

Advice for people experiencing domestic abuse

This factsheet is for people suffering domestic abuse, who need housing advice in Kent.

If you are in fear of a partner, ex-partner or member of your family, you might be experiencing domestic abuse.

Helplines & support organisations

If you a woman experiencing domestic abuse and you live in an area of **Kent** you should contact **Victim Support** on 0808 168 9276. Victim Support will assess you and refer you on to one of the specialist organisations that provide refuge accommodation and support services in your local area.

There are different providers of Domestic Abuse Support Services for different areas of Kent. Most areas will operate a One-Stop-Shop where you can visit for advice and support. For details of where you can access support please visit <http://www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk/>.

If you live outside Kent or don't want to go to the council, you can contact the **National Domestic Violence Helpline** on **0808 2000 247**. You can talk confidentially to someone about your situation and to find out what your options are.

If you are a man experiencing domestic abuse you can contact the **Men's Advice Line** on 0808 801 0327.

If you are in a same-sex relationship you can call the **National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline** on 0800 999 5428.

Call **the police on 101** (if it is not an emergency) or **999** in an emergency.

The **Women's Aid** directory of local services is at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory/>.

Help to stay in your home

If you feel that you want to stay in your home, you can get legal advice about obtaining an injunction. An injunction is a court order that either:

- protects you or your child from being harmed or threatened by the person who's abused you (this is called a 'non-molestation order'), or
- decides who can live in the family home or enter the surrounding area - this is called an 'occupation order'.

You could obtain an occupation order even if you do not own any interest in the property you have been living in, or you are not a tenant.

If your income is low, you could get 'legal aid' to help with the legal costs. The **National Centre for Domestic Violence** provide a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation. You can call 0800 970 2070 or txt NCDV to 60777.

If you are frightened that your ex will break the terms of the injunction, despite the risk of being arrested, you might want to consider a '**Sanctuary Scheme**'. You could get a number of extra security measures installed at your address. Please contact **Integrated Domestic Abuse Support Services** on 0808 168 9276 for assessment and referral to your local service.

Moving to a safe place

If you have decided to leave home, make sure you plan your departure safely. Call the Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run by **Refuge and Women's Aid on 0808 2000 247**. Do not make a decision to give up your home permanently until you have obtained advice about your rights from a solicitor, Citizen's Advice Bureau or other advice agency. Use Shelter's directory to find a Shelter Advice Centre or Citizens Advice in your area. This can be found on the Shelter web site at www.shelter.org.uk.

If you don't have any friends or relatives or other accommodation that you can stay in safely, there are specialist refuges all over the UK. Refuges are not just emergency accommodation – you will be supported to rebuild your life. The support organisations mentioned overleaf help women find a space in a refuge.

Bromley Women's Aid safebeds scheme is available to women fleeing domestic abuse who are usually ineligible for housing help, because they are from abroad and have 'no recourse to public funds'. Telephone 0280 313 9303.

Applying as a homeless person

If you are an eligible person and can show that you have nowhere that you can safely remain in or return to, the council will work with you to help you find somewhere else to live. If they consider you are in priority need, they will find you temporary accommodation in a safe area, in the meantime. You will be in priority need if you have children or are pregnant. You may also be in priority need if the domestic abuse you have suffered has made you particularly vulnerable, or if you are vulnerable for other reasons, such as your mental or physical health.

The council will work with you to develop a 'Personalised Housing Plan'. This will outline the steps that both you and the council should take to find you more settled housing in a safe place. Most councils have a range of schemes to support people into a new home, such as financial help with rent deposits and rent in advance. This work will go on for a period of 56 days, or until you secure a new home. If they are unable to help you find a home during this 'relief period', and you are in priority need (and have co-operated with the council), they may then make you a direct offer of housing.

Contacting your local Council

Ashford: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk>

Canterbury: <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk>

Dartford: <https://www.dartford.gov.uk>

Dover: <https://www.dover.gov.uk>

Gravesham: <http://www.gravesham.gov.uk>

Maidstone: <https://self.maidstone.gov.uk>

Medway: <https://www.medway.gov.uk>

Sevenoaks: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk>

Folkestone & Hythe: <https://www.shepway.gov.uk>

Swale: <https://www.swale.gov.uk>

Thanet: <https://www.thanet.gov.uk>

Tunbridge Wells: <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk>

Tonbridge & Malling: <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk>