

# Safety planning and staying safe

for victims and survivors of domestic abuse



They say 'love hurts' ...but should it?



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# About developing a plan

You do not have any control over your partner's violence but you do have choices about how to respond to situations and how you can get yourself (and your children) to safety.

Whether or not you feel you can leave your abuser – there are things you can do to keep you and your family safe.

The information in this booklet will help you to plan ahead, stay safe, and will make any decisions easier in times of crisis. It has been put together with assistance from victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

**Remember to keep your safety plan in a safe place. Plans should never be shared with the abuser.**

## Safety planning for anyone with a disability

We realise that some of the information given in this booklet may be difficult to put into practice if you have a disability.

**If you do need help with thinking through your safety planning please ring Women's Aid on (01472) 575757.**

**Please note:** Local emergency accommodation has full disabled access and aids to assist you if you need to leave.

It isn't always possible to plan for every situation and we are always learning from our experiences.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge past and current service users who have helped us put all the information together.

Safety planning is about identifying risks and planning in advance it is about planning BEFORE an emergency.

If you feel you are in immediate danger – **ALWAYS** call **999**



# Protecting yourself if you are still with the abuser

- Try to keep your mobile phone charged up and with you at all times in case you have to lock yourself in a room.
- Try to keep credit on your phone; however, providing it is charged up, emergency calls can still be made without credit and support agencies can accept reverse charges.
- Set up speed dials for numbers that you may need in an emergency.
- Memorise numbers or have them in a place of safety (Women's Aid have an easy to remember number specifically for this reason).
- Where possible, have caller ID on your phones (if not, try using an answer phone to screen any unwanted calls).
- Plan your escape route from the house in an emergency and keep a set of spare keys somewhere.

## **If appropriate, set up signals or codes with neighbours and friends, for example:**

- Lights on/off in a certain room.
- Windows open/shut.
- Blinds/curtains half shut or half open.
- Sentences such as "I won't be able to come over for coffee as my Mum is here."
- Discuss with your neighbours when you would want them to call the police (for example if they see your partner at your house).
- Pack a bag with important things that you would need if you had to leave in a hurry – this should include money, passport, medication, birth certificates and a change of clothes for children. Put the bag in a safe place or leave it with someone.
- Keep any court orders, injunctions and emergency numbers with you at all times.
- Diary/log any abuse including abusive calls, texts, emails, etc.

# If you are at home and being threatened or attacked

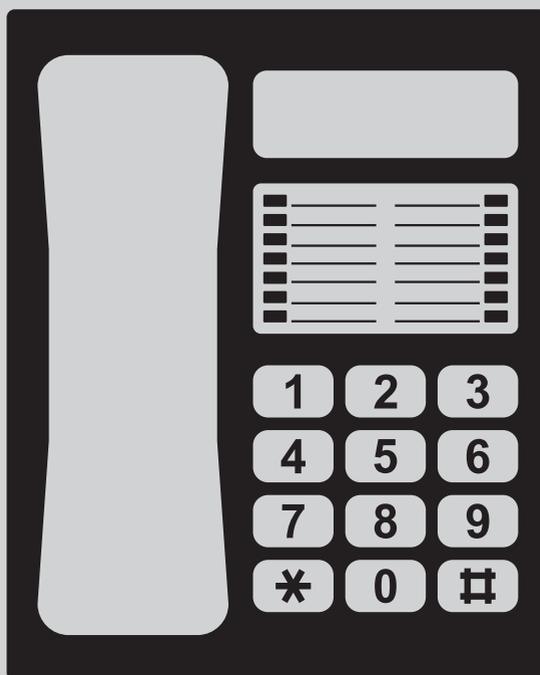
- When in danger always ring 999 – you may want to ring other support agencies but remember, this may delay help arriving.
- Try to stay calm and use a calm voice (even though you may not feel calm inside!)
- Do not fight back – it will make you more unsafe (although you can still defend yourself).
- Try to stay near a door/exit.
- Try to stay near a phone.
- Be aware of rooms with potential hazards (stairs, windows etc.)
- Be aware of rooms with weapons such as knives, blades, etc.
- Exit as quickly as possible.
- Go to a neighbour, friend or shop and seek medical help if needed.

**If you do leave in a hurry without taking important things, don't worry. We can help you to retrieve them at a later date.**



# Keeping yourself safe at work

- Tell your line manager what is happening – you may be able to change duties/venue if necessary.
- If possible, give a copy of the abuser’s photo to the security guard or reception staff.
- Keep a copy of any court order, injunctions etc. at work.
- Report any incidents to your line manager.
- Do not go to lunch alone.
- Ask someone to walk you to the car or bus.
- Diary or log any contact that the abuser has with you at work via calls, emails, visits, etc.



# Emergency accommodation

There is emergency refuge accommodation available in North East Lincolnshire if you feel this is an option to keep you and your children safe. This can be planned in advance with a support worker for a time when it is safe for you to leave. Bed and breakfast or other housing provision is also sometimes used in emergencies. Call (01472) 575757 to contact the refuge.

In addition, North East Lincolnshire Council provides an emergency housing telephone service – open 24 hours a day, seven days a week – and will temporarily accommodate people who find themselves homeless due to fleeing domestic abuse. Call (01472) 326296 option 1 from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday or (01472) 313131 out of hours. There is also a drop in service at Freeman Street Resource Centre from 9am to 12 noon and 1pm to 4pm Monday to Friday, to provide housing advice and emergency assistance.



## Moving out of town

Women's Aid can work with you to help you move town if you feel that is the only way you will be safe. Again this needs to be well planned and you will need to speak to a support worker to help you.

Call (01472) 575757 if you feel this might be an option for you.



# Staying safe in your car

- Check around visually while you are parking the car and also before you get out.
- Park your car so you can drive straight off without making any manoeuvres, for example reverse into parking spaces and don't park behind closed gates.
- Park as near to a street light as possible.
- Keep the doors locked when driving and remember that when you have windows open fully anyone can reach in.
- Always check your petrol, oil and water to avoid breaking down.
- Join a breakdown organisation or keep the number of someone you can call in the event of a breakdown.
- Keep your mobile phone charged, in credit and in reach (i.e. not at the bottom of a cluttered bag).
- If you are not sure about finding your destination, get the directions before you set out.



# Safety when walking alone

- Walk as confidently as possible – hold your head up and try not to look frightened.
- Don't walk down alleyways, short cuts or across wasteland.
- Stick to routes that are well lit and near to residential areas if possible.
- If possible, tell someone where you are going, which way you are going and when you are expected to arrive.
- Keep your mobile phone charged, in credit and handy in a pocket or at the top of your bag.
- Have a torch with you and keep the batteries charged up. Check that it still works from time to time.
- Have a personal alarm with you.



# Are you a child living in an abusive home?

If abuse is happening at home you probably want to stop it but you might not be sure what you can do. The first thing is to tell someone what is going on. You might be able to talk to the person who is being hurt or to a teacher, friend, neighbour or other family member.

Sometimes you might feel you want to stop the fight and protect the person who is getting hurt. This can be very dangerous and puts you at risk of getting hurt yourself. If you are scared when there is a fight, you can call 999 and ask for the police – they will come to your house any time of the day or night.

You may be wondering why the parent who is being hurt doesn't leave or get away – there are many reasons for this and this list may help you to understand:

- They don't have anywhere else to go.
- They don't have enough money.
- They still love the person who is hurting them.
- They hope that person will change and things will get better.

- They don't want you to have to leave the person who is causing harm.
- They don't feel strong enough to cope on their own or ready to face the many changes ahead.
- They may be worried that they can't take you with them.

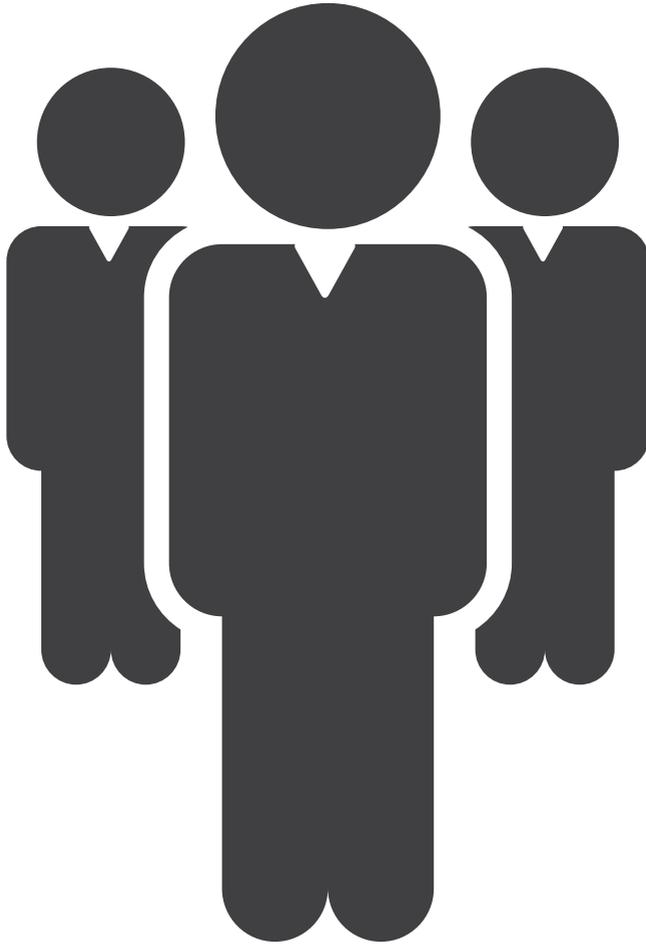
Remember – you cannot stop the abuse and it is not your fault.

All violence is wrong and it does not solve problems. Getting involved in fights may make things worse so try to stay out of any arguments and try not to take sides.

If you have a mobile phone, keep special numbers stored if you think you may need them urgently at some time. Try to keep some credit on your phone but remember you can still call 999 in an emergency if you don't have credit.

Try to keep your phone with you if you lock yourself in your bedroom or other safe room. You can call for help from friends or relatives that you trust on the following numbers:

1.
2.
3.



# Safety planning and children

Talk to the children about what is going on – whatever you may think, children do know about it and do hear it. If you don't talk to them they will come to their own conclusions which may not be accurate. Try to be honest without frightening them.

Talk to the children about why you have left or why you haven't left – this is important as some children feel angry and upset when the victim does leave, but some children feel unprotected and let down when victims don't leave the abuse.

Do not encourage children to join in with the abuse – this includes things like name calling.

Do not tell children they are just like their father/mother when they are showing frustration or anger about the abuser.

## **Remember:**

Children will feel more secure with one parent in a stable environment than with two parents in an unstable and violent environment.

Any plans undertaken with children must **NEVER** give them responsibility for anyone else's safety.

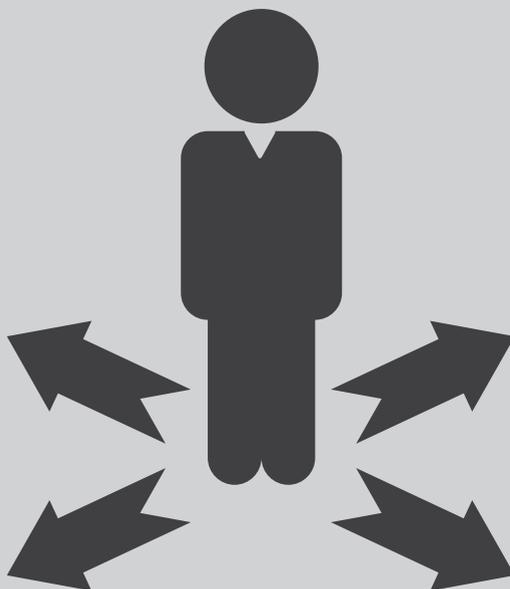
If appropriate, while making plans with your child, it is important to:

- Go through an escape plan with them – plan and find safe routes out of the home and to somewhere safe.
- Discuss how you would leave at different times, days and situations. Leaving in the dark or middle of the night would be different to leaving in the daytime.
- Discuss places they would run to or hide at in an emergency (such as a neighbour or corner shop) and agree a plan if you get separated from the children.
- Encourage the child to have a bag packed as well – this could include favourite things that they don't want to leave behind.
- Encourage children to stay out of the way during a fight.
- Show them how to use the phone, including making a 999 call. Find somewhere for them to keep phone numbers of who they can ring for help e.g. supportive family/friends.
- Discuss signals or codes, for example, agreed sentences, lights on/off, position of lamp, etc. These can help everyone living in the house but also think about how children can raise the alarm to neighbours and/or family.

- Discuss who is going to know at school – this is important to a child who will usually be reluctant to talk about the abuse.
- Discuss which family, friends, babysitters, etc. they can talk to or go to in an emergency – this is important to a child who maybe is confused about the abuse.
- Make sure the school knows who they can and can't talk to and that they have copies of any necessary paperwork such as court orders, injunctions etc.
- Discuss who will be picking the child up from school and possibly who they must never go with, even if there is a good story, e.g. "mum is poorly so 'X' has got to pick you up".
- Talk to the child about what to do if they see the abuser while at school or while with family or friends.
- Discuss not giving out addresses and phone numbers.
- Discuss what they can and can't say to the abusing parent (for example where they are living).
- Discuss safety during contact visits.
- Do activities with them that may encourage good conversation about what is happening.

- Perhaps encourage the child to keep a journal of how they are feeling, what has happened and what makes them scared/sad.
- Where possible, discuss any realistic options of the child having a phone (including speed dials).

Suggest your child looks at websites for children experiencing domestic abuse, for example:  
[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk).



# Staying safe after the abuser has moved out

Change the locks where possible – make use of security support that is available free of charge (see below).

- Where possible, shop and bank in a different place to before.
- Cancel any bank accounts, credit cards etc. that you have shared.
- Keep any court orders, injunctions, emergency numbers with you.
- Keep a mobile with you at all times – try to keep it with credit on. Emergency calls can still be made without credit and support agencies will accept reverse charges – but remember your battery needs to be charged!
- Set up speed dials for emergency numbers.
- Change your regular travel routes/habits.
- Diary any abusive calls, visits, texts or email.

## Home safety (Sanctuary) scheme

A range of safety and security options are available to you to assist you in staying safe in your home.

These can include emergency phones (programmed to contact chosen people), a change of locks, spy-holes in your door, window locks, firefighting equipment, extra locks to external doors, security lights, door chains, etc.

There are some features offered that may not be suitable for all victims but nevertheless are still available if you need them e.g. grilles or bars at the windows. You may feel some of the options are suitable for you or you may feel you are so unsafe that you have to leave the house or even the town. Either way the choice is yours. If you need help to decide you can ring the police, the council or Women's Aid to talk it through.

# Being aware of your safety around computers, the internet and technology

Experience and stories show that computers and the internet are making it easier for abusers to find out about victims.

Large amounts of data and information about us all is kept on computers and many people choose to interact via social networking.

Although we can't change some of this, victims say they feel better for knowing more about how to be careful.

Social networking can give abusers information on your exact location and who you're with.

Mobile phones are equally risky, with more phones interacting with the internet. Mobile phones can play an important role in the lives of victims of domestic abuse. They can provide a lifeline, yet at the same time allow information about their whereabouts to be gained. abusers can 'pair up' or search their partners phones if they are in the vicinity and use Bluetooth (e.g. outside a

refuge). You should think about changing phones, networks, sim cards, etc. Plans can be made to use different forms of communication with family, friends or support workers as some abusers check calls made and received, view text messages/emails and listen to voicemails.

Some 'tracking' of victims has been done via Google Earth, 192.com, multimap.co.uk etc. Some websites give names, addresses and even directions. In some cities (if you have the address) you can use Google Earth to view live pictures of a refuge!

Support workers can help you with alternative addresses, PO Boxes, etc.

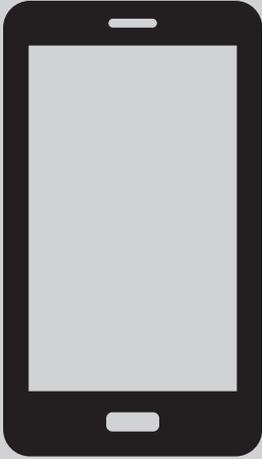
Remember, you can empty your history on your computer if you don't want anyone to see what you have been on.

Further information is available from [www.womensaidnel.org/site/downloads](http://www.womensaidnel.org/site/downloads)

# Digital Stalking

If you are leaving an abuser you should assume that they have installed software or an app that can track you. Turn off your phone whilst not using it. If you have an Android phone you also need to remove the battery. You can pick up an inexpensive pay-as-you-go phone at a supermarket for about £10. It is a good idea to try to get one and get it charged up with a small amount of credit on it before you leave. Once you are safe then you should clean the old information from your usual phone.

- Clean your phone: back-up your photos, music, address book and any apps you want to keep then you should do a factory reset. This will delete any unwanted software.
- Secure your phone: set the phone so that if it isn't used for more than a minute you have to put in a PIN to use it. Make sure that your phone is set to hide your caller ID. Change your login name and password on your Google / iCloud / iTunes account.
- There are mobile phone applications that will block calls. Choose an application that offers a 'whitelist' feature. This means that it will only accept calls from those in your contact list. If you are using a whitelist then remember to add contacts such as the doctor's practice, school, solicitor and your police contact details.
- Choice of phone: a low cost phone (not a smartphone) is the safest. If you have to have a smartphone think about using two phones. A low cost one for texting and calling and a smartphone for internet browsing, games, music etc.
- Gather evidence: save all texts but also take pictures or screenshots of any threatening messages on your phone. That way if anything happens to your phone, you still have evidence of the text. Make a recording of all voicemails left on your phone. Mobile operators limit how long they will keep the voicemail on the system (on average one week). Once that time is expired they delete the voicemail and that evidence is gone.



# Supporting a friend, family member or client who is in an abusive relationship

## Do

- Give priority to the victim and victim's children's safety – explore ways of maximising safety whether they decide to leave their partner or not.
- Take the victim seriously; they know the facts.
- Respond positively, this is the time they are in the most danger.
- Tell them the violence is not their fault.
- Ask them if they know what they want to do and how you may be able to help to achieve it.
- Let them know that they are not alone, give them support.
- Find out if she/he has any language or cultural barriers or if they have any disabilities (this will affect how you can help).
- Accept their decisions – even though you may not agree.
- Explore options and talk through limiting/avoiding the abuse.
- Keep in contact where possible, using code words in a crisis or emergency.
- Regularly update her/him where possible.
- Encourage your friend, family member or client to talk to someone.
- Consider the welfare of any children and remember they may need referring to children's services or the police if they are in immediate danger, regardless of what the victim decides to do.

## Don't

- Tell the victim what to do or make choices for them.
- Promise things will get better when they leave (perhaps it will be worth it eventually – but this will be the most difficult time).
- Try solving all their problems.
- Tell the victim that their partner will change (victims usually hope their partners will change).
- Be judgemental or pressurise her/him into anything they don't want to do.
- Tell the victim how the children will feel about the abuse or the situation – all children react and respond differently.
- Ask them what they did to provoke the violence.
- Ask them why their partner is violent.
- Give up just because things are taking a long time.
- Pass messages or gifts between the victim and their partner.
- Give out any telephone numbers or addresses – be careful with any correspondence.
- Set out any pre-conditions for your help such as they must prosecute the perpetrator, obtain injunctions or leave him/her.
- Withdraw support if they return to the partner – this may well be the right time to increase your help and support and let them know you are still there for them no matter what they decide.

## **If you need help call**

**Police - emergency 999 / non-emergency 101**

**Women's Aid - (01472) 575757, [support@womensaidnel.org](mailto:support@womensaidnel.org)  
or 'Womens Aid Grimsby' on Facebook**

**Domestic abuse helpline (Male victims) - (01472) 588888**

**Victim Support - (01472) 250251**

**Blue Door - 0800 197 47 87**

**North East Lincolnshire Council – (01472) 313131**

**MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) - (01472) 325555**

**Families First Access Point - (01472) 326292**

**Citizens Advice Bureau - 0344 411 1444**

**Hospital - (01472) 874111**

**Childline - 0800 1111**

**Samaritans - (01472) 353111**



# Notes

