

The Centre for Age, Gender and Social Justice



Individualised safety plan – guidance

For a safety plan to be effective it should be tailored to the individual's unique circumstances, in particular, the relationship between the older person and the abusive person. The actions in a safety plan should feel achievable, taking into account of what has, or has not, worked in the past, and avoiding actions that may increase risk. The plan will vary depending on whether it is to be used for increasing safety when:

- the older person shares a home with the abusive person;
- the abusive person visits the older person's home;
- the older person is leaving, ending or changing the relationship with the abusive person.

The safety plan should be as simple as possible, concentrate on key areas of concern, and be revisited frequently. The safety plan should only be taken home if it is safe to do so and should not be kept where the abusive person is likely to find it.

The following chart contains suggestions to explore and consider when assisting an older person in making an individualised safety plan. Some of the suggestions involve informing others about the abuse but this should not be done without the consent of the older person.

1. Leaving the home safely

- Is it safer to leave, or stay at the property and call for help?
 - How will they leave the property daytime/night time?
 - What transport will they use and at what times of day is this available, for example, does a taxi firm stop taking calls at a certain time of night?
 - If they have access to a vehicle, ensure that, it is not blocked in, parked in the direction of travel, and they have the keys accessible at all times.
 - What do they need with them? See emergency bag.
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2. Identifying who can help and how

- Who can the safety plan be safely shared with?
 - Who can be called for help and what do they need to do?
 - Is there someone who can call the older person at regular intervals to check they are alright?
 - Agree a code word or phrase with an identified safe person to signal to them they are at risk and need them to get help on their behalf without the abusive person being aware.
 - Is there a neighbour they can confide in, and how can they signal to them if they need them to call for help?
 - Ensure the all those involved in safety planning know how to respond, for example, to call 999 and not challenge the abusive person.
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3. Calling for help

- Identify who to call, in which situation, for example, the police or a family member.
 - Identify how to call for help. Is a home phone accessible and will the older person be able to access it in an emergency? Put emergency numbers on speed dial. If a mobile phone is used, ensure it is charged and accessible.
 - Ensure the older person knows how to make a silent 999 call. If the older person calls 999 from a landline and is not able to talk, an operator will listen and, if they are concerned will transfer the call to the police. The operator may ask the caller some questions or to indicate they can't talk by asking them to cough.
 - **Silent solution 55** - If a mobile phone is used to call 999 and the older person cannot safely speak, they will be asked by the operator to tap 55 on their keypad to indicate they need a police response.
 - **999 Relay (Deaf, hearing or speech difficulty)** – A person who has difficulty making an emergency voice call can register to use 999 Relay. A text enabled phone or mobile phone is required and details of how to register can be found at: <https://www.relayuk.bt.com/>
 - Does the older person use a personal alarm, for example, to call for help if they fall? Inform the provider the individual is at risk of harm and request the supplier provides a police response, alongside a medical response, if the alarm is activated.
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4.1 Emergency bag

- Whether an older person is in the stages of planning to leave, or if they currently plan to stay in a relationship with an abusive person, it is advisable to have an emergency bag prepared in the event they need to leave their home quickly to protect their safety.
 - An emergency bag should be stored where it can be accessed quickly and not discovered by an abusive person, for example, with a trusted family member or friend. Money and contact details also need to be kept immediately accessible.
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4.2 Items to consider including in an emergency bag:

- Important telephone numbers, contact details
 - Money, debit and credit cards, bank details
 - Medication and prescriptions
 - Important documents (or copies of these), for example, identification, birth certificate, passport, benefits details.
 - Mobility aids, glasses, hearing aids (batteries), continence and sanitary products.
 - Change of clothes
 - Other small items of importance, for example, photo's, jewellery etc.
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5. Making the home safer

- Ensure doors are secure, locks are changed if necessary, and a door chain is fitted (If the older person has limited dexterity ensure locks and chains can be easily operated).
 - Fit a coded key safe to store a spare key and only share the code with a safe person.
 - Fit window locks where possible.
 - Discuss home security, for example, ensuring doors are locked and checking who is at the door before answering.
 - Discuss what actions the older person will take if the abusive person seeks access to their home.
 - Arrange for the local fire service to carry out a free fire safety check and check, or fit, smoke detectors.
 - If the harmer is no longer living in the home arrange for removal of the harmer's belongings from the property, to remove excuses to return to the property. For example, arrange for a mutual friend or family member to store or return them, if safe to do so.
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6. Weapons (what could be used as a weapon?)

