



*A Survivor Lighthouse Resource:
The safety plan toolkit*

PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN – AT HOME

Please note that the following information is not exhaustive and does not guarantee your safety.

Having a personal safety plan is essential if you or your children are suffering abuse or living in a violent home. In an emergency the single most important factor is your physical safety and the safety of any children you may have.

Every person's situation is different, so you may need to take all, or only some of the steps, recommended in this plan.

Remember - In an emergency, always call 999. If for some reason, you cannot speak to the emergency operator, press 55 when prompted and the police will respond.

SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in a room or area where you can exit quickly and easily. Try to stay away from the bathroom, kitchen, bedroom or anywhere else where weapons might be available.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, lifts or stairwell would be best.
- Have a bag packed and keep it at a relative or friends' home, in order to be ready to leave quickly.
- Identify one or more neighbours you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police, if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
- Devise a codeword to use with your children, family, friends and neighbours when you need them to call the police.
- Decide and plan for where you will go, if you have to leave home (even if you don't think you will ever need to).
- If the situation is very dangerous, consider giving the abuser what they want to get them to calm down. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.

Always remember that you don't deserve to be hit or threatened.

AFTER A VIOLENT INCIDENT

- Get to a safe place.
- Call the police.
- If injured, see your doctor or go to hospital as soon as possible.
- Think about speaking to a police officer.
- Consider seeking advice from a solicitor.

PREPARING TO LEAVE

- Open a savings account and/or credit card in your name to start to establish or increase your independence. Think of other ways in which you can increase your independence.
- Get your own post office box, so that you can privately receive cheques and letters.
- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, medicines, clothes and sentimental items with someone you can trust so you can leave immediately.
- Identification is critical for many things when making a new start. The most valuable forms of ID are: Birth certificate (and if you're married, a marriage certificate), passport and driving License.
- This is a list of some of the other important things to keep: Pay slips, or a P45 or P60. Details of any benefits you are receiving. Bank statements. Documentation relating to the ownership of your home, mortgage or tenancy. Utility bills in your name. Details of any credit cards that are in joint names. Documents relating to immigration status and Right to Remain.
- If you have children: Their birth certificates. Their passports, if they have them. Their savings books or details of their accounts.
- Determine who would be able to let you stay with them, or lend you some money.
- Keep a list of important contact numbers close at hand and keep some change or a phone card on you at all times for emergency phone calls.
- Keep a detailed log of what is happening to you. Place, date, time, who the incident involved and what happened.
- Leaving an abuser can be the most dangerous time. Review your safety plan as often as possible in order to plan the safest way to leave your abuser. You should speak to trained staff at a domestic abuse organisation, who can help you to plan your escape.

SAFETY IN THE HOME

If you don't live with the abuser or he or she has left the home, it is important that you take some or all of the following steps to stay safe.

- Discuss a safety plan with your children for when you are not with them. **Please be careful not to alienate your children against the non-resident parent.**
- Inform the children's school or nursery about who has permission to pick up your children.
- Inform your neighbours and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see them near your home.
- Get in touch with the local police Community Safety Unit so they can ensure a speedy response to an emergency call from your address
- Consult a solicitor to see if you are able to change the locks on your doors if your property is rented and, if you can, buy additional locks and safety devices to secure windows. If you can't afford a solicitor, remember that most provide a free half hour consultation. Make sure that before you go, you have written down your questions, to make the most of the time that you have. If you need more time, book another free half an hour with another solicitor.
- Some Councils have a "Sanctuary Project" which can provide a range of security measures to make your home secure. This is a free scheme and referrals can be made by the police, domestic violence advocacy worker, social worker and housing officer.
- One of the big problems with leaving home can often be controlling the post. Letters to the home can contain important personal details, be crucial when setting up new bank accounts and services, and be impossible to get back. Changing an address before leaving home will always mean using a temporary address. This could be a friend, family, or even a PO Box.
- Depending on your situation, it may simply be impossible for you to exercise any control over your post. However, if you do have limited control over your post, you can consider changing the address for your mail.
- This means calling the important providers with new address details. You need to be aware that:
- Some providers will send an e-mail confirming a change of address. Is this email

address secure?

