

Factsheet 5: Housing Advice at Runnymede Borough Council-Are you experiencing domestic abuse or know someone that is ?

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence can come in many forms. It is rarely a one off incident and it is not only about being physically or sexually abused. You may be subject to more subtle attacks, such as constant breaking of trust, isolation, psychological games and harassment. Emotional abuse is just as serious and damaging; many survivors will carry the emotional scars long after any physical injuries have healed.

Being assaulted or being forced or threatened to do something against your will by your partner, ex-partner, or a family member, is as much a crime as being assaulted by a stranger. Anyone can experience domestic violence regardless of gender, race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability or lifestyle. It can take place in heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender relationships. Some people who experience domestic violence may feel afraid or ashamed to tell someone what's happening. It is important to remember that domestic violence is not your fault; we will listen to you and treat you with respect. There are a number of other organisations which you can speak to if you need help or advice. The contact details of these organisations are listed at the end of this factsheet.

What is this factsheet about?

This factsheet explains the different types of domestic violence that can occur and how to get help for yourself or someone you know.

[Please remember...](#)

Nobody should have to experience domestic violence, **IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT.**

Different types of domestic violence

Domestic violence can occur in many different ways. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell if somebody is experiencing domestic violence as there are no obvious signs. We take all forms of domestic violence seriously.

Physical abuse

Physical attacks are the most obvious sign of domestic violence. They don't need to leave visible marks to be damaging. Physically abusive acts can include:

- slapping and punching;
- hair pulling;
- scalding or burning;
- biting;
- strangling;
- throwing and breaking things; and
- the use of weapons such as knives.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is not as obvious as physical abuse, but it can be just as harmful. Emotionally abusive acts can include:

- humiliation;
- constant criticism;
- verbal abuse and name calling;
- being put down in front of others;
- being kept away from family and friends;
- threats against you or others you are close to (e.g. your children or pets);
- destruction of belongings;
- excessive jealousy and possessiveness; and
- control over what you wear or how you look.

Please remember...

Emotional abuse may carry no physical scars but the long term affect can be just as damaging. Please report ANY form of abuse.

Harassment

Harassment can include:

- being watched;
- being followed;
- being pestered;
- unwanted phone calls/texts/emails/letters; and
- being threatened.

Sexual abuse

- Sexual abuse can include:
- rape;
- forced participation in sexual acts you're uncomfortable with;
- indecent phone calls;
- being spoken to in degrading ways; and

- forced prostitution.

Financial abuse

This is where one person deprives another of their financial independence. This includes being kept without money, having to account for what you spend and having to hand over wages, benefits or pension payments.

Forced marriage

A marriage must be entered into with the full and free consent of both people. Everyone involved should feel they have a choice. An arranged marriage is not the same as a forced marriage. In an arranged marriage, the families take the leading role in choosing the marriage partner. The marriage is entered into freely by both people. However, in some cases, one or both people are 'forced' into a marriage that their families want. A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of both people, where pressure or abuse is used.

You might be put under physical pressure (when someone threatens to, or actually does hurt you), or emotional pressure (for example, when someone makes you feel you are bringing shame on the family) to get married. In some cases people may be taken abroad without knowing that they are to be married. When they arrive in the country their passports may be taken by their family to try and stop them from returning home. Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights and a form of domestic violence.

Please remember...

It may sometimes feel that nobody will listen or take you seriously, WE WILL.

What can I do?

Recognising that you are experiencing domestic violence is an important step. What you do then is up to you. Whatever you decide, always put your safety first. Remember you are not alone; there are people who can help.

You will need to think about whether you should leave your current home, or whether you can stay there safely. In an emergency, you should dial 999 (minicom 0800 112 999). Domestic violence is treated very seriously by the police and the courts.

You can contact Your Sanctuary Outreach Service which has a 24 hour helpline 01483 776822 who specialise in working with survivors of domestic violence, and/or visit Surrey Against Domestic Abuse website www.surreyagainstda.info.

Leaving a violent home

If you decide to leave your home, there are a number of options available to find somewhere safe to stay.

Refuges

Refuges are safe houses for people fleeing domestic violence and can be found in all parts of the country. They provide a place of safety at a confidential location and staff can help you find more long term housing. If you are not safe in your own area, you may be asked to go to a refuge in another area. Most refuges are for women and unfortunately there are very few refuges for men. There is other help available to ensure that you can find a safe place to stay.

If you are fleeing domestic violence we can help you directly and will be able to give you confidential advice and help arrange a safe place for you to stay. If you do not want to talk to the council about what's happening, you can arrange a place to stay in a refuge yourself by phoning the 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247 (freephone).

Help from the Council's Housing Department

It doesn't matter if you live in a council or housing association home, if you rent privately, or you own your home; you still have the same rights to emergency accommodation.

Our priority will always be your safety. We have a duty under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002, to offer advice and assistance to anyone fleeing domestic violence. You can seek assistance from any local authority in the UK if you are fleeing domestic violence. If you feel you will be in further danger by staying in the borough you are living in, you can move to another.

