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working together towards a brighter future

The ESDAS Survivor's Handbook

When you're ready, we're here

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working together towards a brighter future

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The Surrey Domestic Abuse Partnership (SDAP) is a group of independent charities **(East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service, South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Service, Your Sanctuary and North Surrey Domestic Abuse Services)** who work together across the whole of Surrey to ensure that survivors of domestic abuse are safe, and to build a future where domestic abuse is not tolerated.

As you live or work within the boroughs of Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge or Mole Valley, you will be supported by East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service (ESDAS).

We are an independent charity, that was founded in 1993. We were created in partnership with survivors and the local community in response to the injustice many adult and child survivors experienced in having to flee their homes to escape abuse and losing their support networks. Many of our staff, volunteers and trustee team are experts by experience and are driven by the belief that abuse is not and should not be accepted as inevitable.

Our service is open to anyone affected by domestic abuse regardless of age, gender, sexuality, religion, mental and physical health. We take a strengths-based, needs-led, trauma-informed approach for supporting survivors to build resilience and foster independence. We offer free, confidential, non-judgmental, impartial and independent service; in which service users are believed, listened to and supported both emotionally and practically. We can provide advice on a wide range of issues including housing, benefits, safety planning and the needs of children affected by domestic abuse, which ensure survivors have the information and advice they need to make informed choices.

The ESDAS Survivor's Handbook also provides general information about your housing rights, civil and criminal law rights and the range of refuge and other domestic abuse services available to you. We would recommend you use this in conjunction with the support offered by your outreach worker as advice will be personalised to your unique situation. It gives you information about how to look after your physical and mental health, and ways you can build self-esteem and confidence. The handbook is full of useful contact details and signposts you to other supporting and helpful organisations. You may need to consider how to use this handbook safely, where it can be stored and how it is accessed, do talk this over with one of our team. The healthy Surrey website is also a great source of resources. Healthy Surrey

ESDAS believes that everyone has a right to live in safety and have a
future without fear. Together we can work together towards a brighter future.

When you're ready, we're here.

What can ESDAS do for me?

We are here to listen and support you. We are a safe place to talk through your experiences, your needs, your rights and your options. We know that no situation is the same and everyone is at different stage in their journey, so wherever you are, we can provide emotional support and if you are not ready to leave your, we can give practical advice around safety within or outside of the home.

- If you are starting to think about how you can leave, we are here to help you plan to leave safely.
- If you have left, we can support your recovery.

We offer a large range of services, if there is something specific that may help you, please ask but here are some of the services we offer:

- Advice and support by phone or email
- Accompanying you to appointments such as court proceedings
- A property security assessment and additional security measures
- Finding refuge spaces, for you and your children
- Counselling
- Emotional and practical support from our trained volunteers
- Mother and Child Groups
- 1-2-1 support for children
- Recovery Support Groups
- Awareness raising and training within business, education and the community

If we can't help with something we will be able to put you in touch with a caring agency or organisation that will be able to help.

When you're ready, we're here.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading, or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, between individuals aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members. It can include:

- Physical abuse (hitting, slapping, strangling, etc.)
- Emotional and psychological abuse (manipulation, threats, gaslighting, etc.)
- Sexual abuse (forced sexual activity, coercion, etc.)
- Financial abuse (controlling access to money, preventing employment, etc.)
- Coercive control (isolating from friends/family, monitoring communications, etc.)
- Digital abuse (stalking, online harassment, monitoring social media, etc.)

Anybody can experience domestic abuse regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability or lifestyle. Domestic abuse can also take place in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender relationships.

Controlling behaviour is at the centre of all domestic abuse whether it is physical or emotional. Controlling behaviour is where a current or ex-partner or family member controls your life to make you dependant, or subordinate to them. They do this by isolating you from your support network including your family, friends, money and work. This prevents you from having what you need to be resist and escape. This can leave you feeling trapped and helpless.

Coercive behaviour is where violence, intimidation, threats and humiliation is used to harm, punish and frighten. This includes so called 'honour' based abuse such as forced marriage and female genital mutation and is not limited to one gender or ethnic group.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse are increasingly using digital tools and technology to control their partners or ex-partners. It might be happening to you. Common devices such as smart phones and tablets are being misused to stalk, harass, impersonate and threaten. It may be that your abuser is accessing your devices and social media accounts by physically forcing you to hand over your passwords, pin code or swipe pattern. It means that it is possible to download software that enables them to monitor your device and track your location and movements. There are hundreds of such tracking tools that can easily be found online at the click of a button. These include smart devices and software that is built for legitimate purposes such as Apple Air Tag and apps used to find lost car keys.

Perpetrators can also set up fake profiles on online platforms and social media in your name to humiliate you online. Hacking your account is a criminal offence but impersonating you to create a fake account is not. It is, however, a form of abuse. We recommend creating a technology safety plan. You can do this by yourself or ask your outreach worker for support. Before you take any steps to stop control through technology, please bear in mind that if your abuser feels like they have lost the ability to control you in a way they previously could, they may escalate their abusive behaviour. Think about how they might respond if you discover they are monitoring you or are under surveillance. You may wish to have a device that they are unaware of for certain interactions but keep the other in place, so they are not aware of it. You can also collect evidence this way. You can take some basic steps if you believe you are being controlled through technology: Change usernames and passwords Get a new device: Consider using a different device that your abuser does not have access to. You can use a public device such as a desktop computer in a library if you need a way to communicate. Device settings: Look at your settings and web browsing history and apps to see if anything is listed that you did not access yourself. Data and battery use: See if there are any data or battery use changes. Surveillance apps often have a large data or battery usage. Location sharing settings: Check these on your devices. You can turn these off but be aware of the response of your abuser and follow your safety plan. Privacy settings: Make sure that you are aware of your privacy settings on any social media accounts and change them to make your accounts and profile as secure as possible. Ask your outreach worker for more guidance and information to achieve the above and other steps.

Useful contacts

https://www.thecyberhelpline.com/guides/cyber-stalking

https://revengepornhelpline.org.uk/

https://refugetechsafety.org/digitalbreakup/

Cover your tracks online - Women's Aid

Who is responsible for the abuse?

The abuser is always responsible for the abuse and should be held accountable. There is no excuse for domestic abuse and the victim is never responsible for the abuser's behaviour. People who are abusive *always* have a choice about their words and actions.

"Blaming the victim" is something that abusers will often do to make excuses for their behaviour, and quite often they manage to convince their victims that the abuse is indeed their fault. This is part of the pattern and is abusive. Blaming their behaviour on someone else, or on the relationship, their childhood, their ill health, or their alcohol or drug addiction is one way in which many abusers try to avoid personal responsibility for their behaviour.

The Power and Control Wheel

The wheel on the following page demonstrates the common themes and experiences of survivors who have lived in an abusive relationship. It includes examples of the range of tactics used by perpetrators, showing that abuse isn't all physical and each is a form of abuse. The wheel, known as the Duluth Model, was developed in the USA in the 1980's out of the experiences of women abused by men. The tactics in the wheel remain relevant today. Power and control are at the heart of the abuser's behaviour.

The cycle of domestic abuse is a repeating pattern that keeps victims trapped in abusive relationships. It has **four main stages**:

1. Tension Building

- The abuser becomes irritable, moody, or controlling.
- The victim feels like they're "walking on eggshells."
- Small arguments or criticisms escalate.

2. Incident (Explosion)

- The abuser lashes out physically, emotionally, verbally, or sexually.
- This could involve hitting, yelling, threats, or humiliation.
- The victim may try to defend themselves or escape.

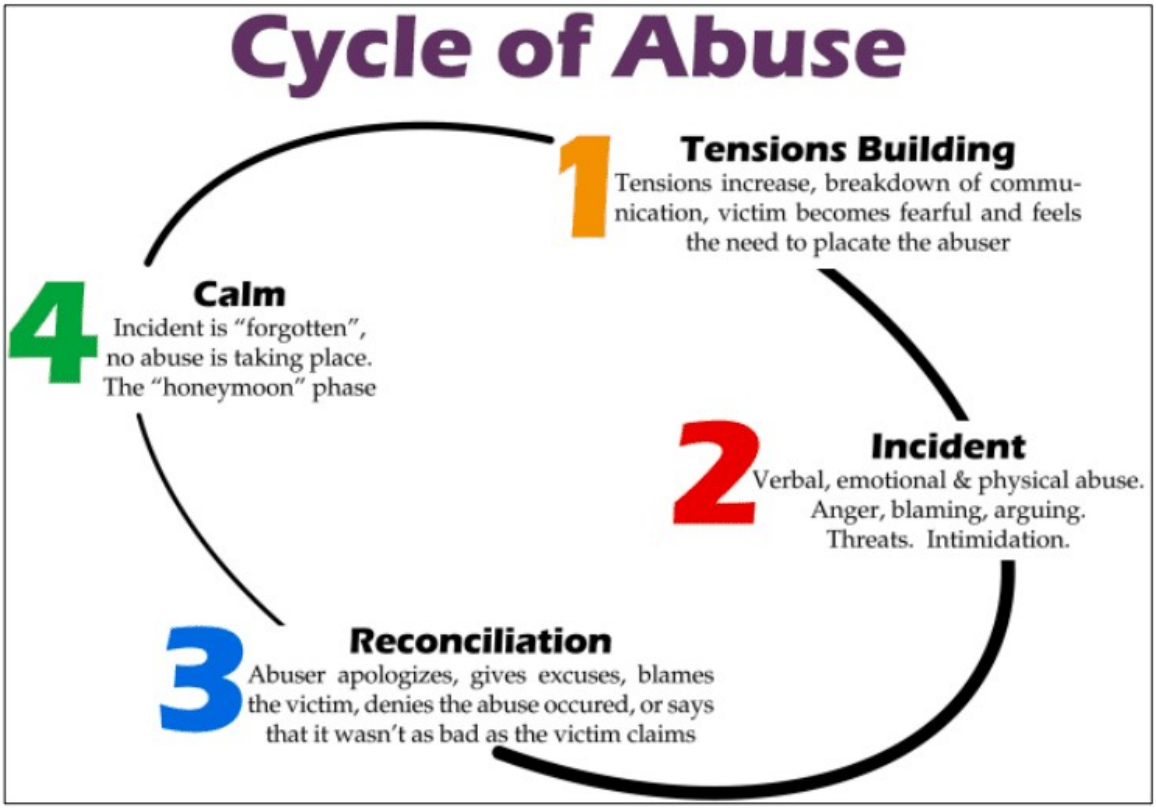
3. Reconciliation (Honeymoon Phase)

- The abuser apologises, makes excuses, or blames stress or alcohol.
- They may promise to change or act extra loving.
- The victim wants to believe them and stays.

4. Calm (Temporary Peace)

- Things seem back to normal; the abuser may act kind or distant.
- The victim hopes the abuse is over.
- Over time, tension builds again, restarting the cycle.

This cycle can repeat over days, weeks, or months, making it hard for victims to leave because of hope, fear, or emotional attachment.



Recognising domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can feel confusing and be hard to recognise. Some signs that you may be experiencing domestic abuse include:

- Fear of your partner or family member
- Feeling controlled or manipulated
- Constant criticism and belittlement
- Being isolated from loved ones
- Threats against you or your children
- Physical injuries explained away as accidents
- Sexual coercion or force
- Financial dependency and restrictions

The following questions may help you to consider if you are experiencing domestic abuse, you can always call and speak to about this with the ESDAS team:

- Are there things you used to enjoy doing that you no longer do?
- Is there something you now must do in this relationship that you didn't before?
- What part of the day is hardest for you?
- If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?

- Do you feel you see and speak to friends and family less now?
- Do you worry about not being good enough or getting things wrong?
- What is the best part of your day?
- What do you consider your greatest strength?
- What advice would you give a friend or family member in your situation?
- If you could change one thing about your partner, what would it be?
- Has your partner tried to control your social life or work?
- Does your partner constantly check up on you or accuse you of infidelity?
- Are you ever afraid of your partner?
- Have you changed your behaviour due to fear of your partner's reactions?
- Has your partner ever destroyed your possessions or harmed you or your children?
- Has your partner ever controlled your finances, medical care, or immigration status?
- Has your partner threatened to take your children away or forced you into sexual activities?
- Has your partner tried to prevent you from leaving the house?

