



Domestic abuse and the risk of homelessness

for the South Oxfordshire &
Vale of White Horse Districts



Listening Learning Leading



www.southoxon.gov.uk www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk



What is domestic abuse?

The Government defines domestic abuse 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 also includes issues such as 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 abuse now includes young people under 18.

If you think you are in an abusive relationship, there are three 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 to get help

There are many organisations which can give you help and support about what you do next (please see details at the bottom of this leaflet).

One is the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse helpline (ODAS) which offers free emotional and practical support to victims suffering domestic abuse. ODAS can be contacted on 0800 731 0055. Contact with ODAS is free,



Listening Learning Leading



www.southoxon.gov.uk www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk



confidential and can be accessed by all women. Men experiencing domestic abuse will be referred to a relevant helpline.

In an emergency contact the police by calling 999

Can I get help to stay in my home?

If you wish to discuss legal protection for yourself (and your children) you should contact a solicitor or your local Citizens Advice Bureau (www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Citizens Advice 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.

Options include:

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

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 abuse?

If you are affected by domestic abuse or are genuinely at risk in your home, please contact us on 01235 422452. We will handle your query sympathetically and confidentially. We will ask questions about your





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

We will not contact the perpetrator as part of our enquiries and you are not under any obligation to pursue any assistance you are offered.

What if I am homeless and have nowhere to go?

Contact us on 01235 422452 and we will provide advice on how to find somewhere to live and we will also create a housing plan of all options available to you. We will be able to discuss whether you would be entitled to emergency accommodation. If we have a legal duty to help you find accommodation 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.

We will explore various options with you through a housing plan, including:

Staying with family or friends

- This may be a safe option for you but is often only a short-term solution.
- If you decide to take this option and you are renting your home from a 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.

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 help you access other services such as support groups and counselling.
- Refuge addresses are confidential to ensure the safety of the women and children.

Moving to private rented accommodation

- We 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 their suitability and may not be in the area that you have lived previously.
- Security measures can be put in place to help you feel safe in your new home.

Moving to Social Housing (Housing Association) properties

- Whether or not you are already a tenant of a local housing authority or a registered social housing landlord, you may be eligible to apply for properties on the Housing Register. For more information please contact us on 01235 422452.
- You may also be eligible to apply to join waiting lists for accommodation in other areas.
- We operate Choice Based Lettings schemes for which we provide a list of available accommodation. To apply online please go to www.southoxfordshirehomechoice.org.uk or www.whitehorsehomechoice.org.uk.

Applying to the housing register is not a 'quick fix' to a housing problem and it could be a long time before you can move to a new home.



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 or someone in your family. You can tell a teacher, a neighbour, a friend or a friend's parent.
- You can call [Childline](https://www.childline.gov.uk) 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](https://www.thehideout.org.uk) about children and young people and domestic abuse and violence.
- If you need more help call the Shelter advice line on 0808 800 4444.

Help finding accommodation from social services

You may be entitled to this 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

Find details of help available via this website <https://socialcareinfo.net/>

What if you get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit?

How can you pay rent on a new home if you currently receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit for the place you are trying to leave?



- You may be able to continue your claim on the property you have left, (in addition to a claim on the accommodation to which you have just moved)
- 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)
- You should also speak to your Job Centre Coach regarding your benefits claims

Our contact details

Housing Team – 01235 422452
housing@southandvale.gov.uk

Online assistance

You can receive online housing assistance, tailored to your circumstances, by completing our self-help housing options tool:

Vale of White Horse District Council:
<http://www.whitehorsehomechoice.org.uk/>

South Oxfordshire District Council:
<https://www.southoxfordshirehomechoice.org.uk/>

You may also be asked to complete the online assessment to help our team ensure you receive the best housing advice available.

Our service promise – all emails will receive a response within one working day





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

Our office hours are 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on a Friday

Useful contacts

Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service 0800 731 0055

www.reducingrisk.org.uk

Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

National Helpline (24hrs) 0808 2000 247

Police (non emergency) 101 (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) 0800 999 5428

Elder Abuse 0808 808 8141

Childline 0800 1111

Shelter 0808 800 4444.

Samaritans 08457 909090





Legal Support

Community Legal Services Direct
0845 345 4 345 www.clsdirect.org.uk

Rights of Women
020 7251 6577 www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

National Centre for Domestic Violence
0844 8044 999 www.ncdv.org.uk

