

Developing a safety plan with someone affected by domestic abuse

By raising the issue of domestic abuse, we create opportunities to explore ways in which women and children can be safe. A safety plan is a semi-structured way to think about steps that can be taken to reduce risk, before, during and after any violent or abusive incidents. It is important to stress that although a safety plan can reduce the risks of violence, it cannot completely guarantee victim's and children's safety.

This safety plan has been adapted from a variety of existing plans. It should be used with victims who are escaping violence. Remember it may not be safe for a victim to fill in the plan and take it with them. Always offer to keep any information or documentation on your premises. Drug and alcohol agencies may wish to ask additional questions about how their perpetrator's substance use is affecting the violence they are experiencing.

People living with abuse should not keep the safety plan where it may be discovered by the abusive partner.

People experiencing violence will already have survival strategies they find effective. It is essential to acknowledge these and use them as guidance for your work. A safety plan is about allowing victims to identify the options available to them within the context of their current circumstances. Some questions to ask in drawing up a safety plan:

- Who can you tell about the violence who will not tell your partner/ex-partner?
- Do you have important phone numbers available e.g. family, friends, refuges, police? Do your children know how to contact these people?
- If you left, where could you go?
- Do you ever suspect when your partner is going to be violent? e.g. after drinking, on payday, after relatives visit.
- Can you go elsewhere if you suspect your partner is going to be violent?
- Can you keep a bag of spare clothes at a friend's or family member's house?
- Are you able to keep copies of any important papers with anyone else? e.g. passport, birth certificates, benefits book.
- Which part of the house do you feel safest in?
- Is there somewhere for your children to go when your partner is being violent and abusive? (don't run to where your children are as your partner may harm them as well)
- What is the most dangerous part of your house to be in when your partner is violent?
- Have you discussed with your children a safety plan for what they need to do during an incident (e.g. do not intervene, but get away and get help)?

Sample personal safety plan

Suggestions for increasing safety – in the relationship

- I will have important phone numbers available to my children and myself.
- I can tell _____ and _____
- about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- If my children are hurt, I will tell _____
- If I leave my home, I can go to (list four places):

- or _____
- I can leave extra money, car keys, clothes, and copies of documents with _____
- When I leave, I will bring _____
- To ensure safety and independence, I can: keep change for phone calls with me at all times/keep my mobile on me at all times: open my own savings account; rehearse my escape route with a support person; and review safety plan on (date).

- When the violence begins which areas of the house should I avoid? For example, bathroom (no exit), kitchen (potential weapons)

Suggestions for increasing safety – when the relationship is over

- I can: change the locks; install steel/metal doors, a security system, smoke detectors and an outside lighting system.
- I will inform _____
_____ and _____
that my partner no longer lives with me and ask them to call the police if s/he is observed near my home or my children.
- I will tell people who take care of my children, and my children themselves, the names of those who have permission to pick them up. The people who have permission are:

_____ and _____
- When I make phone calls I can use 141 so my number cannot be traced.
- I can tell _____
_____ at work about my situation and ask _____
_____ to screen my calls.
- I can avoid shops, banks and _____
_____ that I used when living with my abusive partner.
- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call _____
_____ for support.

Important phone numbers

Police

Helpline **DAFFS 0800 694 9999**

Friends

Other

Items to take checklist

- Identification
- Birth certificates for me and my children
- Benefit books
- Medical cards for me and my children (e.g. children's "red books", school immunisation records etc)
- Phone card, mobile or change for a pay phone
- Money, bankbooks, credit cards
- Keys – house/car/office
- Keys to a friend or relative's house
- Medicine or medication for me and my children
- Driver's license
- Change of clothes for me and my children
- Passport(s), Home Office papers, work permits, national insurance numbers
- Divorce papers and legal orders
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed
- Mortgage payment book, current unpaid bills
- Insurance papers
- Address book
- Pictures, jewellery, items of sentimental value
- Children's favourite toys and/or blankets
- Any proof of abuse, notes, tapes, diary, crime reference numbers, names and numbers of professionals who know.

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**Referral forms to specialist support and information
for those affected by domestic abuse.**

**Where ever possible please complete
and submit electronically.**

**All forms and information in the appendices
available at www.saferstrongerns.co.uk**

Council documents can be made available in large print, audio, easy read and other formats. Documents on our website can also be emailed to you as plain text files.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

For more information contact:
community@n-somerset.gov.uk
or telephone: 01934 426 752