# Advice for survivors of domestic abuse

The law considers that domestic abuse is not just defined by ‘violence’. Both survivors and perpetrators of abuse can be of any gender identity, age, sexual orientation, religion, class, disability, race or relationship status. Domestic abuse is not confined to circumstances within the home and the abuser can be anyone associated with the victim. This includes intimate partners or ex-partners, family members or carers.

Domestic Abuse can be:

* psychological
* physical
* sexual
* financial
* emotional
* controlling or coercive behavior
* So-called honor-based abuse

Recent studies have suggested that one-in-four women and one-in-six men have been victims of domestic abuse.

## What to do in an emergency

It is claimed that on average two women are killed every week in England by a male partner or ex-partner. Despite this there are many challenges in dealing with escaping abuse and it is not always easy to leave. The Council believes that you should be supported in taking whatever action you think is most suitable and there are services available to help people flee violence as well as support for those who feel unable to leave abusive situations.

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| If you are concerned about your safety at any time you should always call the police by dialing 999 in an emergency. |

## What is Domestic Abuse?

Two women in England and Wales are killed each week by a current or former male partner.

Domestic Abuse can take many forms but includes any incident of threatening behavior, violence or abuse. This can include:

* **psychological** – includes intimidation, insults, isolating from friends/family, treating you as inferior to them, threatening to take children away & forced marriage.
* **physical** – includes shaking, smacking, punching,. Kicking, biting, bruising, starving, throwing things, using weapons & female genital mutilation.
* **sexual** – rape or threats of rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution, refusing to practice safe sex, sexual insults, preventing breastfeeding, forced pregnancy, passing on STDs.
* **financial** – includes not letting you work or study, refusal of giving money, making you beg for money, gambling, not paying bills, building up debt in your name.
* **emotional** – includes swearing at you, undermining your confidence, making racist, sexist of other derogatory remarks, making you feel unattractive, calling you stupid or useless, isolating you from friends/family & intentionally eroding your confidence.
* **controlling behavior** – includes behavior designed to make a person subordinate or dependent by isolating them from sources of outside support.
* **coercive behavior** – includes an act (or pattern of acts) of assault, threats or humiliation and intimidation that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim.
* **so-called honor-based abuse** – includes abuse explained by the perpetrator as necessary to defend family honor. It can include all other types of violence if claimed for this specific purpose. Common examples are forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

It is important to remember that you are not to blame for any kind of abuse and there is help available to make yourself and your family safe and work towards a life without abuse.

## Might you be the victim of abuse?

If you are in fear of a partner, ex-partner or member of your family, you may be experiencing domestic abuse. Ask yourself if any of the following are familiar to you:

* they call you names and make you feel bad about yourself
* they make you afraid by threatening you or your children
* they behave violently towards you
* they stop you seeing your friends or family
* they withhold money from you
* they harm you or make you feel you could be seriously harmed

If the answer to some of these questions is “yes” you might be experiencing domestic abuse. Relationships can be complicated and there is lots of help available if you need it.

If anything is making you feel uncomfortable about your relationship, or if you're worried about a friend of family member, contact ‘[Safe in Sussex](http://www.safeinsussex.org/)’ on **0330 333 7416** for a confidential chat.

## Leaving home

Leaving home can often be complicated due to childrens’ schooling or if you do not get any time alone. If you feel you might be at risk at home it is possible services can help you plan to safely leave your property. If you need to leave you should try to arrange temporary housing from the Council or other Domestic Abuse services first. Remember that not everyone leaving home is entitled to emergency accommodation but the Council should always assist you in securing an emergency option if one is available.

You could choose to stay with friends or relatives whilst you think about what to do next.

Remember to take some essentials with you, such as:

* a change of clothes for you and your children.
* Toiletries and any mediation you take regularly
* Passports or other forms of identification
* Mobile phone
* Bank and credit cards
* Any records you may have kept about where you intend to go

Do not make a decision to leave **permanently** until you have spoken to an advisor and considered all your options. Always call **999** in an emergency.

You can also use [Shelter’s Directory](https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/local_services) to find help in your area.

## What to expect if you need help from the Council

If you are the victim of abuse you can seek help at any time from a variety of local and national services listed at the bottom of this document.

There are options and services available to help people stay in their home safely by removing the perpetrator either with the assistance of the police or by a Court Order.

If you need to leave home and have nowhere else to go you can contact the local Council where you live or any other local authority where you may wish to live in the future. The Council must give you advice about finding somewhere to live and some people will be entitled to emergency accommodation.

If the Council has a duty to find you somewhere to live you will be asked to provide details of your situation. You may be asked for supporting evidence which could include details of incidents and dates. You can bring a friend or advisor with you for support and you can ask to see a male or female Housing Advice Officer.

If the Council is able to provide emergency accommodation the Council will have a duty to ensure this is in a safe location. This might mean that a refuge or B&B away from where you have been living is the most suitable option. If you want to explore such options yourself without seeking assistance directly from the Council you could contact the [*National Centre for Domestic Violence,*](https://www.ncdv.org.uk/)[*WORTH Services*](http://www.worthservices.org/)*,* [*Refuge*](https://www.refuge.org.uk/) or[*Women’s Aid*](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIl_WNrbP-3QIVxed3Ch3b-AdmEAAYASAAEgKtH_D_BwE)yourself using the contacts at the bottom of this document.

If you need to access emergency refuge accommodation and have a particular need (such as older children, a disability) or religious/cultural sensitivities you should make this clear to any advisor from the outset. There are refuges for women, men, single people and families. However please note there is limited specialist housing for men experiencing domestic abuse.

## Confidentiality

The Housing Advice Team will always treat whatever you discuss with the Council with the highest levels of confidentiality. If you are escaping an abusive domestic situation the Council will not contact the perpetrator. However the Council will need to make enquiries into your circumstances which may mean completing a vulnerability assessment with you and asking you to provide a confidential written statement of the situation.

## Help from Social Services

Some people may be entitled to help from [West Sussex County Council](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/)’s Childrens or Adult Services departments. This might be if you:

* are elderly
* have children living with you
* are under the age of 18
* are currently in care, about to leave care, or are already a Care Leaver
* are in poor health
* have a physical or learning disability
* are already engaged with Child Protection services or procedures

There are no rules about the kind of help social services departments have to provide.

## Help for children, family members (or if you are worried about someone)

If you or someone else in your family is being hurt at home you may not be sure what you can do about it. Domestic abuse is not your fault and you won’t get into trouble for telling someone about it.

The first thing is to tell someone else that you trust about what is happening. You can tell a teacher, a neighbor, a friend or a friend’s parents.

You can call ‘[Childline](http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx)’ on **0800 1111** for free. They won’t tell anyone you are calling unless you are in immediate danger. They can tell you about places where you can get help.

## Who else can help you?

**Shelter** – offers a housing advice line on 0808 800 4444.

**Sussex Police** – always call the police on “999” in an emergency. The website offers further advice on keeping yourself safe.

Website: [www.sussex.police.uk/advice/protect-yourself-and-others/domestic-abuse/](http://www.sussex.police.uk/advice/protect-yourself-and-others/domestic-abuse/)

**WORTH Services** – support for victims of domestic abuse across West Sussex.

Website: [www.worthservices.org](http://www.worthservices.org)

Phone: 07834 968 539 (9am-5pm, Monday-Friday)

**National Domestic Violence Helpline** – 24-hour helpline for support in partnership with *Refuge* and *Women’s Aid.*

Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24 hour, 365 days a year, calls are usually free from a mobile)

**Refuge** – help for men, women and children against domestic violence.

Website: [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

Website: [www.refuge.org.uk/get-help-now/help-for-men/](http://www.refuge.org.uk/get-help-now/help-for-men/)

Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24 hour, 365 days a year, calls are usually free from a mobile)

**Women’s Aid** – help and support for female and male victims of violence.

Website: [www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/)

Website: [www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/support-for-male-survivors/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/support-for-male-survivors/)

Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24 hour, 365 days a year, calls are usually free from a mobile)

**Safe in Sussex** – Community-based support and local refuge provision for women (but working with the whole family) to prevent domestic abuse escalating.

Website: [www.safeinsussex.org](http://www.safeinsussex.org)

Phone: 0330 333 7416

**My Sister’s House** – Arun & Chichester Women’s Centre. Wide-ranging help for women who are victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

Website: [www.mysistershouse.info](http://www.mysistershouse.info)

Email: office@mysistershouse.info – all emails answered within 24 hours.

Phone: 01243 697 800

**National Centre for Domestic Violence** – free & fast legal support to survivors of domestic violence and help with achieving emergency injunctions to keep you safe in your home.

Website: [www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)

Phone: 0808 970 2070

**Victim Support** – help and support for victims of crime to move beyond the impact of crime.

Website: [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

Phone: 0808 168 9111 (24 hour, 365 days a year, calls are usually free from a mobile)

**Men’s Advice Line** – advice and support for men experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

Website: [www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

Phone: 0808 801 0327 (9am-5pm, Monday-Friday)

**Man Kind Initiative** – helping men escape domestic abuse.

Website: [www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)

Phone: 01823 334 244 (10am-4pm, Monday-Friday)

**RESPECT** – help for male victims of domestic violence & perpetrators of abuse and young people using violence and abuse in close relationships who want to change.

Men’s Advice Line: 0808 801 0327

Perpetrator’s Advice Line: 0808 802 4040

**The Links Group** – Pet fostering service for families escaping domestic abuse

Website: [1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Links\_leaflet\_Oct\_2011.pdf](https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Links_leaflet_Oct_2011.pdf)