

# Factsheet

## Domestic Abuse and Homelessness

This factsheet provides information about how to get help if you need support regarding domestic abuse, and the housing options available to you.

### What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse (DA) can take the form of physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or financial abuse in an intimate or family type relationship. It includes stalking and harassment, forced marriage, so-called 'honour' crimes and female genital mutilation.

DA can happen to anybody regardless of age, disability, gender identity, race, religion, belief, or sexual orientation. DA affects children too. They may hear, witness or experience abuse themselves. Rarely a one-off incident, DA can take the form a pattern of coercive, controlling behaviour that may start gradually and get worse over time.

If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable with happening to you or something that has happened in the past support is available.

Abusive behaviour is a choice made by the perpetrator. **It is never your fault.**

### Keeping Safe

There are steps you can take to help to try to keep you (and your children) safe:

- If you are in immediate danger and cannot leave the property, try to block yourself in the safest room and call 999.
- Teach your children when to call 999, what to do, and how to give their address.
- Keep your phone close and fully charged and put important numbers on speed dial. Think about which friends/family you may be able to turn to.
- Tell someone you trust about the situation. Ask them to keep an eye on you. You may want to decide on a safe word or phrase you can use, or text to let them know you are not ok. Agree what they will do if you use the safe word (e.g., call the police).
- Plan what to do in an emergency and if you are planning to leave, ask for help and support to consider how to do it in the safest way possible.
- Ask neighbours to call 999 if they hear a disturbance.
- Keep copies of important documents, along with some emergency money, any medication and a packed bag for emergencies, in a safe place or with a trusted friend or family member.
- Keep an itemised record of unwanted contact and how it made you feel. **Only do this if you have a safe place to store it.**

### Is Domestic Abuse impacting upon your housing?

If you are a council tenant and need to flee your home, contact Lewes District Council on 01273 471600 or Eastbourne Borough Council on 01323 410000 (Option 9) and ask to speak to your Housing Officer who will be able to support and advise you on matters relating to your tenancy. If you are privately renting or own your own property, please call the same numbers above (Option 7) and ask to speak to the Housing Options and Wellbeing Team. An officer can talk to you about your housing needs and may be able to assist you to find alternative accommodation if appropriate. Please also use the numbers above if contacting us outside of normal office hours

(Monday to Friday: 8.30am until 5pm) If you would prefer to communicate with a member of staff of a particular gender – please make this known at the earliest opportunity and we will do our best to accommodate this.

An officer will speak with you to advise you of your options. These options can vary depending upon what is safe and appropriate for your needs. Advice will be given to allow you to explore options if you would like to stay in your property. Options may include measures to secure your current home, legal remedies such as court orders or advice around searching for new accommodation. We may also suggest that you seek independent legal advice from a solicitor or from housing advice services such as [Brighton Housing Trust](#).

If you do not have anywhere safe to stay or are in any doubt about what to do, we can advise you of your options which may include securing a space in Refuge, or if this is not possible, determining whether your circumstances mean we are able to offer you emergency accommodation.

## **Support to stay in your current home**

### **Making your home safer to live in:**

#### **Sanctuary Schemes**

Where it is safe to stay in your home, assistance can be provided. This assistance can include help with safety measures such as extra window or door locks, and other external security measures including cameras or security gates. This is unlikely to be considered suitable if the perpetrator remains within your home, although if you are applying for a court order to remove them, this could be considered. If you are a private tenant, we will need the landlord's permission to carry out any works.

#### **Current Tenancy**

Please speak with the Housing Solutions team and consider taking independent legal advice before you make any decision around what to do with your current tenancy. If possible, consider talking to your landlord about the situation in case there is anything they can do to help. They may have alternative accommodation they can offer you or be able to assist with making your current accommodation safer.

There are several options that can be considered, and we can discuss these in further detail with you.

These options can vary depending on what type of tenancy you have, who owns the property, who is named on the tenancy, who the landlord is and whether you are married.

### **Further information can be found at:**

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/domestic-violence-support/>