

Domestic Abuse

Safety Planning Booklet



A resource by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee

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Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for people of any age, gender, cultural, ethnic or religious background who might be affected by domestic abuse. It is also a resource for anyone working with people who might be affected by domestic abuse and their children.

Introduction

Anyone in any type of relationship can become a victim of domestic abuse. This booklet aims to help you safety plan for yourself and your children. It describes what domestic abuse may feel like; who you can turn to if you need help; and explains about how to make and keep a safety plan updated.

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.

In this booklet, we will use the term 'ex/partner' because in Scotland, domestic abuse can be between partners who are currently in a relationship or ex-partners who have separated or divorced.

Your ex/partner is responsible for their abuse and only they can stop it. You are not responsible for their behaviour. The abuse is not your fault, and you did not cause it. But you can be supported to take some control by planning steps that can help increase your and your children's safety and wellbeing.

There is a lot of information in this booklet. Just use what is helpful to you and your children, if you have any. Do what you think is the right thing for you and your family to stay safe, and don't hesitate to contact emergency services or the Police if you feel very unsafe or if you are being threatened.

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 can consider options over what you can do, whether you choose to stay in the relationship or plan to leave, or if you have already left. Also, remember that domestic abuse does not look the same for everyone. However, everyone deserves the right to be able to access help and support for domestic abuse and there are people and services in Edinburgh who want to help you and your children to stay safe if you need help doing so.

Risk assessment

The first step in addressing domestic abuse is to recognise that there are forms of abuse and coercive controlling behaviours within the relationship. Domestic abuse is unfortunately very common, and you are not alone in your experience. It is not something to be ashamed of, even if your partner makes you feel like it is your fault. It is considered unlawful if someone controls you or insults you, physically and/or sexually hurts or threatens you or your children. You have the right to feel safe from threats and harm, especially in your home.

- 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, family or other supports?
- Do you feel like you are constantly walking on eggshells?
- Are you allowed to freely take part in activities outside 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 your ex-partner?
- Does your ex/partner get jealous, often for no reason?
- Do they check up on you, and insist on knowing your every move, where you go and whom you see?
- Do they control your money?
- Do they abuse drugs or alcohol and frighten or worry you when they do?
- Have they ever hurt another person or an animal, for example a pet?

If you answered yes to ANY of these questions you may be experiencing domestic abuse. But remember that you are the best judge of your situation, and you are not alone.

Your options

You can choose to do any or some of the following:

- Leave permanently or temporarily
- Stay, hoping your partner will change
- Stay, accepting that your partner may not change
- Take legal action against your ex/partner
- Talk to someone such as a family member, friend, colleague or a specialist domestic abuse service (contact numbers for these are at the end of this booklet)

Preparing for an emergency

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

- Keep a secret phone in a room with a lock, or in a place where you are confident it will not be found by your ex/partner (if possible) so you can lock yourself in and call for help in an emergency
- Carry a personal alarm, if that's safe. A personal alarm can cause a distraction, giving you a few seconds to escape/react and draw attention to you in a public space.
- Consider using a personal safety app such as [HollieGuard](#) or [WalkSafe](#). These apps enable you to alert your trusted contacts when you are feeling unsafe. Make sure you have a pre-agreed plan with people you trust about what to do if they receive an alert from you. For example, you could ask them to phone your partner to cause a distraction, or to pop round unexpectedly for a visit. These apps can also be used to help you stay safe when out and about, so you can explain why you have them to your partner; however, be aware that they can also be used to monitor your movements.
- 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.
- Have a conversation with a Police officer about putting a 'marker' on your phone. This will make it easier for police officers to know that there is a good chance you are calling because of domestic abuse and they will bear that in mind when speaking to you on the phone.
- Identify a code that you can use to alert trusted others (family, friends, neighbours, your children) so they know when to call the police. Make this something you can casually throw in a conversation but not something you would naturally use, for example 'happy anniversary' or 'mum's recipe for cake'
- 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).
- **If the police 999 responder can tell that a child is phoning, then they will always attend.** If a child is calling from a landline, then they can easily determine what address the child is phoning from. However, if a child is phoning from a mobile phone, then they will need to share the address/location that they are calling from. If possible, teach them

how to use the [What3Words](#) app, or ask them to memorise the three words that correspond to your address. If you live in a tenement building, your children should ideally state the full address or 'What3Words' code, as well as the flat number.

- Plan escape routes from your house. This could be a back door or a window, provided this is unlikely to lead to you being injured, or to lead you to a dead end where you might get trapped. Rehearse how you would get out in an emergency if possible.
- Plan what you will do with your children, if you have any. You may be able to take them with you or it may be safer to come back for them with the police. You may be able to organise for a trusted friend, neighbour or relative to look after them or pick them up from school if prompted.
- Let your children's school know about trusted contacts for your children and who will be allowed to pick them up in an emergency. Also let them know what to do if your ex/partner turns up at the school unexpectedly or outside your children's normal routine.
- Try to leave without letting your partner know. Make an excuse to go out or leave the room to go somewhere safe.
- Call for help. Shout loudly and continuously. You have nothing to be ashamed of.
- Spot nearby safe exits and stay close to them when you can.
- In an emergency dial 999.

For tips on how to use the 999-emergency number, please see Appendix 1: 'How to use 999 emergency number' on page 29.

If you no longer want to be with your partner

There may be a time when you feel the only option is to leave. **Sometimes abusers can increase or escalate the abuse if they suspect their partners are leaving, so it can be a dangerous time. You can seek help and advice ahead of time to support you to leave and help to keep you safe.** They may also continue abusive behaviour towards their partner after they have left.

This is why it is extremely important that you make a plan about how to leave. Specialist organisations and services can help you to plan how to leave an abusive partner as safely as possible and they can also provide you with support throughout this process. For more information on how to access them, please see page 16.

Some considerations when you are planning to leave:

- Think about how to give your partner the clear message that the relationship is over. This may mean stopping all contact or moving out while your partner is out of the house.
- Think about how your ex/partner is going to find out the relationship is over and what this means for your safety
- Tell them by letter, text, phone or simply stop all contact with them
- Think about obtaining legal measures to prevent your partner or ex partner from contacting you. Specialist organisations and legal services (p.16) can advise you on this.
- Think about getting legal/housing advice about your rights – for how to access this please see pages 15-20 for organisations and services that can offer advice.
- 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 know that you do not want your ex/partner to collect them. This also applies to school staff, childminders and anyone else who is helping to look after them.
- Plan what to do with their possessions and how you can tell them about this. You can use a third party to help with this or seek support from Police Scotland's non-emergency number (101) if you are concerned about your safety.

If you are concerned about your immigration status

If you were not born in Scotland or the UK you may feel concerned about reporting domestic abuse. This can be because:

- Your ex/partner told you that as a migrant, you are not entitled to help from services
- Your ex/partner told you that if you report domestic abuse you will be a 'troublemaker' and you might be arrested or deported back to your home country
- Your partner told you that as an immigrant you will lose your children if you report domestic abuse
- Your visa depends on your relationship status (for example, if you have a spouse visa or a student visa)
- You believe that reporting domestic abuse might affect future visa applications or your settled status.

It is true that immigration status can complicate reporting of domestic abuse.

However, everyone, regardless of immigration status, what country they come from, when they arrived in the UK or where they were born, can still access support through the services listed in pages 17-22 of this booklet. These services can offer you specialist advice on how to stay safe, and they can talk to you about your options on reporting domestic abuse based on your specific immigration circumstances.

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

It may be the case that for whatever reason, you wish to stay in your home and therefore you need your ex/partner to leave the property. At other times, you might want to implement additional safety and security measures to safeguard your property, yourself and your children. These can incur a cost, but Police Scotland as well as specialist domestic abuse organisations and services can help you to access money to help cover some of those costs. For more information, see pages 17-22 of this booklet.

In this situation you might want to consider the following:

- Think about getting legal/housing advice to find out your rights - for information on this please see pages 17-22 for organisations and services that can offer advice.
- Think about obtaining legal advice about how to keep your ex/partner out of your home. The organisations listed from page 17 of this booklet can offer you specialist support on how to do this.
- Not responding 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 halfway to stop your ex/partner using a key from the outside
- Call the police on 999 if they come to the door – for information on how to use the 999 emergency number, please see page 7.
- Speak to the Police about placing a ‘marker’ on your phone to indicate that there is/has been domestic abuse incidents at that address.
- 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
- Always keep a list of emergency contact numbers with you – memorise them if possible.

If you do not want your ex/partner to phone you

- Ignore their calls or block their number from contacting you
- Block them on your social media accounts
- Change your number or Sim card
- Block their number and withhold numbers from your phone
- Install caller ID on a landline
- Avoid answering calls from unknown numbers, if this is possible

- Use an answering machine service so you can screen all calls
- Call your phone company to ask for an unlisted number on your landline
- Dial 141 before dialling out to hide your own 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/ access your social media

- The National Cyber Security Centre provides a lot of information on how to safeguard your social media accounts on their [website](#).
- 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
- Report abusive content or spam to the social media provider.
- 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 and to Police Scotland. It is illegal for intimate images to be shared without your consent under the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016. This used to be called 'revenge porn' and you can find out more [here](#), while [this website](#) can help you access support.
- 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.
- Change passwords regularly, choose really difficult passwords that your partner can't guess and never give out your passwords

Action plan for preparing to leave

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.

There may be a time when you feel the only option is to leave. **Sometimes abusive ex/partners can increase or escalate 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 the break up.

If you are thinking about or planning to leave, below are some considerations that will help you in that process:

- Organisations and services can provide advice and they can help you to plan or to leave
- 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.

- Depending on your living arrangements (for example whether you own or rent your home and whose name is on the lease/mortgage) you may be able to stay in your own property and preventing your ex/partner from entering/living there.
- 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, drivers' license, immigration documents, marriage certificates and financial documents. You might also want to keep copies of your tenancy/mortgage agreement and utility bills as proof of identity and address.
- Try to get an extra set of keys cut for the house and car(s) and chargers for your mobile phone(s) and devices. 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 if possible.
- Try to take everything you need with you as it may be difficult to get it later. This can include items of sentimental value such as family heirlooms.

If you have a pet

Having a beloved pet can prevent people from leaving a partner who is abusive. It can also cause considerable anxiety about what might happen to your pet if you leave, or how your children might react to leaving their pet behind. Some ex/partners might use the bond between you or your children and your pet to abuse or control you.

In Scotland, and throughout the UK, it is against the law to mistreat, abuse or neglect an animal by failing to meet its welfare needs, or to protect an animal from unnecessary suffering. If your ex/partner has been abusive towards your pet, you can report this to Police Scotland on the 101 non-emergency number or to the [Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals \(SSPCA\)](#). Animal neglect and/or cruelty can be investigated and if your partner is found guilty, they could face a 5-year prison sentence, and unlimited fines or both.

If you need to leave a relationship, there are some options below about what you can do with your pet(s):

If you can't take your pet(s) with you

- You always have the option to leave your pet behind, if this is not a pet you are attached to or if the pet is not registered to you.
- If you need to leave but cannot take your pet with you, speak to trusted friends and family to discuss if they can take your pet in on a temporary basis.
- If you need to leave but cannot take your pet(s) with you, you can arrange for short-term foster care for them while you settle with your children. For information on how to do this, please see Section '[Safety Planning when you have a pet](#)'

- In the worst-case scenario, if you cannot take your pet with you but cannot leave them behind, you might wish to consider putting them up for adoption. This can be an incredibly difficult and emotional decision to make, but one that might be best for your pet in the long term. If you need to put your pet(s) up for adoption, make sure that you give them to a recognised animal protection charity who will look after them and ensure that your pet(s) go to a safe home in the future.

Taking your pet(s) with you

- If you plan to take your pet with you, make sure that you have all the essentials they need. This could include a carrier box, a collar and lead, some spare food and toys.
- Make sure you take any proof of pet ownership with you
- If your pet needs regular medication, keep some spare in a bag that you can grab as you are leaving.
- As soon as you are somewhere safe and have the opportunity, call your pet's vet to let them know what is happening and that your pet is safe with you, to avoid your ex/partner tracking down your pet by claiming that it's been lost/stolen
- Consider changing vet practice- if your pet needs to be seen by the vet, your ex/partner will likely know where the vet is and might track you down.
- Make sure that the pet's microchip (if they have one) is registered under your name and contact number.

Protecting yourself if you do leave

- Think about getting legal/housing advice to find out your rights – please see pages 15-20 for organisations and services that can offer advice.
- 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. Inform them of what your ex/partner might do if they find you, and discuss the best thing for family and friends to do/say if they are accosted by your ex/partner
- Avoid usual routines 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
- Always keep court orders and emergency contact numbers with you
- Make sure your new address is kept confidential and does not appear on any court papers. You might need to request support from a solicitor to do this.
- 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, they could have sent a consenting message pretending to be you
- Make sure to change permissions to share status or location on your mobile phone.

- 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
- Change all your passwords and online account details
- 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. The [Electoral Commission website](#) has information on the application form you need to fill in and on the documents you need to provide in order to become anonymous on the electoral register.
- Consider using apps to help you record and report stalking and harassment, such as [FollowItApp](#).
- 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 if you can; 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.
- If you have experienced sexual abuse or violence from your ex/partner, consider accessing a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). There are SARCs located throughout Scotland and you will find more information about the support they provide on the [NHS Inform website](#). *If you have experienced rape or sexual assault in the last 7 days, you can phone the sexual assault self-referral phone service 24 hours per day, 7 days per week on 0800 148 88 88. Calls are free from landlines and mobiles, but the number may appear on an itemised phone bill.*
- If you have called the police to an incident or made a statement to them, they will give you an incident number. Try to keep this incident number safe; you can use it later to ask the police for an incident report form
- If your ex-partner breaches (breaks) any court order, tell your solicitor or the police

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

Staying Safe Online

Regardless of where you are on your journey with domestic abuse or whether you are considering leaving your partner, your online safety is very important. Many people use technology to abuse or control their ex/partner through apps, by monitoring their mobile or their computer, reading their emails or texts and checking their travel patterns.

This section of the booklet will give you some technical advice on how to cover your tracks online. However, please remember that **the information contained here might not help you to completely hide your tracks or browsing history**. Please also remember that **if your ex/partner is monitoring your devices or online activity and they are suddenly unable to do that anymore, this might raise suspicions**, so you may need to have a ready excuse as to why they are no longer able to access this information.

Women's Aid provide a detailed website with information on how to keep yourself safe online, including how to browse privately, how to delete your search history, how to create safe passwords, how to secure your devices, how to keep your personal information and social media accounts safe and how to turn off location tracking. For more information, [please check this link](#). For general online safety advice, check the [Security Guidance](#) in the Ministry of Justice Website, or the guidance available through the [National Cyber Security Centre](#).

How to increase your safety at work

- 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, and location if possible, 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 – either redirect them or ask them to say that you are not available and to take a message
- 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

If your ex/partner works at the same place as you

- Check whether your employer has a domestic abuse policy, or another relevant policy that covers domestic abuse, including perpetrators (for example bullying and harassment, dignity at work, sexual harassment, absence management, wellbeing at work)
- If you feel comfortable and if it's possible, you might want to speak to a trusted colleague or line manager about what is happening.

- Keep a log of your ex/partner's behaviour at work – how are they using the workplace to control or abuse you? (for example, do you work in the same physical space? Do they monitor how often you leave your desk? Do they become abusive if you have private meetings with colleagues? Do they wait around the workplace waiting for you to finish work?)
- Ask colleagues to monitor behaviour and to observe if/when your ex/partner's behaviour might be escalating. Discuss what they can do to disrupt the behaviour or to interrupt if they think that your ex/partner's behaviour might escalate
- Explore options for support at work. For example, does your employer have an employee assistance programme? Are you able to take time off for safety and wellbeing appointments without your ex/partner seeing them in your calendar?
- Can you request to work from home or from another office (or at a location where you are less likely to be near your ex/partner?)
- Can you create a workplace safety plan with support from colleagues/your line manager/ HR that is specific to your workplace? For example:
 - What are some of your ex/partner's behaviours that your colleagues should look out for?
 - What information should your line manager/colleagues share or not share with your ex/partner?
 - Can you avoid working on your own or with colleagues that your ex/partner might be jealous of, and can you request that security staff are informed in confidence?
 - Is there a codeword you can use with your colleagues if you feel that you are in danger or if the situation is escalating to alert them that you need help? What would you like them to do in that situation?
 - Some employers can pay your salary into different accounts. Are you able to request for some of your salary to go to a different account that only you have access to?

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. Practice what they should say: their full name, address and phone number. **The key piece of information the Police need to respond to an emergency is the address/location of the emergency.**
- 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 outside 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 Women's Aid or other services supporting children's health and wellbeing needs listed [from page 19 onwards](#).

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 or take up other educational or volunteering opportunities 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, coffee or cigarettes as they depress your mood
- Try to eat balanced, healthy foods – too much or not enough will affect your mood and mental health.
- 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.

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/ Cheque books and debit/credit cards
- Bank books and bank account numbers
- House/rent documents
- House/car keys
- Medications/medical records
- Address books
- Pictures/photographs (including ex/partner to help identify them)
- 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
- Pet food, medication, carrier or collar and lead, as well as proof of ownership

Support Services

Specialist Violence Against Women Services in Edinburgh

Edinburgh Women's Aid: 0131 315 8110 / duty@edinwomensaid.co.uk

- 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 Domestic Abuse Court Support Service (EDDACS): 0131 315 8122

- 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

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre: support@ercc.scot

0131 556 9437 (office hours) or text: 07966 067 301

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline 7 days per week between 5pm – midnight:

08088 010302 (6pm-12am) or text 07537 410 027

Email: support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk or webchat:

www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

- We offer free and confidential emotional and practical support, information and advocacy to all survivors aged 12 and over in Edinburgh, East and Midlothian, who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives. This includes rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, childhood sexual abuse, and commercial sexual exploitation.
- Support: Face to face support, long-term, group, advocacy, crisis, and evening helpline provided by Rape Crisis Scotland (please see number above)
- Complementary therapies

Aditi: 0131 603 4865 – aditi@sacro.org.uk

- Provides one-to-one mental health and wellbeing support to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women in a range of language who are affected by domestic abuse or Honour-Based Abuse.

Another Way: 0131 624 7270 – anotherway@sacro.org.uk

- One to one support for women involved in selling or exchanging sex in Edinburgh, Lothians and Scottish Borders. Sacro workers offer women support with issues such as addictions, domestic abuse, healthcare, housing, parenting, cognitive behavioural therapy and exiting
- They provide information on relevant agencies and services from training and employment to benefits.

Beira's Place: 0131 526 3944 – support@beirasplace.org.uk

- Offers support, advocacy and information on all forms of sexual violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, to women aged 16 and over who live in any part of the Lothians. The service is free and confidential and offered to women no matter when the violence or abuse has happened. Beira's Place is a single-sex service for women as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

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

- FearFree is a support service for any man, or LGBTQI+ person experiencing domestic abuse

Bright Choices 0131 622 7500

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

Feniks 0131 629 1881 – info@feniks.org.uk

- Provides mental health and wellbeing support to central and east European community members, particularly Polish. Feniks has a dedicated mental health and practical support service for migrant women affected by domestic abuse.

Foursquare 0131 557 7901 referrals@foursquare.org.uk

- A service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including women affected by domestic abuse and who might have experienced trauma.

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

PF Counselling Service 0131 447 0876 info@pfcounselling.org.uk

- The PF Counselling service provides affordable counselling and psychotherapy in Edinburgh for people facing difficulties in life. Counselling is for adults over the age of 18.

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 and Household Support

Offer help to residents who need support with their day to day lives. From health and wellbeing to parenting, neighbour disputes to welfare benefits, the team will assess your needs and put you in touch with the right services

Northwest - 0131 529 5014	Northeast - 0131 529 7168
Southwest - 0131 469 5150	Southeast - 0131 529 5123

Housing and homelessness

Northwest – 0131 529 5050	Northeast – 0131 529 3111
Southwest - 0131 527 3800	Southeast – 0131 529 5151

The Access Point – 0131 529 7438

For housing, social work and health assistance

Family Group Decision Making 0131 221 2210

- A family meeting brings together extended family when there are child welfare concerns
- Can be used to agree contact arrangements after separation, or to plan for children's safety when couples are continuing a relationship
- A coordinator meets with all the people attending the meeting. You are given private time together to talk about concerns and come up with a plan to help children to remain at home or within the family

National Support Services

Police Scotland – 101 (non-emergencies) 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.

