



Help for you if you are an suffering DOMESTIC ABUSE

What is this factsheet about?

This factsheet is for people suffering domestic abuse, who need housing advice in Merton.

If you are in fear of a partner, ex-partner or member of your family, you might be experiencing domestic abuse. For example, 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?

Helplines & support organisations

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 police on 101** (if it is not an emergency) or **999** in an emergency, if your personal safety is threatened.

The **Women's Aid** directory of local services is at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory>

Help to stay in your home

If you feel that you want to stay in your home, you can get legal advice about obtaining an injunction. An injunction is a court order that either:

-) protects you or your child from being harmed or threatened by the person who's abused you (this is called a 'non-molestation order'), or
-) decides who can live in the family home or enter the surrounding area - this is called an 'occupation order'.

You could obtain an occupation order even if you do not own any interest in the property you have been living in, or you are not a tenant.

If your income is low, you could get 'legal aid' to help with the legal costs.

If you are frightened that your ex will break the terms of the injunction, despite the risk of being arrested, you might want to consider a '**Sanctuary Scheme**'. You could get a number of extra security measures installed at your address. If you would like to explore this option, you can obtain further advice from the Housing Options Team on 0208 545 3636.

Moving to a safe place

Make sure you plan your departure safely. Call the Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run by **Refuge and Women's Aid** on 0808 2000 247, they can help you talk through your options. The helpline acts as the gateway to all services across the country and helps women find a space in a refuge.

If don't have any friends or relatives or other accommodation that you can stay in safely, there are specialist refuges all over the UK. Refuges are not just emergency accommodation – you will be supported to rebuild your life.

If you have decided to leave home, 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. Do not make a decision to give up your home permanently until you have obtained advice about your rights from a solicitor, the Council's Housing Options Service, Citizen's Advice Bureau or other advice agency.

Applying as a homeless person

You can apply to a local housing authority as a homeless person. If you are an eligible person and can show that you have nowhere that you can safely remain in or return to, the council will work with you to help you find somewhere else to live. If they consider you are in priority need, they will find you temporary accommodation in a safe area, in the meantime. You will be in priority need if you have children or are pregnant. You may also be in priority need if the domestic abuse you have suffered has made you particularly vulnerable.

The council will work with you to develop a 'Personalised Housing Plan'. This will outline the steps that both you and the council should take to find you more settled housing in a safe place.

This work will go on for a period of 56 days, or until you secure a new home. If they are unable to help you find a home during this 'relief period', and you are in priority need (and have co-operated with the council), they may then make you a direct offer of housing.

If you need to contact us

Visit:

Housing Options
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

Email to: housingadvice@merton.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8545 3636