- When checking if an abusive person has access to, has used, or threatened to use a weapon, ensure any item that could be used as a weapon is considered. For example, have they thrown a heavy item at the older person or hit them with a walking stick?
 - Discuss withdrawing to a room where items that can be used as weapons are less accessible or where it is easier to move beyond their reach. If possible identify a room that has access to the outside.
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7. Medication

- If the older person takes medication, does the abusive person control, restrict, or threaten to restrict access to the medication?
 - If so, can this be prevented or a small quantity of medication kept in a secure place for the older person to access if necessary?
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8.1 Financial considerations

- Check if someone who has committed financial abuse is registered as a Power of Attorney for finances and consider removing them.
 - Inform the bank about financial abuse, and asking them for advice and to put measures in place to help prevent further abuse. For example, requesting to speak to the account holder alone if they arrive at the bank accompanied.
 - Ask the bank to cancel compromised debit and credit cards and internet banking.
 - Alter the date bills are paid by direct debit, to coincide with income paid in, for example, pension and benefits payments, being paid in. This helps to ensure important bills are kept up to date before the older person is pressured to give money and less money is available for access by the abusive person.
 - Set up a savings account that can only be accessed in person by visiting the bank.
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8.2 Financial considerations - leaving or just left a relationship

- Open an individual bank account and transfer incoming payments over from joint account, for example, state and private pension, benefits.
 - Transfer half of jointly held assets immediately from joint accounts.
 - Ask the bank for advice on closing or severing a joint bank account. If it is not viable to do so immediately, ask the bank to restrict or end overdraft facilities to reduce future liability for someone else's debt.
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9.1 Dementia - When the older person experiencing abuse has a diagnosis of dementia

- Forward plan and put measures in place as early as possible following diagnosis.
- Explore whether the person wants help to leave, or end a relationship with, the abusive person.
- Explore options for independent or supported living.
- Remember, strategies that have worked in the past may no longer work, as a person may not be able to recall how to keep themselves safe effectively.
- Identify one or more safe and trusted people, for example, family members, friends, neighbours, to inform about the abuse and share a safety plan with.
- Identify a safe and trusted person to appoint with Power of Attorney, while the person still has full capacity.
- Removing Power of Attorney from an abusive person.

- Ensure practitioners involved with a person are aware of the abuse, for example, GP and healthcare practitioners, social worker, dementia specialist, care provider.
 - Make an “Advanced Statement,” detailing what a person’s wishes are, for example, who they do or do not want to provide care for them. An advanced statement is not a legally binding document but must be taken into consideration by people making decisions on a person’s behalf. The statement must be made and signed while someone still has capacity, and placed somewhere safe, for example, with medical notes.
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9.2 Dementia - When the older person is experiencing abuse from someone with a diagnosis of dementia

- Identify if the person was abusive before their diagnosis of dementia.
 - Explore whether the older person wants help to leave, or end a relationship with, the abusive person
 - Explore if the older person does/does not want to provide care for the person and in what form. For example, may be comfortable with providing meals but not providing intimate care.
 - Identify signs that someone is becoming agitated or aggressive and use identified methods to calm the situation, or remove themselves to a place of safety.
 - Explore strategies that have, and have not, worked in the past and assess if they are still effective.
 - Identify people who can be called for assistance.
 - If possible, create a safe room in the home that:
 - ✓ can be locked, or secured with a door wedge;
 - ✓ has a telephone fitted (or remember to take a charged mobile phone);
 - ✓ has a supply of essentials, for example bottled water, snack, necessary medication, blanket.
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10. Pets

- If there are pets in the home, and the older person does not feel able to leave them, they should be included in the safety plan.
 - It should not be assumed that an older person will prioritise their own safety over the safety, or separation from, a beloved pet.
 - Pets can be a great source of comfort and companionship to a person experiencing abuse but they can also be used by an abusive person to exert further control.
 - Can pets go with the older person to their identified place of safety?
 - Identify someone who is willing to have the pets temporarily at short notice.
 - Some animal charities will arrange to temporarily foster the pets of victims of domestic abuse. Contact them for advice in advance.
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Individual safety plan – Template

People I will share my safety plan with:

I can call for help using:

(e.g. home phone, mobile, pendant alarm)

Who I can call safely if I need help:

(In emergency call 999)

I have planned with the above how to tell them safely I need help

e.g. code word, and what action they need to take:

If I need to leave quickly, the safest way is:

Where I will go and how I will get there day/night:

Who I will contact and how:

I have an emergency bag packed with the following items, in the named place:

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If I cannot leave, the following is the safest room I can use, and what I need to keep there:

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Actions I can take to help keep me safe:

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I have told the following people (e.g. neighbour) how to recognise I am at risk and what I

need them to do:

Plans for my animals: