



Safety Plan Guide

In an emergency always call 999

There is a lot of information and things to think about in this guide but it is important for your safety and that of your children to start planning and exploring how you can protect yourself from violence and future abuse. You may choose to work on your plan with a trusted family member, friend or colleague.

Personal safety

- ⇒ Plan in advance how you might respond in different situations, including crisis situations.
- ⇒ Think about the different options that may be available to you.
- ⇒ Keep with you any important and emergency telephone numbers (e.g. your local IDAS number, the 24 hour helpline number; the police domestic violence unit; your GP; your social worker, if you have one; your children's school; your solicitor and so on)
- ⇒ Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency and what they would need to say (for example, their full name, address and telephone number).
- ⇒ Think about where you might go in an emergency. Are there neighbours you could trust? If so, tell them what is going on, and ask them to call the police if they hear sounds of a violent attack.
- ⇒ Rehearse an escape plan, so in an emergency you and the children can get away safely. Think about the safest routes in and out of your house.
- ⇒ Pack an emergency bag for yourself and your children, and hide it somewhere safe (for example, at a neighbour's or friend's house). Try to avoid mutual friends or family.
- ⇒ Try to keep a small amount of money on you at all times - including change for the phone and for bus fares.
- ⇒ Know where the nearest phone is, and if you have a mobile phone, try to keep it with you.
- ⇒ If you suspect that your partner is about to attack you, try to go to a lower risk area of the house - for example where there is a way out and access to a telephone. Avoid the kitchen or garage where there are likely to be knives or other weapons; and avoid rooms where you might be trapped, such as the bathroom, or where you might be shut into a cupboard or other small space.
- ⇒ Be prepared to leave the house in an emergency.

Safety considerations at work

- ◇ Keep emergency numbers easily accessible – consider the use of a mobile phone that connects directly to the police.
- ◇ Know who your contact person is in your organisation if you need help or advice.
- ◇ Give your organisation the name and number of an emergency contact person for you.
- ◇ Tell someone if you are receiving any sort of threat or harassment at work
- ◇ Think about how you travel to and from work – try to make sure that you are not travelling alone or in the dark.
- ◇ If there is anything you think your employer can do to help increase your safety, ask as soon as possible.

Protecting yourself after you have left

If you leave your partner because of abuse, you may not want people to know the reason you left. It is your decision whether or not you tell people that you have suffered domestic violence; but if you believe you may still be at risk, it might increase your safety if you tell your family and friends, your children's school and your employer or college what is happening, so that they do not inadvertently give out any information to your ex-partner. They will also be more prepared and better able to help you in an emergency.

If you have left home, but are staying in the same town or area, these are some of the ways in which you might be able to increase your safety:

- ◇ Try not to place yourself in a vulnerable position or isolate yourself.
- ◇ Try to avoid any places such as shops, banks, cafes that

that you used to use when you were together.

- ◇ Try to alter your routines as much as you can.
- ◇ If you have any regular appointments that your partner knows about (for example, with a
- ◇ counsellor or health practitioner) try to change your appointment time and /or the location of the appointment.
- ◇ Try to choose a safe route, or alter the route you take or the form of transport you use when
- ◇ approaching or leaving places you cannot avoid such as your place of work, the children's school or your GP's surgery.
- ◇ Tell your children's school, nursery or childminder what has happened, and let them know who will pick them up. Make sure they do not release the children to anyone else, or give your new address or telephone number to anyone. (You may want to establish a password with them, and give them copies of any court orders, if you have them.)

If you have moved away from your area, and don't want your abuser to know where you are, then you need to take particular care with anything that may indicate your location; for example:

- ⇒ Your mobile phone could be 'tracked'; this is only supposed to happen if you have given your permission, but if your partner has had access to your mobile phone, they could have sent a
- ⇒ consenting message purporting to come from you. If you think this could be the case, you should contact the company providing the tracking facility and withdraw your permission; or if you are in any doubt, change your phone.
- ⇒ Try to avoid using shared credit or debit cards or joint bank accounts: if the statement is sent to your ex-partner, they will see the transactions you have made.
- ⇒ Make sure that your address does not appear on any court papers.
- ⇒ If you need to phone your abuser (or anyone with whom they are in contact), make sure your telephone number is untraceable by dialling 141 before ringing.
- ⇒ Talk to your children about the need to keep your address and location confidential.

If you stay or return to your home after your partner has left, then you will probably have an Occupation Order or a Protection Order. If the injunction has powers of arrest attached then do make sure that your local police station has a copy and that the police know that they need to respond quickly in an emergency.

You could also consider the following:

- ◆ Changing the locks on all doors.
- ◆ Putting locks on all windows if you don't have them already.
- ◆ Installing smoke detectors on each floor, and providing fire extinguishers.
- ◆ Installing an outside light (back and front) which comes on automatically when someone approaches.
- ◆ Informing the neighbours that your partner no longer lives there, and asking them to tell you or call the police if they see him nearby.
- ◆ Changing your telephone number and making it ex-directory.
- ◆ Using an answer machine to screen your calls.
- ◆ If your ex-partner continues to harass, threaten or abuse you, make sure you keep detailed records of each incident, including the date and time it occurred, what was said or done, and, if possible, photographs of damage to your property or injuries to yourself or others. If your partner or ex-partner injures you, see your GP or go to hospital for treatment and ask them to document your visit.
- ◆ If you have an injunction with a power of arrest, or there is a restraining order in place, you should ask the police to enforce this; and if your ex-partner is in breach of any court order, you should also tell your solicitor.

What to pack if you are planning to leave your partner

- Birth & marriage certificates, school records
- Medical records, driving documents

- Money, credit cards, cheque books
- Benefit books, rent books, passports
- Work permits, visa, medications
- Several days clothing
- Possessions with sentimental value
- Children's favourite toys

You should also take any documentation relating to the abuse such as police reports, court orders such as injunctions and restraining orders and copies of medical records if you have them.