



# Domestic Violence in the South and Vale

for the South Oxfordshire &  
Vale of White Horse Districts



Listening Learning Leading

[www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk)



[www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

# What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic Abuse is a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour. Your partner, ex-partner or family member may want to control every aspect of your life from where you go, to who you see and what you spend. It can affect all types of gender, age, religious belief, sexual orientation, race and disability.

The Government defines domestic violence as

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”

This includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as so called ‘honour based violence’, ‘female genital mutilation’, and ‘forced marriage’.

An adult is defined as any person aged 18 years or over. Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in laws or stepfamily.

The definition of domestic violence now includes young people under 18

# What can I do?

## First steps:

If you think you are in an abusive relationship, there are 3 important steps you can take that will help you break the chain:

- 1) Recognise that it is happening to you
- 2) Accept that you are not to blame
- 3) Get help and support.

# Where can I go to talk about my situation

There are numerous organisations that you can contact to talk about your situation. They can provide you with comprehensive advice so that you are better able to make an informed choice about what course of action is most appropriate to your circumstances. This decision to take action and what action to take, is yours and no-one else should make it for you.

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse helpline (ODAS) offers free emotional and practical support to victims suffering or fleeing domestic abuse. ODAS can be contacted on 0800 731 0055. Contact with ODAS is free, confidential and can be accessed by all women, with or without children, regardless of sexuality, ethnicity and immigration status. Men experiencing can contact and will be referred to the relevant helpline.

**Remember – in an emergency contact the police by dialling 999 for assistance**

# What legal remedies are available to me?

There are legal remedies available to assist you and provide protection. If you wish to discuss legal protection for yourself (and your children) you should contact a solicitor or your local Citizen's Advice Bureau. The Citizen's Advice Bureau has access to the Law Society's 'Solicitors Regional Directory', which lists solicitors who specialise in matrimonial/family work. You may also be able to access this directory at your local library.

## How can I remain in my home?

There may be various remedies to enable you to remain or return to your home.

These remedies include

- Injunctions / orders
- Removal of the perpetrator where they are not the tenant of the property
- Security/Sanctuary measures
- Alarms/Mobile phone

For further information regarding these remedies, please contact ODAS on 0800 731 0055.

If you own your home, it may be worthwhile discussing appropriate options available to you with a solicitor.

# Will the Council help me if I leave my home due to domestic violence?

If you are affected by domestic abuse or are genuinely at risk in your home, please contact a Housing Needs Officer at South and Vale District Councils. Your query will be handled sympathetically and confidentially. You will be asked questions about your circumstances to ensure you receive advice and assistance appropriate to your individual situation.

The Council will not contact the perpetrator as part of its enquiries and you are not under any obligation to pursue any assistance you may be offered.

You can approach any local authority in England and Wales for assistance if you are at risk in the area you are living. The local authority to which you present may have a duty to ensure that alternative accommodation is available on a temporary basis, in a place where you and your household are not at risk.

There are various options available to you:

## 1) **Staying with family or friends**

- This may be a safe option for you but it is often only a short term solution.
- If you decide to take this option and you are renting your home from a social landlord (council or housing association) you should inform them that you are unable to stay in your home
- **DO NOT** give up your tenancy until you have found alternative permanent accommodation or have taken specialist legal advice

## 2) **Going to a Women's Refuge**

- Refuges are houses which provide safe temporary accommodation in a secure and supportive environment for women and children escaping domestic abuse.
- The specialist support workers will be able to give advice on matters such as benefits, legal issues and accommodation options.
- They will also be able to support and help you access other services such as support groups and counselling which will help you talk about your experience should you wish to and help you through the situation.
- Refuge addresses are confidential to ensure the safety of the women and children. Refuges accept women with or without children who have experienced domestic abuse.

### **3) Moving to Private Rented accommodation**

- The Council's have options available to help people access the private rented sector. These include help with deposits and sometimes help with the rent in advance.
- Property locations will be assessed as to the suitability and therefore it is likely that an offer of private rented accommodation may not be in the area that you have fled.
- Security measures can be put in place to help you feel safe in your new accommodation.

### **4) Moving to Social Housing (Housing Association) properties**

If you are not already a secure, assured or introductory tenant of a local housing authority or registered social landlord, you may be entitled to join the Housing Register. If you are a secure, assured or introductory tenant of a local housing authority or registered social landlord, you may also be entitled to join the Housing Register for a transfer. For more information concerning these housing options please contact the Housing Needs Team on 01235 520202.

You may also be eligible to apply to join waiting lists for accommodation in other areas, and we would recommend that you contact your local housing authorities for the particular areas you may be interested in moving to directly, for further advice.

You may also wish to consider seeking alternative accommodation in the private sector. For further information about accessing accommodation in the private sector, please contact the Housing Needs Team on 01235 520202

Both Councils operate Choice Based Lettings schemes. To apply online please go to [www.southoxfordshirehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.southoxfordshirehomechoice.org.uk) or [www.whitehorsehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.whitehorsehomechoice.org.uk) depending where your connection lies.

This is not a 'quick fix' to a housing problem and it could be a long time before you make a successful bid.

## What happens if I am Homeless and have nowhere to go?

Section 177 (1) of the Housing Act 1996, Part VII (as amended), states that *'it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to domestic violence against him/her, or against a person who normally resides with him/her as a member of his/her family or, against any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him/her'*.

If you, or a member of your family, are affected by domestic abuse, the Council may have a duty to assist you under homelessness legislation (Housing Act 1996, Part VII as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

If the Council considers that you are eligible for assistance, homeless and in priority need, it may have a duty to ensure that temporary accommodation is available to you, in a place where you are no longer at risk of violence. This accommodation could be out of the area to ensure your safety.

Dependent upon your circumstances, family make-up, and where possible your preference, the accommodation you are offered may be in refuge.

If you are affected by domestic abuse or are genuinely at risk in your home, please contact a Housing Needs Officer at South and Vale District Councils. Your query will be handled sympathetically and confidentially. You will be asked questions

about your circumstances to ensure you receive advice and assistance appropriate to your individual situation.

The Council will not contact the perpetrator as part of its enquiries and you are not under any obligation to pursue any assistance you may be offered.

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## I am in receipt of Housing Benefit – If I leave my accommodation temporarily, how will I afford to pay rent elsewhere?

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit, you may be able to claim Housing Benefit on the property you have left, *in addition to accommodation to which you have fled*. For further advice regarding Housing Benefit entitlements, please contact South and Vale District Council's Housing Benefit team on 0345 302 2315 (Vale) 0345 302 2313 (South).



# Useful contacts

Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service  
0800 731 0055 Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

National Helpline (24hrs)  
0808 2000 247

Police (non emergency)  
101

Police (emergency)  
999

Victim Support  
0808 168 9111

Kiran Asian Women's Aid  
0208 558 1986

Men's Advice Line  
0808 801 0327

Broken Rainbow (LGBT)  
0300 999 5428

Elder Abuse  
0808 808 8141

Childline  
0800 1111

## Legal Support

Community Legal Services Direct  
0845 345 4 345 [www.clsdirect.org.uk](http://www.clsdirect.org.uk)

Rights of Women  
020 7251 6577 [www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)

National Centre for Domestic Violence  
0844 8044 999 [www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)



# Contact us today

Housing Team – 01235 422422

South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils  
135 Eastern Avenue  
Milton Park  
Abingdon  
OX14 4SB

Our office hours are 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on a Friday

## Our Service Promise

All e-mails will receive a response within 1 working day



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