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) – 0800 148 88 88 (24 hours)

- The [SARCs website](#) contains information for anyone who has experienced rape or sexual assault in the last 7 days, more than 7 days ago, and for people who are under 16.
- You can request the collection of any forensic evidence to be stored for up to 26 months allowing you time to consider more formal reporting options.
- If you've been raped or sexually assaulted in the last 7 days, you can phone the sexual assault self-referral phone service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0800 148 88 88. Calls are free from landlines and mobiles.

Scotland's Domestic Abuse & Forced Marriage Helpline - 0800 027 1234 (24 hours)

- Information and support to anyone affected by abuse

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

Citizens Advice

- Contains information on a range of issues, including domestic abuse. To find out a local centre, please see the website.

Children First – 08000 28 22 33 (Mon-Fri 9am-9pm; Sat-Sun 9am-12pm)

- Children 1st supports children in Scotland to live in safe, loving families and to build strong communities. They provide holistic family support and trauma recovery in neighbourhoods across Scotland and work with children, young people and their families to uphold and progress their rights and to strengthen and improve the systems that are there to support them.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

- The DWP is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance.
- In Edinburgh, there are three Job Centres with specialist advisors on Domestic Abuse, as follows:
 - Leith Jobcentre:
 - Telephone: 0800 169 0190
 - Address: 199 Commercial Street, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 6QP
 - High Riggs Jobcentre:
 - Telephone: 0800 169 0190
 - Address: 20 High Riggs, Edinburgh, EH3 9HU
 - Wester Hailes Jobcentre:
 - Telephone: 0800 169 0190
 - Address: Westside Plaza, Murrayburn Road, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, EH14 2SP

LGBT Helpline – 0300 123 2523 - Helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk

- Provides information and emotional support to the entire diversity of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community across Scotland, including queer, intersex, asexual people and all identities under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella. This includes families, friends and supporters of LGBT people, and health and social care professionals working with LGBT people.
- **0300 123 2523** available Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 12 noon and 9pm and Thursdays and Sundays 1pm to 6pm

Men's Advice Line - 0808 8010327 – info@mensadviseline.org.uk

- Phone line available Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; email support available Mon-Fri 9am-5pm
- Offers non-judgemental emotional support, practical advice and information to male victims of domestic abuse

Rape Crisis Scotland - 08088 01 03 02 (every day, 6pm to 12 midnight)

- Offers free and confidential support and information by phone or email

Respect – 0808 802 4040 - info@respectphoneline.org.uk

- Can provide details of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes and associated support services.
- info@respectphoneline.org.uk available Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 12pm and 4pm to 6pm.
- A webchat service is now offered Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10am to 11am and 3pm to 4pm.

Scottish Women's Rights Centre - 08088 010 789

- Tuesdays 6-9pm; Wednesdays 1.30-4.30pm; Fridays 10am-1pm
- Free and confidential legal information and advice. Offers weekly surgeries in Glasgow

Samaritans – 116 123 (24 hours) – jo@samaritans.org

- 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
- Emails can be sent at any time, however responses can take several days.

Shelter Scotland/ Edinburgh Hub – 0808 800 4444; Online chat service

- This is a free phone service providing information about emergency access to refuge services and general housing matters.

Other useful websites

NHS Inform – Mental Health

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

Centre for Clinical Interventions

- Information and workbooks to support you to manage your mental health and to look after yourself

How to make an emergency SOS call from your mobile phone

- This website provides useful information for how to familiarise yourself with your phone's emergency functions and how to make it easier to reach help in an emergency

Calling 999 on a Smartphone – Tips and Tricks

- Provides information on how to make accessing emergency services quicker and easier, including how to register for the 999 BSL service.

Safety Planning when you have a pet

Pet Fostering Service Scotland – PFSS – 0344 811 9909

- Provides short term care for pets when their owner is unable to do so through illness, homelessness or domestic abuse and cannot arrange any alternative care.

Freedom (Dogs Trust) – 0808 169 4315

- Provides short term fostering for dogs to support people fleeing domestic abuse.

Lifeline – 0300 012 0286 - lifelinescotland@cats.org.uk

- A free and confidential cat fostering service for families who are fleeing domestic abuse so they can rest assured their cat will be taken care of until they can be safely reunited.
- The service launched in Scotland in summer 2024 in partnership with Edinburgh Women's Aid.

Personalised safety and support plan

For professionals

This safety and support plan is based on the template available through SafeLives. 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.

For people affected by domestic abuse

This document is to help you to think about your options and recommendations for your own safety, and the safety of your children or other people who depend on you. Only keep copies (electronic or hard copies) of this document if it is safe, and unlikely for your ex/partner to find it. You may want to consider keeping it with trusted people such as relatives or friends.

Client name/ ref no:

Page ____ of ____.

Is it safe to take this safety plan home with you?

Where will you keep it?

If I need to leave I will try and take the following 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 (for example interdicts, 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(s)/ plan for leaving/ support post separation

Children

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

Other professionals involved in my support:

Name	
Contact Number	
Agency name	
Agency opening hours	
Email Address	
Other relevant information	

Name	
Contact Number	
Agency name	
Agency opening hours	
Email Address	
Other relevant information	

Name	
Contact Number	
Agency name	
Agency opening hours	
Email Address	
Other relevant information	

Children's Key information:

Child's name:	
Child's sex:	
Child's date of birth:	
Child's GP:	
Child's midwife/ health visitor/ lead professional:	
Child's nursery/school:	
Child's health condition(s):	
Child's medication:	
Child's emergency contact (who can pick them up from school? Who can they safely stay with?)	Name: _____ Phone number: _____ Relationship to the child: _____
Any additional essential information:	

Child's name:	
Child's sex:	
Child's date of birth:	
Child's GP:	
Child's midwife/ health visitor/ lead professional:	
Child's nursery/school:	
Child's health condition(s):	
Child's medication:	
Child's emergency contact (who can pick them up from school? Who can they safely stay with?)	Name: _____ Phone number: _____ Relationship to the child: _____
Any additional essential information:	

Child's name:	
Child's sex:	
Child's date of birth:	
Child's GP:	
Child's midwife/ health visitor/ lead professional:	
Child's nursery/school:	
Child's health condition(s):	
Child's medication:	
Child's emergency contact (who can pick them up from school? Who can they safely stay with?)	Name: _____ Phone number: _____ Relationship to the child: _____
Any additional essential information:	

Child's name:	
Child's sex:	
Child's date of birth:	
Child's GP:	
Child's midwife/ health visitor/ lead professional:	
Child's nursery/school:	
Child's health condition(s):	
Child's medication:	
Child's emergency contact (who can pick them up from school? Who can they safely stay with?)	Name: _____ Phone number: _____ Relationship to the child: _____
Any additional essential information:	

APPENDIX 1: How to use the 999-emergency number

- When you call 999, your call will be connected to a call centre with BT operators who will ask you which emergency service you need: Police, Ambulance or Fire Service.
- If no service is requested but anything suspicious can be heard (for example shouting or crying) then operators will connect you to a police call handler.

If you call from a landline:

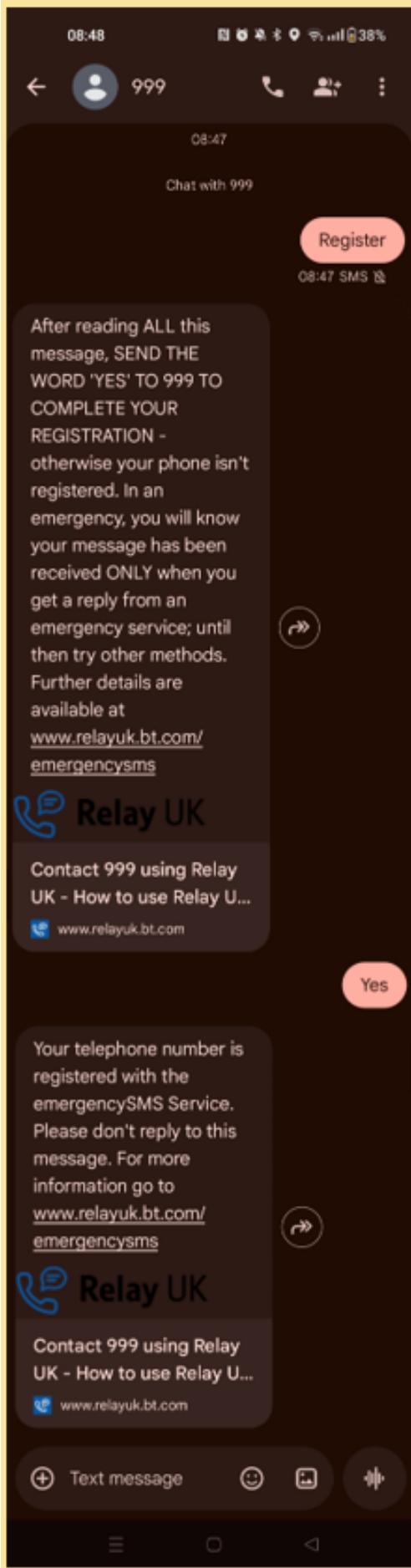
- If you don't speak or answer questions and the operator can only hear background noise, they'll transfer your call to the police.
- If you replace the handset, the landline may remain connected for 45 seconds in case you pick it up again.
- Calling 999 from a landline automatically gives the police information about your location.

If you call from a mobile phone:

- It is always best to speak to the operator if you can, even if you are just whispering.
- If it is not safe to speak, they may ask you to cough or tap the keys on your phone to answer their questions with 'yes' or 'no'.
- If it is not safe to speak but there is no background noise, the operator might not be able to determine whether there is a genuine emergency and will put you through to the [Silent Solution](#) System. This system is designed to help people who cannot speak to the operator but who genuinely need police assistance:
 - You will hear an automated 20 second police message that begins with 'you are through to the police'.
 - It will ask you to press 55 to go through to police call management. The BT operator will remain on the line and listen.
 - **If you press 55, they will transfer your call to the police. If you don't press 55, the call will be terminated. Pressing 55 does not allow the police to track your location.**
- If it is safe to speak to the operator: Ask for the Police and give a brief description of the incident and where you are.
- If you are at home: Let the Police know where at home, you are and anyone else who may be in the household (for example children or other vulnerable people)
- If you are in a public place: Give as much information as you can, for example street names, what you are seeing around you (shops, monuments, parks, landmarks). If you need to move, try to explain which direction you are traveling in.
- Using 'What3Words' [What 3 words](#) is an app that allows you to pinpoint your location anywhere in the world by allocating you with a unique combination of 3 random words. If you download and install the app on your phone, you can memorise the 3 words that correspond to your home address or use it to locate where you are if you are out and about. This will enable emergency services to find you and reach you more easily.
- If it is not safe to speak to the operator or listen to their instructions/questions: Try to make noises to communicate distress. If your partner is present and you are in danger:
 - Put your phone somewhere where it can pick up sound
 - Try to throw hints as to where you are and what is happening. For example, '55 Edinburgh Street is my home, you're not allowed to be here!'

For more information on how to configure your phone to make it easier for emergency services to reach you in an emergency, please see [this link](#) on emergency first aid, or [this link](#) with information on specific phone models

How to use the 999-emergency number by text



There may be times where it's safer to contact the 999-emergency number rather than phone call. This can be situations where you don't want to be heard speaking, or where you are in a location where phone signal is poor.

It is also a great option for people who might have trouble hearing on the phone.

To contact 999 by text in an emergency first of all you have to register your number for this service. To do this, follow the instructions below:

1. Type the word 'Register' and text it to 999.
2. You will receive a text message from 999 – read this carefully: it explains that the only way to know your emergency message has been received is that you have received a response.
3. The link provided in this text message also includes information for how to use the Relay UK app and how to use a text phone (if you need a relay person)
4. If you are happy with the information provided, type 'Yes' and send to 999.
5. You will then receive a text confirming that your number has been registered for the service.

The screenshots to the left demonstrate the process described above.

Once you have completed this registration process **and you have received the message 'Your telephone number is registered with the emergency SMS service'** you are now able to contact 999 by text.