We appreciate this can feel confusing and frightening and would always recommend you speak to ESDAS. You are not alone. Many of the survivors we speak to find it helpful to connect with other survivors – this can feel validating and reassuring. ESDAS run regular drop in coffee mornings, these are very informal and run by an outreach worker and trained volunteers. Another supportive online forum is available from Women's Aid.

https://survivorsforum.womensaid.org.uk/

Other useful relationship reflection tools are available

https://form.jotform.com/233272963751360

At ESDAS we never force you to do anything you do not want to do or are not ready to do. We understand that abuse can feel confusing and many survivors we work with tell us that they love their abusive partner. Many are terrified of the consequences, or how they will cope or that they will lose their children - or they may feel that it is best for the children if they stay and try to make their relationship work and their partner is good with the children. They may be worried about practical issues: where can they go? Will they make themselves homeless? Where will they get money? They may be worried about loneliness – and starting over again. We can help and support you no matter what you decide. Recognising the abuse, then beginning to understand your rights and options is the first step to empowerment.

Your rights in a relationship

My rights in all my relationships

I have the right to say no.

I have the right to make mistakes.

I have the right to change my mind.

I have the right to ask for what I want.

I have the right to express my opinions.

I have the right to be listened to respectfully.

I have the right to change my life situation.

I have the right to choose how to live my life.

I have the right to decide what my priorities are.

I have the right to have my boundaries respected.

I have the right to choose who I share my body with.

I have the right to choose who I spend my time with.

I have the right to set limits on how I will be treated by others.

I have the right to experience my feelings and to express them, if I want to.

I have the right to walk away from relationships that I determine are not good for me.

I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect by everyone I meet.

I have the right to my own needs and feelings, and to have them be as important as anyone else's.

I have the right to have these basic human rights, and I have the right to stand up for them.

Making a Safety Plan

ESDAS can help you make a personalised safety plan. This will be based on your unique situation. This is a way of helping you to protect yourself and your children. It helps you plan for the possibility of future violence and abuse. It also helps you to think about how you can increase your safety either within the relationship, or if you decide to leave. Planning ahead can help protect you and your children. Consider these steps:

- Identify safe places to go in an emergency.
- Teach your children how to call 999.
- Pack an emergency bag with essential items (ID, money, important documents, medication, and keys).
- Keep emergency phone numbers accessible.
- Speak to trusted friends or neighbours who can help
- You may want to consider keeping a diary of events- dates of what has happened, how you felt and the impact on you and the children. There are apps that can be downloaded, please speak to ESDAS about this.
- Try to always keep a small amount of money on you. If possible and safe to do so, try to set aside a small amount of money each week or even open a separate bank account.
- Know where the nearest phone is – and if you have a mobile phone, try to keep it with you.
- If you feel that your partner is about to attack you, try to go to a lower risk area of the house - for example where there is a way out and access to a telephone. Avoid the kitchen, or garage where there are likely to be knives or other weapons; and avoid rooms where you might be trapped - such as the bathroom.
- Be prepared to leave the house in an emergency. **In an emergency we would always advise to call 999.**

This is a general guidance on safety planning, each situation is unique, and we would always recommend talking your safety planning over with ESDAS.

Preparing to leave

There may come a time when you feel the only option is to leave your partner.
If you do decide to leave your partner, it is best if you can plan this carefully, with support. Sometimes abusers will increase their abuse if they suspect you are thinking of leaving and

will continue to do so after you have left, so this can be a particularly dangerous time. It's important to remember that ending the relationship will not necessarily end the abuse.

Thinking about leaving and making the decision to leave can be a long process. Planning it doesn't mean you have to carry it through immediately -or at all. But it may help to be able to consider all the options, and how you could overcome the difficulties involved. As this is a time of increased risk, please always talk over your plans with ESDAS and update us on any changes to your situation so we can adjust your safety plan as needed.

What to pack if you are planning to leave your partner

Ideally, you need to take all the following items with you if you leave. Some of these items you can try to always keep with you; others you may be able to pack in your "emergency bag".

- Some form of identification.
- Birth certificates for you and your children.
- Passports (including passports for all your children), visas and work permits.
- Money and credit and debit cards.
- Keys for house, car, and place of work. (You could get an extra set of keys cut and put them in your emergency bag.)
- Cards for payment of Child Benefit and any other benefits you are entitled to.
- Driving licence (if you have one) and car registration documents, if applicable.
- Prescribed medication.
- Copies of documents relating to your housing tenure, e.g. mortgage details or lease and rental agreements.
- Insurance documents, including national insurance numbers.
- Family photographs, your diary, jewellery, small items of sentimental value.
- Clothing and toiletries for you and your children.
- Your children's favourite small toys.

You should also take any documentation relating to the abuse - e.g. police reports, court orders such as injunctions and restraining orders, and copies of medical records if you have them.

Protecting yourself after you have left

It is important to keep speaking with ESDAS after you have left. They will help you update your safety plan and make referrals to other agencies that can help you and your children. If you go to another area, outside of Mole Valley, Tandridge or Reigate & Banstead, we will make warm referrals to your new specialist service.

As there is a risk of abuse continuing there are some enhanced steps you may wish to consider.

• it might increase your safety if you tell your family and friends, your children's school, and your employer or college what is happening, so that they do not inadvertently give out any information to your ex-partner. They will also be more prepared and better able to help you in an emergency.

• Try to alter your routines as much as you can.
• If you have any regular appointments that your partner knows about -e.g. with a counsellor or health practitioner - try to change your appointment time and/or the location of the appointment.

Try to choose a safe route, or alter the route you take or the form of transport you use, when approaching or leaving places you cannot avoid - such as your place of work, the children's school, or your G.P.'s surgery.

Tell your children's school, nursery or childminder what has happened, and let them know who will pick them up. Make sure they do not release the children to anyone else or give your new address or telephone number to anyone. (You may want to establish a password with them, and give them copies of any court orders, if you have them.)

• Consider telling your employer or others at your place of work particularly if you think your partner may try to contact you there. If you have moved away from your area, and don't want your abuser to know where you are, then you need to take particular care with anything that may indicate your location. If you employer has a domestic abuse policy, ask to see this to see how else they can support you.

• Your mobile phone could be "tracked" use a digital safety guide specific to your phone and adjust settings. It may be safer to change your phone. Your outreach worker may be able to help you with a basic pay as you go phone.
•Consider carry a personal alarm or downloading a personal safety app. ESDAS can talk to you about these.
• Try to avoid using shared credit or debit cards or joint bank accounts: if the statement is sent to your ex-partner, they will see the transactions you have made.
• Make sure that your address does not appear on any court papers. Use a C8 form
• Talk to your children about the need to keep your address and location confidential.

If you remain in the home, you could also consider the following:
• changing the locks on all doors.
• Installing a camera doorbell
• putting locks on all windows if you don't have them already.
• installing smoke detectors on each floor and providing fire extinguishers. We can book you in for a safe and well check with Surrey fire and rescue.

• installing an outside light (back and front) which comes on automatically when someone approaches.
• informing the neighbours that your partner no longer lives there and asking them to tell you - or call the police - if they see him nearby.
• changing your telephone number
• use voicemail to screen calls.
• keeping copies of all court orders together with dates and times of previous incidents and callouts for reference if you need to call the police again.

If your ex-partner continues to harass, threaten and abuse you, make sure you keep detailed records of each incident, including the date and time it occurred, what was said or done, and - if possible - photographs of damage to your property or injuries to yourself or others. If your partner or ex-partner injures you, see your GP or go to hospital for treatment and ask them to document your visit. If you have a non-molestation order, or there is a restraining order in place, you should ask the police to enforce this, and if your ex-partner is in breach of any court order, you should also tell your solicitor and outreach worker.

Housing options and rights

Deciding what options are open and right for you and/or your children can be difficult and confusing. Your outreach worker can explore all options that are available to you and may suggest that you make a housing options appointment with the local council. Your outreach worker or a trained volunteer can come with you to provide support, advocate on your behalf and take notes.

We support you to decide what housing options are right for you and work with other agencies to help find you somewhere safe to stay.

If you need to leave home because you are being abused by the person you are living with, or are threatened or intimidated by an ex-partner, you may decide to go into a refuge; or you may choose to stay temporarily with family or friends; or you may need to go into emergency accommodation. Staying with friends or family may be your first choice - but often it is not very practicable. Your abuser is likely to guess where you are and may put pressure on you to return; and your family or friends may not be willing or able to accommodate you for very long, and may also encourage you to go back home, or make you feel as though you are to blame for the situation.

