

# **Homelessness guide for people experiencing domestic abuse**

**Havant**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Public Service Plaza, Civic Centre Road,  
Havant, PO9 2AX

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, in all kinds of relationships regardless of ethnicity, religion, culture, age, sexuality, disability or gender and can have serious consequences for individuals and families affected.

Domestic abuse is defined by the government as “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.” This can include but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological and emotional
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- verbal
- stalking and harassment

There are other organisations that you may also wish to contact for advice and support. We have listed some of these contacts at the end of this leaflet. These services can provide you with comprehensive and confidential advice so that you are better able to make an informed choice about what course of action is most appropriate to your circumstances.

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

If you are affected by domestic abuse and feel unsafe in your home, please do not hesitate to contact Havant Borough Council’s Housing Services team. We will work with you in a sympathetic and confidential manner.

We will need to ask you 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 our enquiries and you are not under any obligation to pursue any assistance you may be offered.

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. If the council considers that you are eligible for assistance it may have a duty to ensure that temporary accommodation is made 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 and dependent upon your circumstances, family make-up, and where possible your preference, the accommodation you are offered may be a short-term refuge placement which can provide you with dedicated support and assistance.

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.

### **If you are likely to become homeless**

If you are likely to become homeless, the council has a prevention duty which arises if the council is satisfied that you are eligible and at risk of losing your accommodation within 56 days.

In these circumstances, housing advice should be sought at the earliest opportunity to allow you time to work with the council to prevent your homelessness.

The prevention duty comes to an end in a number of ways, but mainly if you have suitable accommodation open to you for at least six months. If you are unable to prevent your homelessness, you will be owed the relief duty.

### **If you are homeless**

If you are homeless the council has a relief duty which arises if the council is satisfied that you are eligible for assistance and homeless. Again we would advise that housing advice should be sought at the earliest opportunity to allow you time to work with the council to help resolve your homelessness.

The relief duty lasts for up to 56 days and it is not always the council's duty to provide you with accommodation. However, the council will give you advice to help you to secure accommodation.

This duty comes to an end in a number of ways, but mainly if you have suitable accommodation open to you for at least six months.

### **What happens when you approach the council?**

The council will carry out a Housing Needs Assessment with you if you are eligible for assistance, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Your housing officer will create a Personalised Housing Plan with you and discuss your support needs to understand your specific circumstances.

It is important to establish why you are at risk of homelessness or homeless and how you can resolve your housing situation. Your Personalised Housing Plan will record the agreed steps you and the council will take to assist you to prevent your homelessness or to find suitable accommodation.

If you do not agree with the actions within your Personalised Housing Plan, the council will put in writing why the actions could not be agreed and what steps the council thinks would be reasonable for you to take.

If the council considers that you are deliberately and unreasonably refusing to cooperate with the actions in your personalised housing plan, you will be issued a notice which ends the council's duties.

## **Priority need**

The law is very specific. Being without a home is not sufficient to grant you priority need status. If you are vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, learning disability or physical disability or other special reason, then the council must investigate and decide if you are granted priority need status. The council will also assess your circumstances under the other priority need categories set out in law.

## **Local connection**

The council will also investigate whether you have a local connection to the borough. In order to have a local connection to the borough you must:

- Normally reside within the Havant Borough Council boundaries and have done so for six of the last 12 months or three of the last five years or,
- Have full-time, permanent employment within the borough boundaries or,
- Have close family members resident in the borough or,
- Have other special circumstances that exist

If you do not have a local connection with the Havant Borough Council, but do with another area, you may be referred there, provided you are not at risk of violence in that area.

## **What help can I get to enable me to remain in my own home?**

By taking action to protect yourself, you will also be taking steps towards ensuring that you are able to stay in your own home. Injunctions and security measures will help ensure your home becomes a safer place to be. There are also legal powers that can be used to let you return to your property if you have been forced out. These options apply whether you are a tenant of a local housing authority or registered social landlord such as a housing association, or if you own your own home or are renting in the private sector.

The Housing Services team will be able to offer advice and information about how to access the above remedies and will also be able to make appropriate referrals to agencies that can offer support. You can speak to the Housing services team whether you are a tenant, a homeowner or living with family or friends. You may also wish to discuss the options available to you with a solicitor.

## **What options are available to assist me to pursue alternative accommodation on a longer-term basis where I will no longer be at risk?**

Whether you have had to move to temporary accommodation or are able to safely remain in your own home, you may wish to consider what housing options are available to you in the longer term and the Housing Services team will be able to assist you to explore your options.

If you are not already a secure, assured or introductory tenant of a local housing authority or registered provider, you may be entitled to join the Hampshire Home Choice housing register. If you are a secure, assured or introductory tenant of a local

authority or registered provider you can also apply to join Hampshire Home Choice for a transfer. For more information concerning these housing options please contact the Housing services team within the Housing Service on telephone number 023 9244 6379 or apply online at [www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk).

You may also be eligible to apply to join waiting lists for accommodation in other areas, and we would recommend that you contact local housing authorities for the particular areas you may be interested in moving to directly, for further advice and assistance. We will be able to help you with this if you need assistance, and can help you find out more information about local qualifying criteria.

You may also wish to consider seeking alternative accommodation in the private rented sector. The Housing Services team will be able to offer advice and information about how you can access accommodation in the private sector.

You may also be interested in exploring the options available to you for affordable home ownership. The Housing Services team has information available on these options and can offer advice on the current schemes available. You can also find out more information through Help to Buy South, by visiting their website at [www.helptobuysouth.co.uk](http://www.helptobuysouth.co.uk)

### **Further advice and other support services**

- Stop Domestic Abuse (Helpline: 0330 016 5112)
- Blue Lamp Trust Bobby Scheme (Phone: 0300 777 0157 Email: [info@bluelamptrust.org.uk](mailto:info@bluelamptrust.org.uk))
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline - 24 hours women only (Phone: 0808 2000 247)  
[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)
- Women's Aid (Phone: 0117 944 44 11 Email: [info@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:info@womensaid.org.uk))  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- Mankind Initiative - Support for male victims of domestic abuse (Phone: 01823 334244)  
[www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)
- Men's Advice Line (Phone: 0808 801 0327 Email: [info@mensadviceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadviceline.org.uk))  
[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)
- National LGBT Domestic Abuse helpline

Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender victims of domestic abuse (Phone: 0300 999 5428)

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

- National Centre for Domestic Violence

This is a fast, free emergency injunction service which allows anyone to apply for an injunction within 24 hours if there has been a recent violent incident or threat of violence

Freephone: 0800 970 2070

[www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)

0844 8044 (24 hour emergency helpline)

Text NCDV to 60777

- Respect - help for offenders / practitioners advice (Phone: 0808 802 4040 Email: [info@respectphoneline.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphoneline.org.uk))

[www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

### **Housing Services contact details**

Address: The Public Service Plaza, Civic Centre Road, Havant, Hampshire, PO9 2AX

Tel: 023 9244 6379

Email: [housingservices2@havant.gov.uk](mailto:housingservices2@havant.gov.uk)

Web: [www.havant.gov.uk](http://www.havant.gov.uk)