

NORTHERN CONSTABULARY

DOMESTIC ABUSE SAFETY PLANNING

Safety Planning is a process you can use to increase your personal safety and that of your children. It can provide you and your children with the reassurance that you can not only protect yourself but reduce the risk of further harm to you and your children. Any safety plan should focus on the needs and circumstances of you and your children, with your safety and protection taking precedence at every stage. Safety planning is all about building on the safety measures you already have in place, rather than making radical changes to your existing coping strategies.

The following advice offers you a range of ideas to consider when devising a safety plan for you and your children.

If you are staying with your abuser

- Seek professional advice and support from local support and outreach organisations, domestic abuse services and help lines
- Consider how agencies can make contact safely, eg through a work number or at a friend's address
- Consider where you can quickly and easily use a telephone and who are safe people to contact - memorise a list of numbers for use in an emergency, like friends, police, support organisations
- Consider a signal with children, family, neighbours, friends or colleagues, which will alert them to call the police when help is needed
- Think through escape routes in advance, if possible avoid rooms with no exit or with weapons e.g. bathroom or kitchen
- Try to save some money for fares and other expenses
- Receive medical help for any injury ensuring that they are recorded and if possible photographed. These may be used at a later date to support court cases or re-housing applications

If you are planning to leave

- Take care over who to trust with any plans that you are making to leave
- Consider whether or not a court order is a viable option - seek legal advice
- Make an extra set of keys for home and/or car and store them somewhere safe
- Make up a bag with spare clothes, phone numbers, keys, money and keep it safe so you can take it quickly or keep it with a trusted friend

Have the following available in case you have to flee

- Important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, driver's licence, divorce papers, lease or mortgage papers, passport, insurance information, school and medical records, welfare and immigration documents, court documents
- Credit cards, bank account numbers
- Some money
- Extra set of keys - for house, car and work
- Medication and prescriptions, including those for children
- Phone numbers and addresses for family, friends, doctors, lawyers and community agencies
- Clothing and comfort items for you and children
- Photographs and other items of sentimental value such as jewellery
- Take identification that might help others to protect you from the abuser, such as recent photo of the abuser and their car details
- Talk to the children about the possibility of leaving and try to take all children, whatever long term arrangements might be

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If you are living without your abuser after separation (in your own home or after moving)

- Seek expert legal advice on child contact and residence applications, and about options for court orders
- Change phone numbers to ex-directory and screen calls; pre-programme emergency numbers into the phone
- Change the locks and install a security system, smoke alarm and an outside lighting system
- Notify neighbours, employers and schools about any court orders, and ask them to call the police immediately if they see the abuser nearby
- Make sure that school and the people who care for the children know who has authorisation to collect them
- Employ safety measures before, during and after contact visits, if appropriate
- Consider changing children's schools, work patterns - hours and route taken - and the route taken to transport children to school
- Avoid banks, shops, and other places frequented when living with the abuser
- Make up a code word for the family, colleagues, teachers, or friends, so they know when to call the police for help
- Keep copies of all relevant paperwork (including court orders) and make written records of any further incidents