

All contact with us is strictly confidential. If we are contacted by individuals or other organisations enquiring about your circumstances, details will never be given out without your permission.

Useful contacts

Citizens Advice Bureau
Tel: 0844 826 9685
www.herefordshirecab.org.uk

Herefordshire Women's Aid
Telephone 01432 356146
or 0800 783 1359
Info@westmerciawomensaid.org

National Domestic Violence
Helpline
Tel: 0808 2000 247

Hereford Night Shelter
(Male only)
Tel: 01432 276097

Victim Support
Tel: 01432 347208

West Mercia Police
Tel: 0300 333 3000

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call 01432 260500 or e-mail info@herefordshire.gov.uk

Domestic Abuse and Housing

Please be aware that this leaflet contains basic information only and is no substitute for seeking individual advice. Domestic abuse is a general term used to describe a range of behaviour often used by one person to control and dominate another with whom they are in a close relationship. Domestic violence almost always happens in private.



Does your partner or anyone else in your family:

- Threaten to hurt you, your family or pets?
- Abusive, tell you that you are worthless?
- Intimidate you emotionally or physically?
- Denying you access to money?
- Force you to have sex when you don't want to?
- Throw things, pull your hair, threaten you with weapons?

These are all acts of domestic abuse.

You are not responsible for the violence. There are organisations waiting to help.

This leaflet will explain your housing options, and we have listed some other organisations who could help, at the end of this leaflet. If you are living with or have a relationship with a person who is violent you may have to leave the home, at least temporarily, in order to protect yourself and your children.

Where can I go?

If it is safe to do so, you may be able to stay with friends or relatives whilst you find permanent accommodation.

If you are female, you and your children may wish to contact the Women's Refuge, run by Herefordshire Women's Aid. The refuge is able to offer confidential counselling and information over the phone, and if necessary provide emergency accommodation, day or night, 7 days a week.

The refuge address is kept secret to protect the women who stay there and the refuge workers are able to

offer support and advice on claiming benefits or arranging a solicitor. You will also be able to meet and talk to other women who share similar experiences.

If you need to speak to an advisor at **Herefordshire Women's Aid** during office hours call **01432 356146**

Or you can call the free 24-hour help-line on **0800 783 1359**

If you are male, you may wish to stay at the Hereford night shelter. The night shelter may be able to provide emergency overnight accommodation, where a room is available, and has staff who are able to offer advice and assistance on issues such as benefits and finding alternative accommodation.

You can contact the Night Shelter by calling **01432 276097**

How can the housing advice and options service help me?

If you are unable to stay with friends, or do not want to contact the refuge or night shelter, you can contact herefordshire housing advice and options service

The housing advice and options service

Tel: 01432 261600

Fax: 01432 26 1591

Email: housing.enquiry@herefordshire.gov.uk

The Out of Hours number is: 01432 26 0000

The advice officers will be able to provide you with general advice on the laws affecting your housing rights and your right to make a homelessness application. They may be able to sort out emergency accommodation for you while you consider the options available.

Remaining in your own home

There are measures that can be taken to ensure that you can stay at home if you are at risk of violence or abuse of somebody that does not or no longer lives at your home.

The housing advice and options service can offer you help to remain at home with the Sanctuary Scheme, this scheme will make your property as safe as possible. Please feel free to discuss this scheme with us.

Legal Advice from a Solicitor:

If you feel that it should be your partner, rather than yourself, who should leave the home, you should consult a solicitor and get legal advice. You may be able to claim Legal Aid to help with the costs.

A list of solicitors should be available from your local Citizens Advice Bureau. Telephone 0844 826 9685

Your solicitor will advise you that it may be possible to get a Court Order, known as an Injunction, against the person behind the domestic abuse.

An Injunction can do a number of things. It can order the violent person:

- Not to assault or harass you (a Non-Molestation Order)
- Not to assault any children living with you
- To leave the house
- To keep a certain distance away from your home or any other place where you go regularly, such as where you work
- To let you back into your home if you have been forced out

If the violent person breaks the Injunction, they are in contempt of court and can be brought back to face a judge who can vary the Order to make it more effective or even sentence the person to a term in prison. If you are assaulted or

threatened, you should always call the police and they will be able to assist you.

West Mercia Police have a dedicated Domestic Abuse Team.

If the person who is being violent against you is living with you as your partner, it may be possible to reach a voluntary agreement where they leave and agree to you having sole tenancy or ownership of the property. If this is not possible, it may be necessary to go to Court and ask the judge to award the home to you and your children. A solicitor and the housing advice and options service will be able to give you further advice.

What will happen if I leave my home?

Under the Housing Act 1996, local authorities, such as Herefordshire Council, have a duty to provide advice, assistance and temporary accommodation, where necessary, to anybody who is at risk of, or has suffered, domestic abuse, however due to the shortage of temporary accommodation available and the potential risk to yourself and your children you may have to be accommodated in a Women's Refuge outside Herefordshire.

The housing advice and options service will be able to provide you with confidential advice and assistance on behalf of the council, and will talk through the options with you. Under homelessness legislation, a person must do everything within reason to keep their home.

Where possible, you should not voluntarily give up the rights to your home as it could affect your homelessness application. Talk to the housing advice and options service and get advice straight away. Always bear in mind that you will never be expected to stay in your home if it is not safe for you to do so.