



Swale
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Are you suffering
Domestic Abuse and
worried about your
Housing Situation?**



Housing Services Advice

How can Swale Borough Council help?

- Advice and help with security via our “Keepsafe” scheme.
- General Housing and Tenancy advice.
- Advice and assistance if you need help to move, using our Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Information on what support and assistance other organisations can offer and help with contacting them.
- Benefits advice.
- Support in taking legal action where appropriate.
- “One Stop Shop”. You can visit ‘Phoenix House’ (Central Avenue, Sittingbourne) any Tuesday between 9.30am and 11am and obtain advice from a range of agencies including:
 - Housing
 - CAB
 - Victim Support
 - Legal
 - Benefits

You;

- do not have to show proof of violence or abuse.
- can ask for someone to translate for you.

We;

- will not give any of your details out or contact any other agency without your consent, except where children are considered to be at risk.
- will offer advice and support, but YOU must decide what is best for you.

Emergency Rehousing

If you have been attacked, threatened or are in fear of your own, or your children's, safety and feel that you cannot stay or return home, then you can take the following action;

During office hours;

- Call Swale Borough Council's Housing Options Team on 01795 417511 to arrange emergency temporary accommodation. We are open 8.45am to 5pm Monday-Thursday and 8.45am to 4.30pm on Friday.

Outside office hours;

- Contact the Out of Hours Team on 01795 428547, who will arrange emergency temporary accommodation, or
- Contact The Dove Project on 01702 302333 to find a refuge space.

REMEMBER - Domestic Abuse is much more common than many of us realise

- 1 in 4 women experience Domestic Abuse at some time.
- It happens in all walks of life, to women and men of all ages and from all ethnic backgrounds.
- There is no excuse for Domestic Abuse.

What can I do if I want to leave my home?

Come into Swale Borough Council's Housing Advice Desk, which is located in the reception area of Swale House, (East Street, Sittingbourne), or contact the Housing Options Team on 01795 417511.

We provide a confidential service and ensure anyone suffering Domestic Abuse gets the advice and support they need to enable them to make informed decisions.

We would suggest that, if at all possible, you make an escape plan to ensure that you have made the necessary arrangements before actually leaving. However, while you are making your escape plan it is a good idea to have a safety plan in case you need to leave before you are ready.

Safety Planning

- Keep Benefit books, bankcards, birth certificates and marriage certificates in a safe place. Try and get copies and leave one set with a solicitor or family member/good friend.
- Keep spare clothes in a bag at a friend's home or in a locker at work, etc.
- Keep some money in a safe place i.e. open a new account in your sole name. You should be able to arrange to collect all your correspondence from your local branch. To open an account you will need two forms of identification. This can be a driving licence, passport, etc. You will also need something with your address on it, a recent bill, child benefit book, etc.
- Keep emergency numbers in a safe place. It may not be possible to have these pre-programmed in a mobile phone.
- If you have a car it might be worthwhile leaving a spare set of keys with a family member or friend.

Money

It is a good idea to save some money, even if it is only a small amount to buy those little things you might forget such as toothpaste, or milk for a cup of tea.

Benefits

If you are going to leave and have no work you may be able to claim benefits. You may also be able to claim a Crisis Loan.

If you need financial support, talk to your local jobcentre plus about any state benefits you may be eligible for, and help with childcare costs. You can find details of your local social security office in the phone book and on the website at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Medications

Take essential medication with you. Consider asking your doctor for extra medication, which you may be able to leave with a family member or close friend and collect when you are ready to leave.

Escape Plan

In time you will be able to make your escape plan. Then you will be able to answer these questions.

- ▶ HAVE I FOUND SOMEWHERE TO STAY (EVEN TEMPORARILY)?
- ▶ HAVE I ARRANGED AN INCOME?
- ▶ HAVE I CLOTHES AND MONEY IF I NEED TO LEAVE IN A RUSH?
- ▶ DO I HAVE EVIDENCE TO GO TO COURT IF NEED BE?
- ▶ HAVE I THOUGHT ABOUT SCHOOLING?
- ▶ DO I KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN TO THE CHILDREN?
- ▶ WHEN DO WE GO?

REMEMBER – before leaving take your time to work out all the details if possible

Useful supporting agencies, phone numbers and websites

Women's Support Service; Tel: 01622 761146	Swale Domestic Abuse Line; Tel: 01795 434300
Men's Advice Line; Tel: 0808 801 0327 www.mensadvice.org.uk specifically for men affected by domestic abuse.	Broken Rainbow; Tel: 0300 999 5428 www.broken-rainbow.org.uk supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.
Benefits Advice; Tel: 0800 055 6688 www.swale.gov.uk www.direct.gov.uk	Tax Credits; Tel: 0845 3003900 www.hmrc.gov.uk/Taxcredits
Housing Options; Tel: 01795 417511 www.swale.gov.uk	Rights of Women; Tel: 0207 251 6577 www.rightsofwomen.org.uk
Domestic Violence Unit (Swale Police); Tel: 01795 419314	Swale Police General Telephone no; Tel: 01795 477055
Women's Aid (National Domestic Violence Helpline); Tel: 0808 2000 247 (24 hrs) www.womensaid.org.uk	Samaritans; Tel: 08457 90 90 90 www.samaritans.org
Victim Support; Tel: 0845 38 99 527 Or: 0845 30 30 900 www.victimsupport.org.uk	Dove Project (Refuge spaces); Tel: 01702 302333
Citizens Advice Bureau; Tel: 0844 499 4124 www.cabinswale.org.uk	Citizens Advice Bureau Domestic Abuse Helpline; Tel: 01634 576083

Freedom Programme;

Tel: 07760 428434

This programme is open to any woman who wishes to understand and explore domestic violence and abuse. It is a 12 week programme, once a week for 90 minutes. The programme aims to help women understand the beliefs held by abusive men, to illustrate the effects of domestic violence on children, to help women gain self-esteem and confidence and to increase women's ability to recognise what steps they need to take to protect themselves and their children. All programmes are free. Crèche facilities are available but places must be booked.

One Stop Shop;

The One Stop Shop is held every Tuesday 9:30-11:00am at Phoenix House, Central Avenue, Sittingbourne. Anyone suffering from domestic abuse can speak to people from a range of services face to face to get the right advice and support. The following domestic abuse services are available; legal advice, housing advice, safety advice, and family advice.

Keepsafe;

Tel: 01795 417511

A security check can be carried out on your property in order to identify areas which need improving. Additional measures, including; extra bolts, locks, spy holes and door chains, can be fitted to improve your security and to help you feel safer. Call the number above for further details and to request a referral.

National Centre for Domestic Violence;

www.ncdv.org.uk

Tel: 0844 8044 999

This organisation can be contacted if you need help getting an injunction. It is available to everyone, is free and completely confidential. Injunctions can be obtained within 24 hours.

Neighbourhood Furniture Store;

Tel: 01795 417511

If you require furniture as a result of leaving your home due to domestic abuse, a referral can be made by Swale Borough Council's Housing Options Team to the above organisation; who sell second hand furniture at competitive prices. Call the number above for further details and to request a referral.

Contacting the council

Housing Options Team
Swale Borough Council
Swale House, East Street
Sittingbourne
Kent, ME10 3HT

Phone: 01795 417511

Email: housingoptions@swale.gov.uk

Copies of this document are available
on the council website
www.swale.gov.uk.

If you would like further information,
more copies or alternative versions
(i.e. large print, audio, different
language) we will do our best to
accommodate your request please
contact:

Customer Services,
Phone: 01795 417850
Email: csc@swale.gov.uk