

MAKING A SAFETY PLAN

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR
CHILDREN FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE?

A PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN IS A WAY OF HELPING YOU TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILDREN. IT HELPS YOU TO PLAN IN ADVANCE FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE VIOLENCE AND ABUSE. IT ALSO HELPS YOU TO THINK ABOUT HOW YOU CAN INCREASE YOUR SAFETY EITHER WITHIN THE RELATIONSHIP, OR IF YOU DECIDE TO LEAVE.

You cannot stop your partner's violence and abuse: only they can do that. But there are things you can do to increase your own and your children's safety.

You're probably already doing some things to protect yourself and your children – for example, there may be a pattern to the violence, which may enable you to plan ahead to increase your safety.

By making a safety plan, you can plan in advance how you might respond in different situations, including crisis situations. It is also an opportunity to think about the different options that may be available to you.

PREPARE TO KEEP SAFE

Here are some basic steps you can take.

- **Keep with you any important and emergency telephone numbers.**
E.g. your local Women's Aid refuge organisation or other domestic violence service; the police domestic violence unit; your GP; your social worker, if you have one; your children's school; your solicitor; and the free phone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge: 0808 2000 247.
- **Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency,** and what they would need to say. E.g. their full name, address and telephone number.
- **Is there a neighbour you could trust, and where you could go in an emergency?** If so, tell them what is going on, and ask them to call the police if they hear sounds of a violent attack.
- **Rehearse an escape plan,** so in an emergency you and the children can get away safely.

- **Pack an emergency bag** for yourself and your children, and hide it somewhere safe - e.g. at a neighbour's or friend's house. Try to avoid mutual friends or family. (There are some suggestions in this leaflet for what you need to take with you when you leave).
- **Try to keep a small amount of money on you at all times** – including change for the phone and for bus fares.
- **Know where the nearest phone is** – and if you have a mobile phone, try to keep it with you.
- **If you suspect that your partner is about to attack you, try to go to a lower risk area of the house** - for example where there is a way out and access to a telephone.
Avoid the kitchen or garage where there are likely to be knives or other weapons; and avoid rooms where you might be trapped - such as the bathroom - or where you might be shut into a cupboard or other small space.

Be prepared to leave the house in an emergency.

“BY MAKING A SAFETY PLAN, YOU CAN PLAN IN ADVANCE HOW YOU MIGHT RESPOND IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS, INCLUDING CRISIS SITUATIONS.”

PREPARING TO LEAVE

Whatever coping strategies you have used – with more or less success - there may come a time when you feel the only option is to leave your partner.

If you do decide to leave your partner, it is best if you can plan this carefully.

Sometimes abusers will increase their violence if they suspect you are thinking of leaving, and will continue to do so after you have left, so this can be a particularly dangerous time for you. It's important to remember that ending the relationship will not necessarily end the abuse.

- **Plan to leave at a time you know your partner will not be around.**
- **Try to take everything you will need with you** - including any important documents relating to yourself and your children - as you may not be able to return later.
- **Take your children with you** - otherwise it may be difficult or impossible to have them living with you in future. If they are at school, make sure that the head and all your children's teachers

know what the situation is, and who will be collecting the children in future.

Thinking about leaving and making the decision to leave can be a long process.

Planning it doesn't mean you have to carry it through immediately - or at all. But it may help to be able to consider all the options, and how you could overcome the difficulties involved.

If at all possible, try to set aside a small amount of money each week, or even open a separate bank account.

WHAT TO PACK IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO LEAVE YOUR PARTNER

Ideally, you need to take all the items on the check list opposite with you if you leave. Some of these items you can try to keep with you at all times; others you may be able to pack in your "emergency bag".

CHECKLIST

- SOME FORM OF IDENTIFICATION.
- BIRTH CERTIFICATES FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.
- PASSPORTS (INCLUDING PASSPORTS FOR ALL YOUR CHILDREN), VISAS AND WORK PERMITS.
- MONEY, BANKBOOKS, CHEQUE BOOK AND CREDIT AND DEBIT CARDS.
- KEYS FOR HOUSE, CAR, AND PLACE OF WORK. (YOU COULD GET AN EXTRA SET OF KEYS CUT, AND PUT THEM IN YOUR EMERGENCY BAG.)
- CARDS FOR PAYMENT OF CHILD BENEFIT AND ANY OTHER WELFARE BENEFITS YOU ARE ENTITLED TO.
- DRIVING LICENCE (IF YOU HAVE ONE) AND CAR REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS, IF APPLICABLE.
- PRESCRIBED MEDICATION.
- COPIES OF DOCUMENTS RELATING TO YOUR HOUSING TENURE, E.G. MORTGAGE DETAILS OR LEASE AND RENTAL AGREEMENTS.
- INSURANCE DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER.
- ADDRESS BOOK.
- FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, YOUR DIARY, JEWELLERY, SMALL ITEMS OF SENTIMENTAL VALUE.
- CLOTHING AND TOILETRIES FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.
- YOUR CHILDREN'S FAVOURITE SMALL TOYS.
- ANY ANY DOCUMENTATION RELATING TO THE ABUSE - E.G. POLICE REPORTS, COURT ORDERS SUCH AS INJUNCTIONS AND RESTRAINING ORDERS, AND COPIES OF MEDICAL RECORDS IF YOU HAVE THEM.

PROTECTING YOURSELF AFTER YOU HAVE LEFT

If you leave your partner because of abuse, you may not want people to know the reason you left.

It is your decision whether or not you tell people that you have suffered domestic violence; but if you believe you may still be at risk, it might increase your safety if you tell your family and friends, your children's school, and your employer or college what is happening, so that they do not inadvertently give out any information to your ex-partner.

They will also be more prepared and better able to help you in an emergency.

IF YOU HAVE LEFT HOME, BUT ARE STAYING IN THE SAME TOWN OR AREA, THESE ARE SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO INCREASE YOUR SAFETY:

- **Try not to place yourself in a vulnerable position or isolate yourself.**
- **Avoid familiar places.** Try to avoid any places, such as shops, banks, cafes, that you used to use when you were together.
- **Try to alter your routines as much as you can.** If you have any regular appointments that your partner knows about - e.g. with a counsellor or health practitioner - try to change your appointment time and/or the location of the appointment.
- **Try to choose a safe route,** or alter the route you take or the form of transport you use, when approaching or leaving places you cannot avoid - such as your place of work, the children's school, or your G.P.'s surgery.
- **Tell your children's school, nursery or childminder what has happened,** and let them know who will pick them up. Make sure they do not release the children to anyone else, or give your new address or telephone number to anyone. (You may want to establish a password with them, and give them copies of any court orders, if you have them.)

- **Consider telling your employer or others at your place of work** - particularly if you think your partner may try to contact you there.

IF YOU HAVE MOVED AWAY FROM YOUR AREA, AND DON'T WANT YOUR ABUSER TO KNOW WHERE YOU ARE, THEN YOU NEED TO TAKE PARTICULAR CARE WITH ANYTHING THAT MAY INDICATE YOUR LOCATION; FOR EXAMPLE:

- **Is your mobile phone being 'tracked'?** This is only supposed to happen if you have given your permission, but if your partner has had access to your mobile phone, he could have sent a consenting message purporting to come from you.

If you think this could be the case, you should contact the company providing the tracking facility and withdraw your permission; or if you are in any doubt, change your phone.

- **Try to avoid using shared credit or debit cards or joint bank accounts:** if the statement is sent to your ex-partner, he will see the transactions you have made.
- **Make sure that your address does not appear on any court papers.** (If you are staying in a refuge, they will advise you on this.)
- **Make sure your telephone number is untraceable.** If you need to phone your abuser (or anyone with whom he is in contact), dial 141 before ringing to withhold your number.
- **Talk to your children about the need to keep your address and location confidential.**
- **Register to vote anonymously.** Victims of stalking and domestic violence are now allowed to join the electoral register anonymously, so ensure they are not put at risk, and do not lose the right to vote. Anyone wanting to register their details anonymously must provide evidence such as an order under the Family Law Act 1996 or the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

If an application is granted, the details that appear on the register only have a person's electoral number and the letter N.

- **If you have an injunction order.** If you stay or return to your home after your partner has left, then you will probably have an occupation order or a protection order (see Getting an injunction).

If the injunction has powers of arrest attached, then do make sure that your local police station has a copy, and that the police know that they need to respond quickly in an emergency.

In some areas, there are special schemes to ensure a rapid response by the police (for example, the Community Alarm scheme in the London Borough of Haringey); and in other areas there may be projects – such as Staying Put in Bradford, and the Sanctuary Projects in Barnet and Bromley, South Ribble and Chorley - which provide advice and additional security measures to make your home safe.

However, it is important to know that you do not have to stay at home - with or without an injunction - if you do not feel safe there.

You could also consider the following precautions:

- **Changing the locks on all doors.**
- **Putting locks on all windows** if you don't have them already.
- **Installing smoke detectors** on each floor, and providing fire extinguishers.
- **Installing an outside light** (back and front) which comes on automatically when someone approaches.
- **Informing the neighbours that your partner no longer lives there**, and asking them to tell you - or call the police - if they see him nearby.
- **Changing your telephone number** and making it ex-directory.
- **Using an answering machine to screen calls**
- **Keeping copies of all court orders** together with dates and times of previous incidents and call-outs

If you live in the South Ribble and Chorley area, most of the above would be done by our local Sanctuary scheme

WHAT TO DO IF THE ABUSE CONTINUES

If your ex-partner continues to harass, threaten and abuse you, make sure you keep detailed records of each incident, including the date and time it occurred, what was said or done, and - if possible - photographs of damage to your property or injuries to yourself or others.

If your partner or ex-partner injures you, see your GP or go to hospital for treatment and ask them to document your visit.

If you have an injunction with a power of arrest, or there is a restraining order in place, you should ask the police to enforce this; and if your ex-partner is in breach of any court order, you should also tell your solicitor.

“IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE TO STAY AT HOME - WITH OR WITHOUT AN INJUNCTION - IF YOU DO NOT FEEL SAFE THERE.”

WHAT THE POLICE CAN DO

Most forms of domestic violence are crimes, and you (or someone else on your behalf) may decide to contact the police for help. The police are a key 24 hour agency for women experiencing domestic violence, and the first port of call in emergency.

Being assaulted, sexually abused, threatened or harassed by someone you know or live with is just as much a crime as violence from a stranger, and is often more dangerous.

When the police have been called, their first priority should be your safety and well-being, and that of your children, and to protect everyone present from injury or further harm. Their role is to investigate and not to mediate, counsel or allocate blame by asking inappropriate questions.

If you call the police because you are experiencing domestic violence, they should always give you the opportunity of being listened to and spoken to separately, away from your abuser.

You can also ask to be seen by a woman police officer (WPC). The police should provide you with an interpreter if you need one, and

should never ask your children or other family members to interpret in cases of domestic violence.

The police should help and support you by:

- Protecting you and your children by removing the risk of further violence – ideally by arresting and removing the perpetrator.
- Arranging first aid or other medical assistance - such as an ambulance.
- Finding out what has happened, taking into account the known risk factors associated with domestic violence.
- Offering you support and reassurance.
- Helping you to access other agencies (e.g. Women's Aid);arranging transport to a safe place, if you want this.

Domestic violence should be treated as seriously as an assault or threat from a stranger. Each police officer can use his or her powers to intervene, arrest, caution or charge an abuser.

If there are reasonable grounds to justify an arrest, the police should do this without asking your permission”, or insisting on a statement from you first - though they will need to take one later.

They do not need a warrant to arrest someone who they suspect is about to commit an arrestable offence nor do they need to witness an assault.

The abuser can then be held for up to 24 hours (or 36 hours at weekends) before they need to charge him.

If the perpetrator has left before the police arrive, the police should circulate a description and make every effort to find him. Officers should also gather alternative evidence (e.g. photos of damage or injury) in order to charge and build a prosecution case that does not rely entirely on your statement. They should ensure that you and your children are safe while they do this.

For many women who are experiencing domestic violence, calling the police is not the first option, but is often only a last resort after repeated attacks.

Many women are ambivalent about calling the police: they fear they will not be believed or taken seriously, or it may seem like a betrayal.

Black women, in particular, are less likely to call the police if they fear racism against themselves or their partner, and some women may have concerns about their immigration status and what will happen if they call the police.

Lesbians and Bisexual women may anticipate homophobia; and women who use drugs, or who work as prostitutes will also distrust the police.

If you do call out the police and they take action against your abuser, do ask them for and make a note of the crime reference number as this may be helpful when you contact other agencies.

If your immigration status is insecure, a record of police attendance to an incident of domestic violence might form part of your case to apply for leave to remain in the UK.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

ALTHOUGH EVERY SITUATION IS UNIQUE, THERE ARE COMMON FACTORS THAT LINK THE EXPERIENCE OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP.

ACKNOWLEDGING THESE FACTORS IS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN PREVENTING AND STOPPING THE ABUSE. THIS LIST CAN HELP YOU TO RECOGNISE IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, ARE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP.

Destructive criticism and verbal abuse: shouting; mocking; accusing; name calling; verbally threatening.

Pressure tactics: sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnect the telephone, take the car away, take the children away, or report you to welfare agencies unless you comply with his demands; threatening or attempting suicide; withholding or pressuring you to use drugs or other substances; lying to your friends and family about you; telling you that you have no choice in any decisions.

Disrespect: persistently putting you down in front of other people; not listening or responding when you talk; interrupting your telephone calls; taking money from your purse without asking; refusing to help with childcare or housework.

Breaking trust: lying to you; withholding information from you; being jealous; having other relationships; breaking promises and shared agreements.

Isolation: monitoring or blocking your telephone calls; telling you where you can and cannot go; preventing you from seeing friends and relatives; shutting you in the house.

Harassment: following you; checking up on you; not allowing you any privacy – for example, opening your mail, repeatedly checking to see who has telephoned you; embarrassing you in public; accompanying you everywhere you go.

Threats: making angry gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting you down; destroying your possessions; breaking things; punching walls; wielding a knife or a gun; threatening to kill or harm you and the children; threatening to kill or harm family pets; threats of suicide.

Sexual violence: using force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts; having sex with you when you don't want it; forcing you to look at pornographic material; forcing you to have sex with other people; any degrading treatment related to your sexuality, or to whether you are lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

Physical violence: punching; slapping; hitting; biting; pinching; kicking; pulling hair out; pushing; shoving; burning; strangling.

Denial: saying the abuse doesn't happen; saying you caused the abusive behaviour; being publicly gentle and patient; crying and begging for forgiveness; saying it will never happen again.

“DOMESTIC
ABUSE DOESN'T
HAVE TO BE
PHYSICAL -
IT CAN TAKE
MANY FORMS.”

RECOGNISING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

EVERYONE HAS ARGUMENTS, AND EVERYONE DISAGREES WITH THEIR PARTNERS, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND OTHERS CLOSE TO THEM FROM TIME TO TIME. AND WE ALL DO THINGS AT TIMES WHICH WE REGRET, AND WHICH CAUSE UNHAPPINESS TO THOSE WE CARE ABOUT. BUT IF THIS BEGINS TO FORM A CONSISTENT PATTERN, THEN IT IS AN INDICATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY HELP YOU:

Has your partner tried to keep you from seeing your friends or family?

Has your partner prevented you from continuing or starting a college course, or from going to work?

Does your partner constantly check up on you or follow you?

Does your partner unjustly accuse you of flirting or of having affairs with others?

Does your partner constantly belittle or humiliate you, or regularly criticise or insult you in front of other people?

Are you ever afraid of your partner?

Have you ever changed your behaviour because you are afraid of what your partner might do or say to you?

Has your partner ever destroyed any of your possessions deliberately?

Has your partner ever hurt or threatened you or your children?

Has your partner ever kept you short of money so you are unable to buy food and other necessary items for yourself and your children?

Has your partner ever forced you to do something that you really did not want to do?

If you answered yes to one or more of the above questions, this indicates that you may be experiencing domestic violence.

Has your partner ever tried to prevent you from taking necessary medication, or seeking medical help when you felt you needed it?

Has your partner ever tried to control you by telling you could be deported because of your immigration status?

Has your partner ever threatened to take your children away, or said he would refuse to let you take them with you, or even to see them, if you left him?

Has your partner ever forced you to have sex with him or with other people? Has he or she made you participate in sexual activities that you are uncomfortable about?

Has your partner ever tried to prevent your leaving the house?

Does your partner blame his use of alcohol or drugs for his behaviour?

Does your partner control your use of alcohol or drugs? – For example, by forcing your intake or by withholding substances.

SAFETY PLAN

What are my important and emergency telephone numbers?

Where can I keep them so that they are always available for my children and me?

How will I teach my children to call 999?

Which two neighbours' can I tell about the abuse and ask to call the police if they hear sounds of the abuse:

Have I planned and rehearsed an escape plan?

What have I got in my emergency bag?

Where can I keep my emergency bag safe?

Where can I hide emergency money and important documents?

Have I identified four places I can go if I leave my home?

How much small change will I need for a phone call and bus fare?

Where is the nearest public phone?

What can I do if my partner attacks me at home?

If you recently left the perpetrator:

Who will I tell if I no longer live with the perpetrator?

Who will I ask to call the police if they see the perpetrator near my home or children?

I will tell the people who care for my children who is allowed to pick them up, these people are:

Which shops, bank and other places that I used do I need to avoid?

Who can I call if I'm feeling down and tempted to return?

USEFUL NUMBERS

POLICE (IN AN EMERGENCY, ALWAYS CALL 999)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE

0808 2000 247

REFUGE OR OUTREACH SERVICE

GP

EMERGENCY CONTACT (FRIEND/FAMILY/NEIGHBOUR)

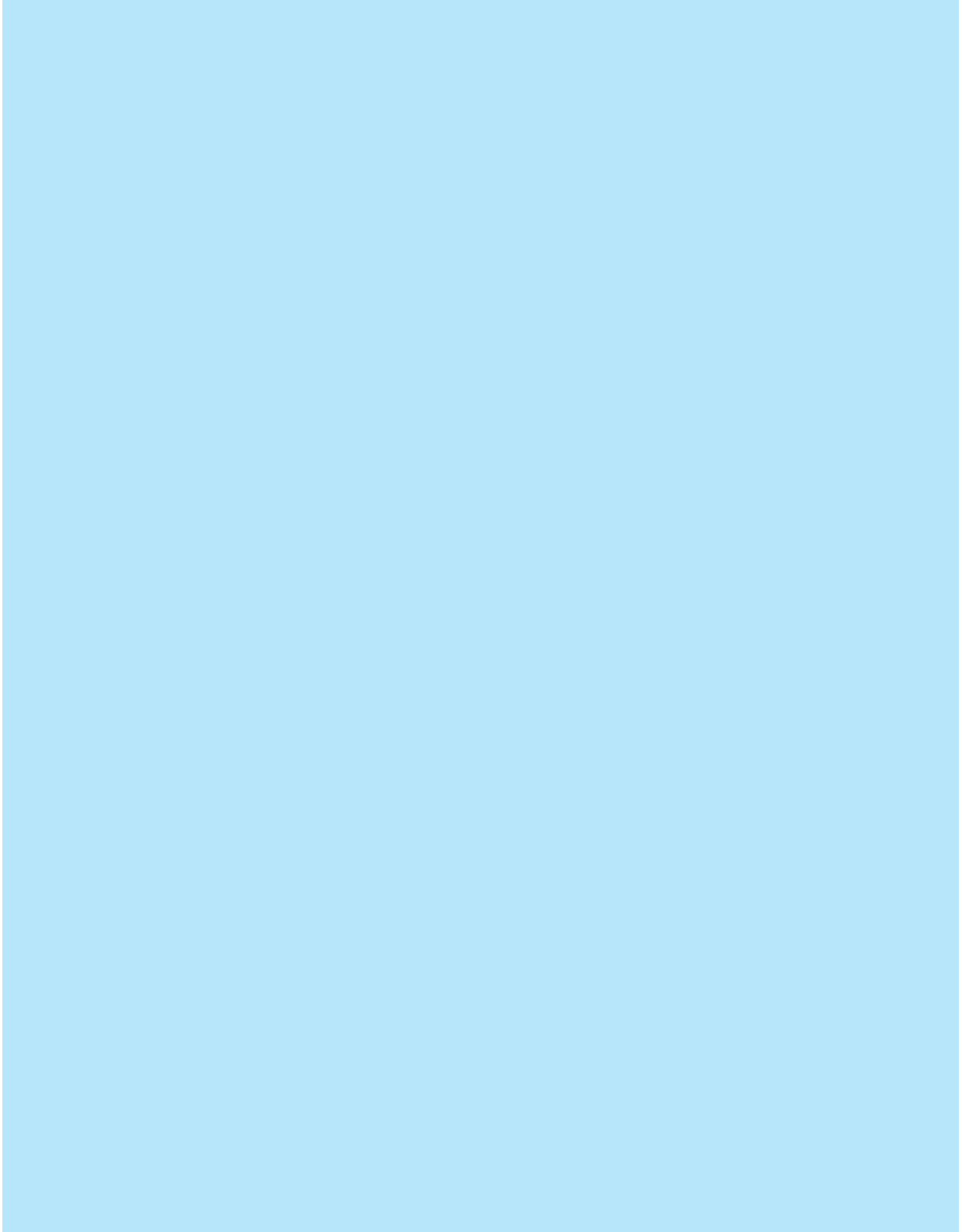
SCHOOL

SOLICITOR

SOCIAL WORKER

**ALWAYS DIAL 141 BEFORE CALLING OUT SO YOUR
NUMBER CANNOT BE TRACED.
IN AN EMERGENCY, ALWAYS CALL 999.**

NOTES



If you would like this leaflet in another language or format (such as large print, audio cassette or Braille) or if you require the services of an interpreter, please phone Customer Services on 01772 450600

اردو (Urdu)

اس اشاعت کی نقل اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا شکل (فارمیٹ) میں چاہئے، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان (انٹرپریٹر) کی خدمات درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی کسٹمر سروسز سے فون نمبر 01772 450600 پر رابطہ کریں۔

廣東話 (中文繁體字) (Cantonese)

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Polski (Polish)

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