

Safety Plan for Dating Apps.

Using dating apps can be daunting, it can make us feel unsafe or vulnerable especially if we have experienced abuse before. Sometimes creating a safety plan for using dating apps can help us feel able to use them and enjoy them! Here's some potential steps to take to make your dating experiences safer.

Setting up your profile:

- Don't use photographs or state information that indicates where you live or work
- Use dating apps that make their users verify their profiles
- Block and report suspicious users
- Be yourself- this is the only way you'll attract people you'll get on with
- Never send money or share financial information with anyone you match with
- If you think something on the app could be improved to make you and others feel safer, contact the app
- Go at your own pace, you don't need to rush to meet someone, give out your number or any private details unless you are ready to do so – you are in control

Before you meet:

- Make sure your phone is charged and you have your house keys
- Screenshot their profile before meeting
- You can always ask to check out your potential date on social media (if they have it)
- Arrange to meet somewhere public like a restaurant, bar, park or market
- Tell a friend where you are going and set up a code word that means you need help
- You can also download a personal safety app such as bSafe, Hollie Guard, Walk Safe or share your location with a friend on find my friends or Whatsapp for the entire date
- Move to messaging via text/numbers if that makes you feel at ease, similarly them not having your number might suit you better!
- Video chat/speak on the phone before meeting, this might make you feel more comfortable meeting in person. Some apps let you do this via the app.
- Work out how you can get to and from the date on public transport

On the date:

- If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts- end the date

- You don't need to disclose everything about your personal life if you don't want to
- Don't leave your drink, your phone or personal items unattended
- No matter if you flirt, kiss or go home with the person you are allowed to say no, change your mind or leave at any point in the date
- If you do decide you'd like to be sexually intimate with the person, make sure you use protection
- If you go to an unknown location, send your safe person your location and you can create a check in system
- When you get to the location of the date work out how you can leave safely if needed

If something bad happens:

- Ask for help from a waitress, bartender, shop keeper or someone around you
- If you leave and they follow you or you try to leave and they do not let you ask for help, text your safe person a code word, make a scene to get help
- Call 999 if you need urgent help, if you don't want the person to hear you press 55 when the operator has answered
- Call someone your safe person to help you
- Go to the nearest open shop, restaurant, bar and ask for help
- Rape crisis helpline: 08088029999
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline:08082000247

Remember, you are not responsible for abuse, if anything does happen it is not your fault the responsibility lies with the perpetrator