

QUESTIONS TO HELP WITH SAFETY PLANNING – MENTAL HEALTH

Managing your mental health:

- You've said that things are really stressful right now as money is so tight and the kids are bored and fighting all the time, so you're shouting and yelling more. I know it might not seem very often at the minute, but can you tell me about the times when you've managed to *not* take your stress out on the kids? What have you done instead? Who or what else has helped?
- I know you've been feeling so low lately that you've felt like there's no point in carrying on. If it was your best friend who was feeling that way, what would you say to them?
- We've been on lockdown now for the past few weeks. Even though it's been tough, how is it that you've managed to keep going? Who or what is it that keeps you going?
- What has surprised you the most about the way that you're coping right now, despite everything that is going on? What has been the biggest help?
- Out of all the people you know, who would you say knows you best? Who is the person who you could confide in about anything, even when you're feeling at your absolute worst? What are the best things that they do or say that help?
- Since we've all been on lockdown, who has been the person that has helped you the most? How have they been helping? Who would the kids say has been the biggest help and how?
- What would the kids say are the best ways that you're staying in control of your feelings at the moment? What about your partner / grandparents / best friend – what would they say is impressing them about the way that you're coping at the moment?

Triggers:

- What is the hardest thing about the current situation with Covid 19 and how it's been affecting you?
- What are the most difficult times of the day / week / month / year, when you find it hardest to cope? What do we need to plan for to make sure that your feelings don't overwhelm you again at these times?
- Who are the worst people for you to be around when you're feeling at your worst? What is it that these people do or say that isn't helpful?
- What is the most unhelpful thing that your partner / kids / family could do or say when you're feeling really crap?
- What things are going on for you right now that just make life feel like more of a slog?
- If I was to ask the kids what they think you are most worried or anxious about at the minute, what would they say?
- If I was to ask the kids how well you're dealing with these worries at the minute, what do you think they would say?
- Thinking about life over the next few weeks / months, however long we might be on lockdown, what would be the one big thing that could happen that would make you feel like you just couldn't cope anymore?

Red flags:

- If I was to ask the kids, what would be the first thing that they would notice that would tell them that you aren't coping very well? What would your partner, friend etc notice?

- What would be the first thing that would warn you that you're slipping back into a dark place in your head or your thoughts are running away with you? What would other people notice?
- What would tell you that things have got to the point where you really need to do something different to get back in control of yourself? Who agrees with this? What would your partner, friend, grandma etc say is happening when things have got out of control?
- What would the kids notice that would tell them that things were starting to get really bad again?

Keeping the children safe:

- Where are you storing your medication so that there is absolutely no way that the kids can get hold of it?
- Of all the people that you know, who would be the first person to notice that you were really starting to struggle? Who would be the most likely person to step in and make sure that the kids aren't badly affected by this? What would they do?
- What ways have you found to help the kids understand what is going on when you're crying non-stop, so that they aren't worrying so much about you? Who is the best person you know that can help talk to the kids about this?
- If you or the people supporting you could do just one thing differently, even if this just makes a small difference to how well you are coping, what would this be?
- If the worst happened and you completely broke down, meaning that you couldn't care for the kids and they needed to be looked after by someone else, who would this be? Who would go where? Where would you be? Where would the children be? Who would decide when it would be safe enough for the kids to be back in your care? How would they know?
- If we were to ask the kids what they would want to happen if you were so low / paranoid / up a height again that you were struggling to take care of yourself, never mind them, what would they say? Who would they want to help?
- The Safety Plan we had come up with involved your friends Jim and Jan coming in to check on you and the kids and help out around the house. Now that they can't do that, what other ways can everyone think of that would mean that Jim and Jan could still help and make sure that the kids are okay?
- What ideas does everyone have that would mean that the kids don't end up having to take care of each other when you're feeling so low that you don't want to get out of bed?
- Kids, what would be the best way for you to let people know if you have any worries (could think about a safety object or word here)? Who would you feel most comfortable telling? What would you want these people to do?