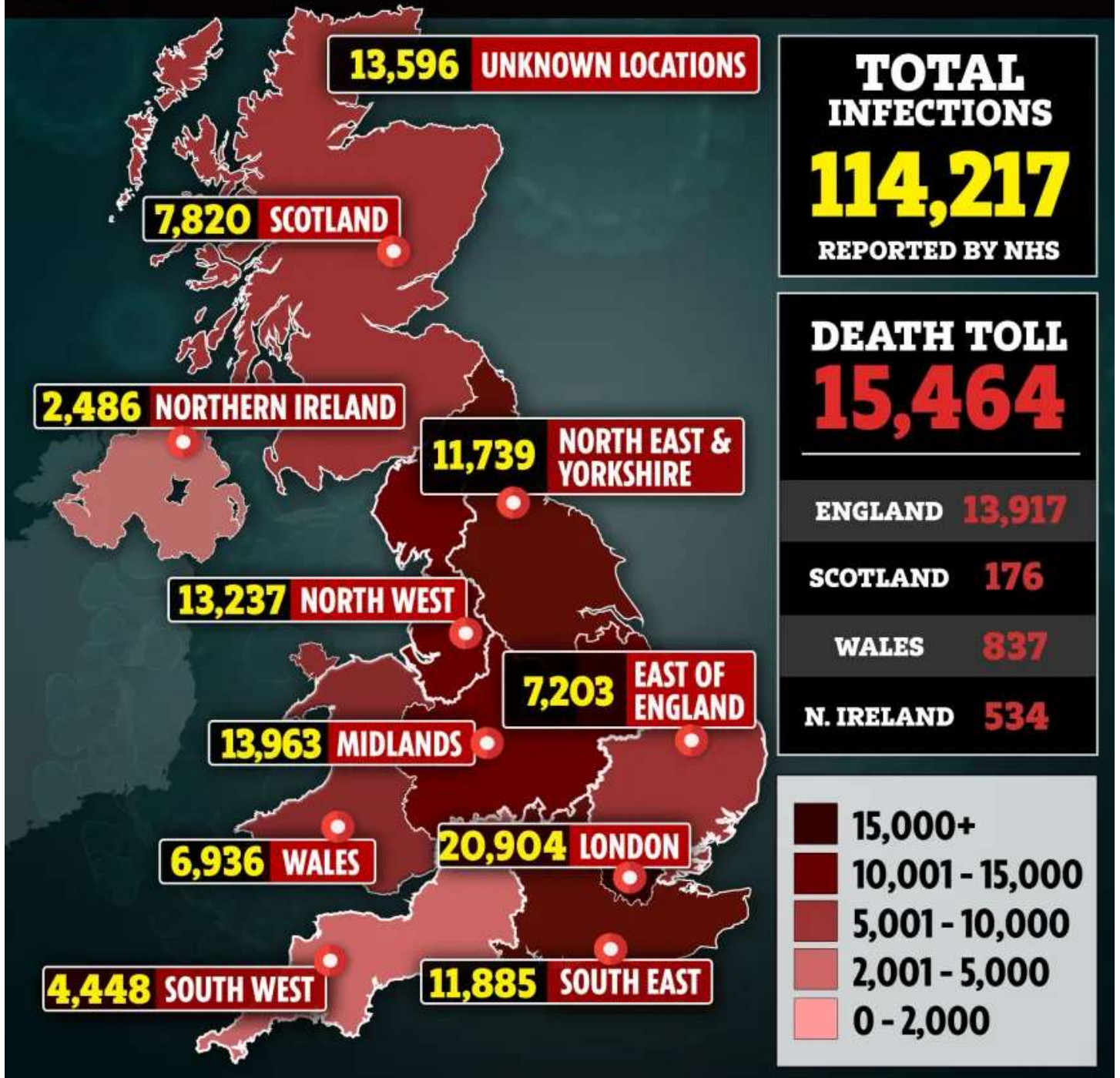
"I feel so alone and as if there is no way out."

I reassure her that she is not alone and that there is a way out. Women's Aid will help her find it.



OFFICIAL UK CASES & DEATHS

ACCURATE AS OF APRIL 18



Women's Aid

Women's Aid offers confidential help and advice via Live Chat, email and on its forum.

See [womensaid.org.uk/information-support](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support).

For more information on COVID-19, visit [womensaid.org.uk/covid-19](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19)

To donate to the appeal for Live Chat, go to [womensaid.org.uk/donate](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/donate).

11.38am: Every time I tell a woman I will try to help her find a refuge space I think about the terrible cuts to services over recent years which mean that fewer and fewer spaces are available.

Some refuges have closed and there is a lack of staff because so many people are having to self-isolate without testing.

11.58am: “I was going to leave but now he is here all the time, working from home. I can’t even make a phone call without him listening in.

“He’s drinking more on the nights. The abuse is getting worse and I’m so scared.”

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ALLY ROSS Nella Rose is in a grievance generation - if there's no offence, she'll invent it

I manage to establish that there are also children in this home. They will be picking up on the stress even if they are not being directly hurt.

Sometimes older children step in to try to protect their mothers and this can put them in danger.



Women feeling trapped on lockdown do not always find it easy to pick up the phone for help Credit: Alamy

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