

Safety Planning Booklet

Anyone in any type of relationship may become a victim of domestic abuse. This booklet aims to help you protect yourself and your children.

It describes what domestic abuse may feel like; who you can turn to if you need help; and explains about safety plans.

A safety plan is a way to improve your own and your children's safety. It helps you to think about the potential risks to you and to plan for the possibility of future abuse. It can help you to be safer while remaining with your partner or if you decide to leave them.

Your partner is responsible for their abuse and only they can stop it. But you can take some control by planning how you can increase your and your children's safety.

There is a lot of information in this booklet. Just use what is helpful to you and your children. Do what you think is the right thing for you and your family to stay safe.

Remember that you are not to blame for the abuse. You have no control over when, why and how your ex/partner abuses you. But you do have control over what you do about it.

Risk assessment

The first step in addressing domestic abuse is to admit that there is a problem. Domestic abuse is very common. It is not something to be ashamed of. It is a crime if someone physically hurts or threatens you or your children. You have the right to feel safe from harm especially in your home. Emotional abuse can have a serious effect on your well-being and self-esteem.

Has your ex/partner ever hurt or threatened you or your children?
Do they frequently humiliate, criticise, insult or threaten you?
Has your ex/partner ever forced you to have sex or made you do things during sex which make you feel uncomfortable?
Are you isolated from your friends?
Are you allowed to leave the house?
Are you afraid for yourself or your children?
Does their contact with the children frequently go wrong?
Are you emotionally or physically drained because of your ex/partner's behaviour?
Even though you are separated, do you still feel controlled and trapped by them?
Does your ex/partner get jealous?
Do they check up on you, for example, check your mobile phone?
Do they control your finances?
Do they abuse drugs or alcohol and frighten or worry you when they do?

If you answer yes to ANY of these questions you may be experiencing domestic abuse. But remember that you are the best judge of your situation.

Your options:

You can:

- Choose to leave permanently or temporarily
- Choose to stay hoping your ex/partner will change
- Choose to stay accepting that your ex/partner will not change
- Choose to take legal action against your ex/partner, for example apply for an interdict or report incidents to the police
- Choose to talk to someone such as a family member, friend, colleague or domestic abuse service (contact numbers for these are at the end)

Protecting yourself in an emergency:

To keep safe from your ex/partner if you think he is going to assault you can:

- Keep a phone in a room with a lock so you can call for help in an emergency
- Carry a charged mobile phone with you at all times
- In an emergency dial 999. Even if you are unable to speak, the police will come to your home. Try to leave the phone off the hook after dialling
- Stay away from the kitchen where there are potential weapons such as knives
- Stay away from bathrooms, cupboards or small places where you may get trapped
- Work out a 'signal' with a neighbour, such as knocking on the wall or floor. Agree what the neighbour should do if they hear or see the signal, for example, 'drop by' for a visit or call the police
- Teach children how and when to phone the police. Agree a code word so they know when you want them to do this. Teach them what to say, for example, their full name, address, telephone number and what is happening. You could practise this with them (depending on their age)
- Plan escape routes from your house. Rehearse how you would get out
- Plan what you will do with the children. You may be able to take them with you or it may be safer to come back for them with the police
- Try to leave without letting your partner know. Make an excuse to go out or leave the room
- Call for help. Shout loudly and continuously. You have nothing to be ashamed of
- Stay near safe exits

If you no longer want to be with your partner you could:

- Think about how to give your ex/partner the clear message that the relationship is over. This may mean stopping all contact
- Think about how your ex/partner is going to find out the relationship is over and what this means for your safety
- Tell him by letter, text, phone or simply stop all contact with them
- Think about getting an interdict, which stops them contacting you
- Think about getting legal/housing advice about your rights

- Tell friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues that you are no longer with your ex/partner and what they should do if they see your ex/partner
- Ensure anyone caring for your children knows that you do not want your ex/partner to collect them
- Plan what to do with their possessions and how you can tell them about this. You can use a third party

If you do not want your ex/partner in your home you could:

- Think about getting legal/housing advice to find out your rights
- Think about getting an interdict to prevent them from coming to your home
- Not respond if they come to the door
- Make sure the doors and windows are locked
- Change the locks or fit new or stronger doors, windows or locks
- Put the key in the lock and turn it half way to stop your ex/partner using a key from the outside
- Call the police on 999 if they come to the door
- Tell neighbours to call the police if they see your ex/partner
- Install outside lights or security cameras
- Use a non-slip rubber door wedge
- Install a smoke alarm system. Contact the fire brigade which will install a smoke alarm free of charge
- Keep a list of emergency contact numbers with you at all times

If you do not want your ex/partner to contact you on the phone:

- Ignore their calls
- Change your number or Sim card
- Block their number and withhold numbers from your phone
- Install caller ID
- Use an answer machine so you can screen all calls
- Call your phone company to ask for an unlisted number on your landline
- Dial 141 on your landline before dialling out so that the person you are phoning cannot see your number
- If they have to contact you by phone, for example because they have contact with your children, consider having a separate mobile they can call you on. Then you turn the mobile off when they have no reason to contact you and decide whether to listen to or read any messages or voicemails.

If you do not want your ex/partner to contact you on or access your social media:

- Get alerts about unrecognised logins if your account is being logged into from a new device
- Visit the Privacy section under Settings to see who can see your posts, who can contact you, and who can look you up
- On Facebook, review activity on your profile by viewing your Activity Log, or if you're on a computer, see what others see when they visit your profile, by selecting View As, to the right side of your cover photo
- Report abusive content or spam to the social media provider. On Facebook there is a Report link that appears near the content itself
- Take screen shots of any unwanted posts before blocking the harasser. After blocking someone, their prior engagement with you will no longer be visible
- Report intimate images shared without your consent to the social media provider
- Block anyone you do not want to contact you. They will no longer be able to see things you post on your profile, tag you, start a conversation with you or add you as a friend. Social media providers do not notify the person that you have blocked them.

Action plan for preparing to leave:

There may be a time when you feel the only option is to leave. Sometimes abusers can increase the abuse if they suspect their partners are leaving, so it can be a dangerous time. They may also continue abusive behaviour towards their partner after they have left.

Planning to leave does not mean you have to do so now, or ever. But thinking about your options and how you might overcome difficulties can help.

- Making the decision to leave can be the beginning of a long process. Remember that you do not need to go through it alone
- Decide who you could stay with, and if necessary, who would lend you some money
- Try to keep spare cash or a phone card with you at all times for emergencies and transport
- Open a savings account in your own name to establish your financial independence. Make sure the bank or post office has a safe address for contacting you. A credit union can be a good place to save and you can also borrow money from it
- Photocopy, or take originals of, important documents such as birth certificates, passports, marriage certificates and financial documents
- Try to get an extra set of keys cut for the house and car. Leave them with spare clothes for you and your children in a bag, with a trusted neighbour or friend, or keep it in a safe place. If you or your children have any medical conditions, make sure you have spare medication in the bag
- Keep useful phone numbers with you or try to memorise them. Don't rely on your mobile phone for the numbers in case you cannot get your phone. Think about having a spare Sim card
- Plan to leave at a time when you know your partner will not be around
- Try to take everything you need with you as it may be difficult to get it later

Protecting yourself if you do leave:

- Think about getting legal/housing advice to find out your rights
- Think about asking for police support to return home to collect belongings
- It may help to tell others that you are at risk, for example, family, friends, school, employer, college so that they do not give any information to your ex/partner
- Avoid usual routines which you had when living with your ex/partner, although this can be difficult when you have children. Plan ahead what you will do if you meet your ex/partner unexpectedly
- Tell the school or nursery who will pick the children up. Make sure they do not give your details out to anyone or give the children to anyone else. You could agree a password with them so they know any contacts are genuine
- Change bank accounts and cancel shared credit cards. Tell your bank that you are separated from your partner
- Keep court orders and emergency contact numbers with you at all times
- Make sure your new address is kept confidential and does not appear on any court papers
- Try to avoid isolated places
- Keep a fully-charged mobile phone with you at all times
- Be aware that your mobile phone could be 'tracked' This should only happen if you have given your permission, but if your partner had access to your phone, he could have sent a consenting message pretending to be you
- If you do need to phone your ex/partner or anyone else he has contact with, make sure you dial 141 before ringing so your number cannot be traced
- Think about contacting the Domestic Abuse Unit in the police for specialist advice on domestic abuse and safety
- If you are victim of stalking or domestic abuse, you can be anonymous on the electoral register. You need to provide evidence under the Family Law Act 1996 or the Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- If your ex/partner continues to harass, threaten and abuse you, phone the police and consider getting an interdict. Keep a diary of the incidents including dates and times; what they said or did; and, if possible, photographs of damage to your property or injuries to yourself. If you are hurt, go to your GP or hospital for treatment and ask them to document your visit
- Ask the police for an incident report form
- If your ex-partner breaches (breaks) any court order, tell your solicitor

Remember: in an emergency always contact the police on 999.

Checklist: what to take with you:

Remember that these items are not as important as your or your children's lives!

- Identification, driving licence, car registration documents
- Welfare books and identification
- Birth certificates for you and your children
- Police reports and documentation of previous abuse
- Money
- Bank books and bank account numbers
- Cheque books and debit/credit cards
- House/rent documents
- House/car keys
- Medications/medical records
- Address books
- Pictures/photographs (including ex/partner to help identify him)
- National insurance card/number
- Passport/visa/work permit
- Court orders
- Divorce papers/marriage certificates
- Children's clothing/favourite toys/blanket
- Jewellery
- Other personal items important to you

Your safety can be increased at work if you:

- Inform your boss and find out if there is a domestic abuse policy at work. Contact your union rep or human resources manager if you need advice
- Think about changing your working hours, even temporarily
- Try to choose a safe route and vary routes/transport to work if possible
- Give a photo of your ex/partner to security staff and other employees
- Describe your ex/partner's vehicle or give registration number to security staff
- Ask colleagues to screen calls from your ex/partner
- When possible, enter and leave with another person
- Think about what you will do if something happens on your way home. You could go to a public place and call the police
- If going out of the building, make sure people know where you are and when you are coming back
- Ask colleagues to check on your safety if you are unexpectedly absent

How to keep children safe:

A safety plan teaches children how to get out of danger and reach safety. It also plans how to let other people help to keep your children safe.

Teach your children:

- Not to get involved between you and your partner no matter what the circumstances. Even if they want to help, their safety comes first
- How to get out of the house safely
- How to contact the police using 999. Practise what they should say, their full name, address and phone number
- Who to call for help – neighbour or friend

Talk to your children about what is happening. Even if they do not see the abuse, they may hear it or know about it. Let children know they have the right to be safe and happy, and that they can talk to you about what they are thinking and feeling. Children who live with domestic abuse are often good at keeping secrets from parents.

Children living with domestic abuse sometimes look for safety outside the home. Know who they are making friends with. Keep them safe by talking to them about the dangers outwith the home.

Some children who live with domestic abuse find routines difficult and can display difficult behaviour or become withdrawn. Find support for your child as soon as you think they may have a problem. Ask your child's school or health visitor to help your child get support.

If you have separated from your partner:

- Give copies of all court orders to anyone looking after your children. Tell them not to release the children to anyone without talking to you. If you have a recent photo of your partner, give this to them
- Agree a password with the school/nursery so they know that it is you on the phone
- Make sure the school does not give your name or address or phone number to anyone
- Encourage the children to identify an adult they are able to talk to and trust, in case they are scared and need someone to talk to at school
- If your children need someone to talk to, ask the school or health visitor to help find someone
- Think about getting support for your children from the Cedar Project or Women's Aid children's workers

Taking care of yourself:

There are things you can do to take care of yourself. Some ideas are:

- Get involved in community activities or get paid work to reduce isolation
- Enrol in college to increase your skills and reduce isolation
- Join support groups to meet other women
- Contact a domestic abuse support service
- Spend time with people who make you feel good and who support you
- Eat well and get enough sleep
- Find activities that make you feel good and practise them
- Take time for yourself to develop hobbies/interests
- Join a gym or start an exercise programme. It will increase your energy, reduce stress and promote well-being
- Don't overbook yourself – limit yourself to one appointment per day to reduce stress
- Write about how you feel in a journal
- Write something positive about yourself every day
- Avoid drugs, excessive alcohol or food as they depress your mood
- Avoid excess shopping and impulse buys
- Find positive and constructive ways to express your anger

Remember it is important to take care of yourself right now.

Support Services

Edinburgh Women's Aid 0131 315 8110

- Crisis counselling
- Support, information and choices concerning domestic abuse, such as housing options, benefits, welfare rights and legal issues
- Temporary accommodation for women and any accompanying children
- Support for children and young people, including outreach support in schools
- Outreach Support
- Group Programmes
- Polish language service available for all above services

Includes Edinburgh Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Court Support Service (EDDACS)

- Accepts referrals from the police and any other agency/individual of women who are in the court process due to a domestic abuse incident
- Carries out risk assessment and safety planning
- Provides information and advocacy to the victim throughout the court process

Police – 101 or if you are frightened or in danger call 999

- The police have specially trained officers who will speak to you separately from your partner. You can ask to see a female/male officer.

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre 0131 556 9437

- Offers free emotional and practical support, information and advocacy to women, girls aged 12 and over and all members of the transgender community who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives
- Support – helpline, face to face support, long-term, group, advocacy and crisis, email
- Support for young survivors aged 12 - 18
- Counselling and support service for women and transgender people involved in prostitution who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives
- Complementary therapies
- Alcohol counselling

Shakti Women's Aid 0131 475 2399

- Support, advocacy and information to all black and minority ethnic women, children and young people in Edinburgh affected by domestic abuse, including arranged and forced marriage and forms of culture based abuse
- Key worker service to support individual women, including outreach service
- Children and young people services, including outreach
- Temporary accommodation for women and any accompanying children

Fearfree 0131 624 7266

- Fearless is a support service for any man, or LGBTI+ person experiencing domestic abuse

Bright Choices in 0131 622 7500

- Supports any woman, man, child or family affected by Honour Based Violence, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)

Saheliya 0131 556 9302

- Women's mental health organisation, which provides services to support the mental health and wellbeing of black and minority ethnic women in Edinburgh
- Counselling
- Befriending
- Complimentary therapies
- Support work
- Children's service

Wellspring Psychotherapy and Counselling 0131 553 6660

- Wellspring is a leading Centre for the provision of affordable high quality psychotherapy and counselling to individuals, couples, groups, families and young people

City of Edinburgh Council Services

Domestic Abuse Services 0131 469 3408

- An accredited, integrated approach to address men's domestic abuse and to improve the lives of women, children and men
- Deliver a programme for men who are unhappy about their abusive behaviour towards a woman partner or ex-partner and want help to change
- Provide a support, safety planning and advocacy service to the women partners and ex-partners of men who attend the programme
- Provide a similar service to Polish men and women – Respekt – with Polish-speaking workers
- Offer consultations to colleagues from other teams on engaging with abusing men and on risk assessment and management in relation to domestic abuse
- Offer awareness and skills based training on constructive engagement with men in domestic abuse cases

Social Care Direct – 0131 200 2324

Out of hours emergency service – 0800 731 6969

- The City of Edinburgh Council's social work service

Family Group Decision Making 0131 221 2210

Samaritans – 116 123 (24 hours)

- Confidential emotional support, 24 hours a day for anyone in crisis. This number links up all their branches; or you can phone your local branch, which you can find in the phone book

Amina – The Muslim Women’s Resource Centre – 0141 212 8420

- Offers a range of tailored support services on a one to one basis, national ‘listening ear’ helpline which also offers Islamic advice through a scholar, employability guidance, befriending, as well as through peer group support

Other useful websites

www.womenssupportproject.co.uk

Information on violence against women and children

www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk

Self-help guides for anyone in crisis, for example depression, anxiety, stress, panic and sleep problems

www.cci.health.wa.gov.au - click on workbooks

Workbooks for adults suffering from anxiety, mood and eating disorders

Safe Lives - Individualised Safety and Support Plan

Notes to practitioner: Use this template to document the options and advice relevant to your client's situation. Keep a copy on the client file and, if it is safe, give a copy to your client to take away with them.

Client name/ ref no:

Page... of..

Is it safe to take this home with you?

Where will you keep it?

If I need to leave I will try and take with me...

In an emergency, I will try to take....

General Safety Planning

Advice on: Routines/ safety at home, work, social settings/ escape route/ code words.

Legal

Advice on: Criminal and Civil options/ police reporting/ court support/ breaches of court orders e.g. interdicts/ any child contact/ residence/ protection issues/ immigration/ social work justice involvement for client or (ex) partner or family member.

Separating & post separation

Code words/ escape route/ plan for leaving/ support post separation

Children

(Ex) partner, family member access to children and school/ parental rights and responsibility status/ support for children/ child's named person/lead professional.

Financial

Advice on: access to finances, benefits/ housing areas/ drugs and alcohol or immigration issues affecting finances

Health and Wellbeing

Advice on: immediate medical needs, access to sexual and general health services, mental health services and whether client has disabilities compounding situation.

Housing and security

Advice on: emergency and longer term housing option/ security measures/ fire assessment

Additional Support Factors

Drugs and alcohol/ mental health/ disability

Who can I contact in an emergency?

999 for an immediate police or ambulance response:

Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit:

Emergency Housing service:

Solicitor:

Nearest Accident and Emergency department is located:

Other

This service can be contacted on...

We are open...