



## **SIX MHA**

**A guide for keeping safe at Christmas when at risk of  
Domestic Violence.**

### **ACCESS SIX MHA'S SUPPORT**

- Helpline – 0800 880 73 73
- Email – [helpline@sixmha.org](mailto:helpline@sixmha.org)
- App Code – LVZ-489-754





## Guide for Keeping Safe at Christmas When at Risk of Domestic Violence

The Christmas season can be a challenging time for individuals at risk of domestic violence. Increased stress, financial pressures, and extended time at home can heighten risks. This guide provides practical strategies and resources to help you stay safe and access support.

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### Understanding the Risks

1. **Heightened Stress Levels:** Financial strain, social expectations, and alcohol consumption can exacerbate abusive behaviour.
  2. **Isolation:** Abusers may use the holiday season to further isolate victims from friends and family.
  3. **Barriers to Support:** Many services operate on reduced schedules during the holidays, making it harder to access immediate help.
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### Safety Planning

#### 1. Develop a Personal Safety Plan

- Identify safe places in your home where you can go if an argument escalates (e.g., rooms with an exit and no sharp objects or weapons).
- Keep essential items packed and ready, such as:
  - Identification documents (ID, passport, birth certificates).
  - Money, bank cards, or emergency cash.
  - Keys for your home and vehicle.
  - A list of emergency contacts.
  - Medication and any necessary personal items.
- Share your safety plan with a trusted friend or family member who can check in on you.



## **2. Use Code Words**

- Establish a code word or phrase with trusted individuals to signal when you need immediate help.

## **3. Stay Connected**

- Ensure your phone is always charged and accessible.
- Memorize important phone numbers in case you lose access to your phone.

## **4. Set Boundaries**

- Limit interactions with your abuser, when possible, especially in high-stress situations.

## **5. Plan for Children**

- Teach children how to call emergency services and practice safety drills.
- Ensure they know how to reach a trusted adult outside the home.

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## **During an Incident**

### **1. Prioritize Your Safety:**

- If you feel unsafe, leave immediately if possible and go to a pre-determined safe location.

### **2. Contact Emergency Services:**

- Call the police if you or others are in immediate danger. Use the silent solutions:
  - In the UK, dial 999 and press 55 if you cannot speak.

### **3. Stay Calm:**

- Avoid actions or words that may escalate the abuser's behaviour. Focus on de-escalating and protecting yourself.
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## Accessing Support

### 1. Reach out to Helplines:

- **National Domestic Abuse Helpline (UK):** 0808 2000 247 (available 24/7).
- **Women's Aid:** [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk).
- **Refuge:** [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk).

### 2. Connect with Local Shelters:

- Many shelters provide safe accommodation and support during the holidays.
- Use resources like **Shelter (UK)** or **Safe Horizon (US)** to find local assistance.

### 3. Utilize Online Support:

- Many organizations offer live chats or email support for discreet communication.

### 4. Contact Trusted Individuals:

- Let trusted friends or family members know about your situation. Arrange regular check-ins.

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## Self-Care and Emotional Support

### 1. Create a Safe Space for Yourself:

- Engage in activities that help you relax and distract from stress, such as reading, listening to music, or journaling.

### 2. Practice Positive Affirmations:

- Remind yourself of your strength and worth. Surround yourself with positive messages.

### 3. Seek Counselling:

- Many organisations offer free or low-cost therapy services for survivors of domestic violence.



#### 4. Plan Small Celebrations:

- Create moments of joy for yourself and your children, even if they are simple or private.

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### Long-Term Strategies

#### 1. Document Abuse:

- Keep a record of incidents, including dates, times, and descriptions. This can be useful for legal protection.

#### 2. Explore Legal Options:

- Consider obtaining a restraining order or protection order. Contact SIX MHA or a legal aid organization for advice.

#### 3. Plan for Independence:

- Seek advice on housing, employment, and financial assistance to create a path toward independence.

#### 4. Build a Support Network:

- Join support groups for survivors to connect with others who understand your experience.

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### Resources for Immediate Help

#### In the UK

- **Police (Emergency):** Call 999 or use the Silent Solution (press 55).
- **National Domestic Abuse Helpline:** 0808 2000 247.
- **Women's Aid:** [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk).

#### Online Support

- **Love Is Respect:** [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org).
- **SafeLives:** [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk).