

Domestic abuse and homeless

Advice agencies, housing options and support for
your situation

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse includes any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse. The abuse can be psychological, physical, social, financial, or emotional.

Domestic abuse can happen between two people who are or were intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

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

- Call you names and make you feel bad about yourself?
- Make you afraid by threatening you or your children?
- Behave violently towards you?
- Stop you seeing your friends or family?
- Keep you without money?
- 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.

Get help now

You can contact the local domestic abuse specialist service, Southwark Advocacy and Support Service (SASS) delivered by Solace Women's Aid. The service is available to men and women over 16 years of age. They offer a wide range of services such as advocacy, safety planning, peer support, safety measures in the home, children's therapeutic interventions and more. They also offer a programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse who want help in changing their behaviour. To access all these services call SASS on 0207 593 1290

You can contact the [National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) on **0808 2000 247** if you're a woman experiencing domestic abuse. 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 [Samaritans](#) on **08457 90 90 90** if you feel in despair and want someone to listen to you and provide emotional support.

Call the police on **999** if:

- your personal safety is threatened
- you are at risk of assault or injury
- in an emergency

Leaving home immediately

If you feel you are at risk of harm there are alternatives you could explore such as the Sanctuary Scheme which can carry out safety works in your home such as changing locks, fire proof letter boxes and panic rooms. You can access this free service by calling SASS on 0207 593 1290. If however you think you need leave your home, try to arrange temporary housing from the council before you leave. Not everyone leaving home due to violence is entitled to emergency accommodation.

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

If you're a woman leaving domestic abuse, try to find a place in a women's refuge. SASS can help you with this.

Take some essentials with you such as a change of clothes, toiletries and any medication you need to take regularly. Try to bring important items such as your passport, bank and credit cards and mobile phone.

Don't make a decision to give up your home permanently until you have spoken to an adviser and considered all your options.

Use [Shelter's directory](#) to find a Shelter advice centre or Citizens Advice in your area.

Get homelessness help from the council

You can apply to our housing solutions team as a homeless person if you can't stay in your home.

The council has to give you advice about finding somewhere to live. Some people are 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 and dates of incidents. You can take a friend or an adviser with you for support.

Get advice immediately if the council says it won't help you because it believes it was reasonable for you to stay in your home. You could [challenge its decision](#).

Contact [Civil Legal Advice](#) on **0345 345 4 345** if you are entitled to legal aid.

Use [Shelter's directory](#) to find an adviser in your area.

SASS also offer a legal surgery service.

Help from social services

Some people may be entitled to help from the council's social services department.

Social services might be able to help if you:

- are elderly
- have children living with you
- are under the age of 18
- have left care (or are about to do so)
- are in poor health

- have a physical or learning disability

Social services may be able to help by finding accommodation for you, paying for a deposit or providing financial support.

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

Find [details of help available in your local area](#).

Refuges for women

Women experiencing domestic abuse may be able to stay in a [women's refuge](#).

Some refuges are specifically for women from certain backgrounds, such as Irish or Asian women.

Staff at refuges can give you advice about your situation.

Contact the [National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) on **0808 2000 247** for more information about refuges.

Refuges for men

If you are a man who has to leave home because of domestic abuse, you can make a homeless application to the council.

There is limited specialist housing for men experiencing domestic abuse.

Contact a Shelter advice centre or Citizens Advice to check what help is available.

Use [Shelter's directory](#) to find help in your area.

Help for children and young people

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 about what is happening to you. You can tell a teacher, a neighbour, a friend or a friend's parent.

You can call [Childline](#) on **0800 1111** for free. They won't tell anyone else you are calling unless you are in immediate danger. They can tell you about places where you can get help.

Find out more from [The Hideout](#) about children and young people and domestic abuse and violence.

Get more help

If you need more help call the Shelter advice line on 0808 800 4444.

Confidentiality

The Housing Solutions service confirms whatever you discuss with the service will always remain completely confidential.

For more information on the council's work in this area please access information on the Southwark Council web site at www.southwark.gov.uk