How to contact us:

Housing Advice Team 01932 425831 or 'drop in' to see the duty housing needs officer

What will you do when I come to see you?

- We will respect and believe you.
- We will not judge you.
- We will offer you the option to speak to a female or male worker if you wish.
- We will take you to a private room to discuss your case.

What happens to me if it is not safe to go back home?

We will work with you to find a safe option. We will not ask you to return home or ask you to find somewhere else to stay by yourself.

The type of help we can offer you will depend on your immigration status. Your options may be limited if you cannot access public funds.

Stopping the violence

Safety for children

Many people experiencing domestic violence wrongly believe that if they tell anyone about the violence, social services will take their children into care. Social services make sure all children and young people are safe.

Domestic violence does have an impact on children even if they don't witness it directly. Social services can provide support and advice about what you can do to keep both you and your children safe.

If you fear your partner will abduct your child or children, get advice as soon as possible. Your local domestic violence outreach services, Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau or a solicitor can advise you on how to protect your child and how contact between your child and a violent partner can be restricted or supervised.

Report the violence to the police

The police take domestic violence very seriously and have specially trained officers to deal with this area of crime.

Contact your local police station if you want to report domestic violence. They investigate all domestic violence incidents and can advise you on police action and other options that can be taken to protect you.

Please remember...

If you are in danger **DIAL 999**

Staying in your home

You don't have to lose your home if you have experienced domestic violence. Think carefully when making any decisions, always put safety first. There are things you can do to legally exclude a perpetrator of domestic violence from your home, and to make your home safer, but these cannot totally guarantee your safety. Get advice if you think it might be safer to leave.

Getting the perpetrator out

Your Sanctuary Domestic Violence Outreach Service can offer advice and assistance on how to get an injunction, called an Occupation Order, which is

issued by the courts to stop the abuser living in the house. We can also provide you with information on how to access the Runnymede Sanctuary Project, where you can have your home secured to stop the abuser getting in.

Legal action

Under the Family Law Act 1996, you can apply for an order that will protect you from threats and/or actual violence and abuse (a Non-molestation Order) an order that will dictate the occupation of your family home (an Occupation Order). The courts can consider removing your abuser from the home.

Runnymede Sanctuary Project

The Runnymede Sanctuary Project offers a variety of security measures if you are a survivor of domestic violence and want to stay in your own home.

If you decide that additional security would benefit you, we will arrange for a Crime Reduction Advisor (CRA) to visit you to carry out an assessment and see what security equipment would help you stay safely in your home.

Runnymede will cover reasonable costs following the CRAs assessment for private renting and homeowners as well as tenants of Runnymede Borough Council. If you are a Housing Association tenant we will refer you to your landlord, although it will be at their discretion to pay for the security measures.

Financial options for survivors

One of the reasons why survivors of domestic violence stay with abusers is a lack of money and believing there are no other financial options available. Having some income is essential for survivors to successfully make the break from abusers. Some welfare benefits which may be available:

It is sometimes possible to claim (dual) Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit) on two separate properties for a limited time. This may be an option if you're already claiming housing benefit on a property which you then have to flee due to domestic violence.

If you are staying in temporary accommodation (for example you may be staying in a refuge until you can secure an injunction to get your violent partner to leave and/or stay away from the property), you may be entitled to claim housing benefit for your permanent and temporary accommodation.

A survivor may be entitled to claim housing benefit for both permanent and temporary accommodation for four weeks which can be extended to 12 months.

The information included in this section does not cover all the benefits that you can claim and is only meant as an introduction.

- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Child and Working Tax Credit
- Child Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance
- Social Fund
- Budgeting Loans
- Crisis Loans
- Community Care Grants

Useful numbers

There are lots of agencies to help people experiencing domestic violence and provide confidential advice and support:

Asian Family Counselling Service

Tel: 020 8571 3933 / 020 8813 9714

Broken Rainbow

A helpline offering advice to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survivors of domestic violence.

Tel: 08452 60 44 60

Email: mail@brokenrainbow.org.uk

Forced Marriage Unit

The Force Marriage Unit offers confidential support and information to help people who are being forced into marriage.

Tel: 020 7008 0151

Emergency out of office hour's telephone: 020 7008 0151

Email: fmu@fco.gov.uk

Let's Talk Programme

Free therapeutic group programme for children and mothers affected by domestic violence. The programme runs groups for children to help them process their experiences and begin the healing process; and groups for mothers to help them understand how to communicate with their children.

Tel: 020 8583 4156

Mens Advice Line

The Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline for men who experience domestic violence from their partners or ex-partners.

Open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm. You can leave a message when the lines are closed or busy and they will get back to you as soon as they can.

Tel: 0808 801 0327 (freephone)

Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline

A helpline for anyone experiencing domestic violence.
24 hour telephone: 0808 2000 247 (freephone)

www.refuge.org.uk

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

Tel: 0808 800 500

Childline: 0800 1111

Shelter – Housing Advice Line

Tel: 0808 800 4444

Victim Support Line

Gives free and confidential support to help you deal with your experiences as a victim or witness of crime, whether or not you report the crime to the police.

Tel: 0808 1689 111