

Factsheet 129

Keeping a Victim of Abuse Safe

When someone needs help:

1. Be specific when discussing what signs or behaviours you have listened to or witnessed that raise red flags
2. Let her/him know that they are not alone and that professional agencies exist to help, support and signpost
3. Express your concern for their safety but do not judge her/him
4. Listen
5. Ask how you can help
6. Stay away from statements suggesting her/him might be partly to blame.
7. Do not ask, “why don’t you leave?” or “don’t do anything to make him mad”
8. Ask open ended questions such as “what behaviours does your partner display that show that she/he does not love and care for you?”
9. Such enquiries help the victim to gain some clarity about the situation
10. Be supportive but do not pressurize the victim
11. Let her/him make decisions at their own pace; they should guide the process and decide when to leave because she knows the situation best
12. Research local support agencies and charities
13. Give her/him guidance on agencies that may be able to assist, e.g. Women’s Aid, Victim Support, Domestic Violence UK#
14. Offer to sit with the individual while they make the call or offer to attend the first appointment with them
15. Make a fleeing pack and place in a safe confidential place to include passports, birth certificates, driving license, P45, P60, NI number, court orders, divorce documents and any other legal documents they feel they may need

Steps to stay safe:

Leaving an abusive relationship is the most dangerous time for a victim. But all victims, whether living with an abuser or preparing to leave, need to plan to protect themselves and their family.

Here are some safety tips:

In the home

- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in a room or area with an exit and not in the bathroom, kitchen or anywhere near dangerous instruments or weapons

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- Practice how to get out of your home safely; identify windows, doors and stairs for a safe exit
- Have a packed bag ready and keep it in a secret but accessible place so you can leave quickly if necessary
- Identify a neighbor, friend or family member that you can safely and confidentially tell about the violence and ask that person to call the police if a disturbance is heard coming from your home
- Devise a code word to use with your children, family, friends and neighbours when you need the police
- Decide on and plan where you will safely go if you leave your home (even if you do not think you will need to)
- Call 999 if in immediate danger
- Call 101 to report a crime

Preparing to leave

- Only tell a trusted family member or friend where you will be
- Preferably tell no one till you are safe
- Determine who will let you stay with them on leaving
- Know someone who may lend you some money if necessary when you leave
- Always try to take your children with you and make arrangements to leave them with someone and somewhere safe
- Leave money, clothes, extra keys and important documents with someone you trust and who is confidential
- Leave supportive agencies telephone numbers with your confidential pack
- Be careful placing supportive agency phone numbers in your mobile
- Your mobile can be hacked
- Open a savings account in your own name to establish financial independence
- Where possible take advice from a domestic violence advocate to devise a safe way to leave your abuser

After a separation, at work or in public

- Be safe who you tell about your situation; you may need to inform organisation security and provide a picture of your abuser
- Arrange to have someone at work screen your visitors and telephone calls
- You may need to consider having a colleague escort you to and from your work premises, car, train or bus

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- Use a variety of routes to go home wherever possible
- Have a plan for what you would do if you found yourself being followed
- If you have a restraining order make sure all of the organisations that you and your children attend have a copy, e.g. your employer, the school head teacher or daycare manager
- Arrange for your children to be escorted from school if necessary
- Inform your neighbours and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if he/she arrives at your home/street
- Change, or add additional locks to your home and windows as soon as possible

Agencies, Resources and Further Information:

Women's Aid <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Refuge www.refuge.org.uk/

Men's Advice Line www.mensadvice.org.uk/

Mankind www.mankind.org.uk/

Refuge for Men www.refuge.org.uk/get-help-now/help-for-men/

<http://www.elephantjournal.com/2015/08/gaslighting-the-mind-game-everyone-should-know-about/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/power-in-relationships/200905/are-you-being-gaslighted>

<http://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/seven-signs-you-are-a-victim-of-gaslighting-fiff/>

Serious Crime Act 2015 - Section 76 Statutory Guidance Document here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482528/Controlling_or_coercive_behaviour_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Serious Crime Act 2015 - Section 76 - legislation here:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/76/enacted>

Domestic Violence Protection Orders

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-violence-protection-orders>

Books:

Coercive Control by Evan Stark

Women at Risk by Evan Stark

Without Conscience by Robert D. Hare