- Providers can make mistakes: the address change may not take effect immediately or at all.
- Data breaches shouldn't happen, but do occur. Does the new address you've chosen belong to someone that will be aware of your situation in case a former partner approaches them?
- You don't always need your physical mail. Scanning and keeping a copy of the most recent letter will often contain all the reference numbers and information you need to talk to the provider later.
- Royal Mail redirection can let you redirect mail to a PO Box number if you don't want to send anything to friends or family. It is meant to take 5 working days to set up, although the post office recommends doing it three weeks in advance: we recommend five weeks if you can.
- The benefit is that you can redirect mail for you and your children whilst leaving mail for a partner untouched.
- Unfortunately, mail relating to benefits cannot be redirected. Also, if you redirect mail in joint names, your partner may be able to redirect it back.

COURT ORDERS

The local courts can grant a non-molestation or occupation order, commonly known as an injunction. This legally orders the abuser not to contact you in an aggressive way either directly or through another person. It also means they have to stay away from your home. Your solicitor can help you put an order in place.

If the court grants an injunction, remember to:

- Keep your injunction with you at all times.
- Call the police if your partner breaks the injunction.
- If you have a solicitor let them know if your partner breaks the injunction.
- Think of ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.
- Inform family, friends, neighbours, your doctor or health care worker and the people you work with that you have an injunction.
- If the court order does not cover your workplace, speak to your employer. Is there a domestic abuse workplace policy? If so, discuss this with your manager. If not, approach your manager and let them know your situation. Remember, 75% of

domestic abuse victims are targeted at work.

OTHER SAFETY TIPS

- **Situational Awareness** - Simply put, situational awareness is being aware of your surroundings. More specifically, in the context of personal safety, it refers to a mindset that allows a person to notice potential threat scenarios in time to react accordingly.
- **Limit your distractions** - If you're walking through a deserted carpark, is it really necessary to send a text at that moment? If you're focused solely on your phone and checking your email, you're not going to notice if something, or someone, looks out of place.
- If you're inside a car with the perpetrator, do not try and get out unless it's safe to do so.
- If you're driving and the perpetrator is following you, drive to the nearest police station, or to a public area that you know is covered by CCTV, such as a 24-hour petrol station, where you can also ask for assistance.
- When parking your car, ensure that it's in a safe area (well lit, covered by CCTV)
- If you use public transport, sit closest to the driver/exit if possible.
- Public areas do not guarantee safety, so shop at different supermarkets and shopping centres, at different hours, than you did when you were with your abuser. Or consider online shopping.
- Likewise, use a different bank and bank at different hours than you did when you were with your abuser. Or consider online banking.
- Change any regular appointments that your abuser knows about.
- Alter your routines as much as possible.
- Carry a personal attack alarm. These are cheap and easy to buy.
- Never trust a door chain lock. Whether in a hotel or at home, never rely on door chain locks for safety. Even amateurs can often undermine them in seconds.
- Some "experts" will suggest carrying car keys and placing them between your fingers. However, this can give you a false sense of security and you should remember this; if you're in a position to strike out with keys, you are already too close to the assailant.
- Never set your smart phone tracking device, or sat nav, to your exact home or work address. Always use an address nearby. This will prevent anyone finding you, should your phone, or sat nav be lost or stolen. (See additional information on how you can be tracked by your phone).

- Likewise, do not leave documents in your car that can lead someone back to your home or workplace.
- **This is a big one** – NEVER accept friend requests from anyone on social media unless you know exactly who they are. Have your privacy settings set to friends only and think before you post, especially if it involves telling people where you are going and what you are doing.
- Unfortunately, arson has been used several times against ex partners, so keep a fire extinguisher, upstairs at home. **Dry powder** can be used on the widest range of fires in the home. It is safe to use on textiles, wood, flammable liquids/gases and electrical fires. However, it cannot be used on kitchen fires involving cooking fats and oils.
- If you or your children are using any item that is connected to the internet, such as a mobile phone, or your car has an inbuilt connection to the internet, you can be tracked and hacked. It is essential that you check the settings and passwords on all of your devices and the devices of your children, especially if your ex-partner ever had access.

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