

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY PLAN INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS

What can you do?

If you are being abused by your partner or someone close to you, there are three important steps you can take:

- Recognise that it is happening to you
- Accept that you are not to blame
- Get help

The most important thing you can do is tell someone you trust. Never be afraid to ask for help and in an emergency ring 999.

Hertfordshire Police have specialist male and female officers experienced in dealing with Domestic Violence who will be able to help you. To contact them ring 101 and ask to speak to the Domestic Violence Officer for your area.

Improving Security

You may need to consult your landlord or your solicitor if the property is jointly owned or is a joint tenancy, consider:

- Changing the locks, installing a security system, smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and/or outside security lighting.
- Changing your routes and routines.
- Changing your telephone number, go ex-directory, screen your calls.
- The Hertfordshire Home Security Service (HHSS) may be able to assist with the cost and installation of security measures. Speak with the police regarding this.

Keeping safe during a violent incident

- If you can, in an emergency ring 999. If you can, try to leave the phone off the hook so the operator can still hear you.

- If you are unable to ring 999, telephone or text a friend, relative or neighbour with a pre- arranged code word indicating you need help so they can call the police for you.
- If you are unable to avoid an incident, try to stay away from rooms with no exit or with potential weapons in them such as the kitchen.
- Plan escape routes before you need to use them.
- If your partner injures you and you have not been able to call the police, see your doctor or attend hospital as soon as possible. Contact the police as soon as you can safely do so.

Identify safe people and places

- Think about telling trusted neighbours, friends and work colleagues about your situation.
- Identify safe places nearest to your home which are staffed 24 hours such as supermarkets, garages, hospitals and fire stations. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help in an emergency.
- Locate the nearest working phone box.
- If you have a car, keep it topped up with fuel.
- Keep a spare car key somewhere safe.

Keeping safe when staying with the offender

- Seek support from professional organisations such as those listed on the rear of this booklet.
- Hertfordshire Police Domestic Violence Officers can put you in touch with local and national agencies and groups who can help you.
- Let those professionals know how they can contact you safely (safe number) so they can keep in touch e.g. through a work number or at a friend's address.
- Make sure that you remove all traces of contact with those organisations from your computer/phone bills/mobile bills.
- You can use the internet in Libraries and Internet Cafes if you need to look something up away from your home address.
- Receive medical help for any injuries ensuring they are recorded and if possible photographed. These may be used in the future to support court cases or re-housing applications. Keep a record/diary of any incident.

Leaving Safely

- Have a small bag already packed with spare clothes, keys, phone numbers and money in case you need to leave quickly. You may prefer to keep this bag

at a trusted friend's or at work. Make sure it is somewhere that the offender does not have access to.

- Talk to the children beforehand about the possibility of leaving in an emergency if it is appropriate to do so. Agree a code word or a plan with them.
- Take the children with you when you leave whatever the long-term arrangements will be.
- Leave when it is safe to do so.
- If you later discover that you have left something essential behind, you can arrange to go back for it with a Police Officer present to prevent a Breach of the Peace. Do not return unaccompanied.
- Consider whom to trust to tell that you are leaving.
- Take identification that might help others protect you from the abuser, such as a recent photograph or details of their car.

The following information is adapted from Women's Aid The Survivor's Handbook available online (<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Full-Survivors-Handbook-English-2009.pdf>)