**Safety Planning – When still in the relationship.**

**Seek specialist support**

* Contact WMWA - we can work with you to make an individualised safety plan that is personal for your situation and offer you further advice and support including your legal, housing and financial options: **LINK HELPLINE**
* Keep your mobile phone with you at all times, charged and ensuring you have enough credit and signal. Try to ensure important numbers are pre-programmed into your phone.
* Write these numbers down (if safe to do so) in case your phone is stolen or damaged and store them in a place that is easy for you to access.
* Try to copy important documents that you may need access to such as financial entitlements, bank account details or passports.
* Try to store any evidence of abuse such as texts, photos or emails safely, if you can’t store them safely or have concerns about tracking on your devices speak to your GP and ask them to make a record of the incident for you.
* If you have a friend or family member you can trust, tell them about your situation and ask them to be your buddy. You could set up a code word or message together making it clear what it means, for example: If I say/text ‘red’ or ‘sorry can’t talk, I need to take the dog out’ (something that will not raise suspicion with the abuser) which means call 999 immediately, if I say/text ‘Amber’ or ‘Hi, can’t speak today as having my nails done’ means I need you to come over to my house etc. The process you follow is as important as the word or message you use, so make sure it is very clear.
* Experiencing domestic abuse can have a negative impact on emotional wellbeing and mental health. If you would like advice or support please speak to your GP or another specialist health professional.

**Staying safe during an abusive incident**

* Your abuser may have patterns to his/her abuse. Try to be aware of any signs that show he /she is about to become violent so that you can assess how dangerous the situation may be for you and your child.
* You know your abuser better than anyone and have managed your own safety throughout your relationship. Think of ways you have calmed the situation previously – what did you do? Do this where possible until you can get help or get to a place of safety.
* Whilst your voice, thoughts and views are important – try not to challenge your abuser and avoid conflict where possible. If it looks like violence may happen, try to remove yourself from the situation before the violence begins, if you can.
* Consider where the “safer places” are in your home – the places where there are not weapons within arm’s reach. If it looks like the abuser is about to hurt you, try to get to a safer place. Stay out of the kitchen, bathroom, garage, workshop or other room where items that can be used as weapons are kept. Try to avoid rooms with tile or hardwood floors.
* If the abuser does start to harm you, try not to run to where the children are; the abuser may hurt them too (either unintentionally or intentionally).
* If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target. Get into a corner and curl up into a ball. Protect your face and put your arms around each side of your head, wrapping your fingers together.
* If you have a car, make a habit of backing the car into the driveway (so you can quickly pull out) and always having enough fuel in the tank.
* Keep your car keys in the same place so you can easily grab them or get a copy of the car keys made and keep those in a place hidden from the abuser.
* If you have children who need a car seat, make sure the car seats are always kept in the car.
* If you and your children cannot leave your house safely, barricade yourselves into a room and dial 999 immediately.

**Keeping your children safe**

• Make sure they know that their first priority is to stay safe, not to physically protect you. Explain that although they may want to get in between you and the abuser or try to physically restrain the abuser that may get them hurt

• If you believe your children would be able to leave the house safely on their own to get help, discuss with them possible places where they could go and make a plan for what they would say/do when they get there.

• Decide on a code word that you can use during a violent incident that would let them know to leave the house and get help.

• If leaving the house would not be possible (based on their age, where your house is located, or for other reasons), identify a safe place for them to go within the house. With younger children, you may want to identify something that they can think about when they are scared

• If they are old enough to call for help, and you would like them to call 999 when the abuse is occurring, practice calling 999 with a phone that is not connected.

• You may even want to role play being the 999 operator so they can practice what they would say.

**In an emergency always call 999, if it is difficult for you to speak you can dial 55 when the phone is answered to let the call-handler know that you need help. Dial 101 for non-emergencies.**

**When you call 999, you should provide as much detail as possible (if it is safe to do so)**

• Give them your location – if it is difficult to find give them a landmark or directions

• Explain how they can access your property and where you are within the property

• Explain what is going on including who is with you and any threats made?

• Let them know whether anyone is injured or needs medical attention

• Let them know whether there are any weapons involved or in the house

• Try to stay on the line and let the call-handler know if you move locations

* If you are unable to communicate or it is not safe to talk, let the call-handler listen to the call silently as this can later be used as evidence.

Read through our other **safety plans** and our **online safety guide** or **call the helpline** to ensure you have all the relevant information.