Emergency accommodation

You are considered homeless if you are unable to stay in your home because of a risk of violence or abuse. Your local authority (council) housing department has a legal duty to provide you with advice about finding somewhere to live if you are homeless because of domestic abuse.
You have the same rights to make a homeless application for emergency accommodation whether you rent your home from the council, from a private landlord or a housing association, or if you own your own home. The council may offer you an appointment to explore your options first. This should be in addition to, and not instead of, an interview to make a homelessness application. You should not be pressured to stay in your own home, or to find alternative private rented accommodation, if you are at all concerned for your safety.

There are two major pieces of legislation which specify your rights to emergency accommodation, and the council's duties towards you. These are the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. The priority should always be your safety. ESDAS can help advocate on your behalf and provide supporting letters.

What evidence of abuse will the local authority need?

You may be told that you need to show evidence that you have experienced abuse; but if you do not have evidence available, the council cannot use this as an excuse for not providing temporary accommodation. They must provide you with accommodation while they make their enquiries. The Code of Guidance to the 2002 Act states that in cases of domestic violence "local authorities should not seek proof of violence or contact the perpetrator. The effects of domestic violence can be cumulative, where incidents occurring over time may erode a victim's self-confidence and contribute to making her/him vulnerable".

Can I only apply to the local authority in my home area?

If you have applied to a council housing department for help, they should never force you to return to your home area if you believe you are at risk from abuse there, nor should they refer you to any other area where you have suffered abuse, if you believe that a referral will lead to further abuse.

Once you have made a homeless application, the local authority to which you have applied has a legal duty to provide you with temporary accommodation while they make enquiries. This could be a refuge, bed and breakfast or a hostel.

The Housing Act 1996 places no restriction upon an applicant's choice of authority to approach when seeking homelessness assistance. Victims of abuse can apply to any local authority. A local connection is not required. A survivor is entitled to submit her application to any local authority, or even to more than one authority at the same time - 18.9 & 18.6 Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

What if the local authority turns me away?

If you have difficulty getting emergency accommodation, contact your outreach worker at ESDAS who can help advocate on your behalf.

You have the right to ask about the facts which were considered in making the decision. You also have a right of review of the decision. The housing department should ensure that their review procedures are clear, accessible, and fair.

ESDAS have a specialist domestic abuse advocate that works alongside our local authority housing departments that you can be referred to for advocacy and specialist housing advice or help you making in complaint.

I have rent arrears; will they still help me?

The council should not refuse your application for emergency accommodation if you have rent arrears and have left home because of domestic abuse.

Obtaining permanent accommodation

Provision of emergency accommodation does not guarantee that the local authority will re-house you permanently. Every council has procedures for deciding priorities in the allocation of housing, and you will probably need to be accepted on to your local authority's Housing Register before you can be re-housed. Applying to join the housing register can be done online with the support of ESDAS.

You may decide that it is safe to return home if you get an injunction (a court order). You could apply to get an occupation order (to exclude your partner or ex-partner from the property and to give you the right to live there) and/or a non-molestation order to protect you and keep them away from you.
We also provide a Sanctuary Scheme which provide advice, personal alarms, and additional security measures to make your home safe. However, it is important to know that you do not have to stay at home - with or without an injunction - if you do not feel safe there.

If your original tenancy (with either the council or a housing association) is in your sole name, or if you have been able to transfer it to your sole name by a court order, you could then consider asking the council or the housing association for a transfer or exchange to another property. This is sometimes called a management transfer. You can also register on home swapper sites to swap properties with another tenant.

Alternatively, you could look for rental property from a private landlord, some local authorities are able to assist you with this. Locally there is the Next Step scheme available, but you need to be referred by the local authority.

You may possibly be able to consider buying your own home - particularly if you have a share in the ownership of your previous home and may eventually expect to receive some money from the proceeds of the sale.

What is a refuge and how can I stay in one?

A refuge is a safe house where women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse can stay free from abuse. Refuge addresses (and sometimes their telephone numbers) are confidential. Your outreach worker can help you search for a refuge space and make referrals on your behalf. Availability for space will vary from day to day and a referral does not guarantee a space. We will not always be able to find refuge space in the location of your choice.

When refuge accommodation has been found for you, a member of staff or a volunteer from the organisation will discuss with you how you can get there. They may arrange to meet you at their office or somewhere else which is easy to find. If they do give you the address and the location of the refuge, it is important that you keep this information to yourself, and that you take care not to leave any of this information behind, (thus enabling your location, or the address or telephone number of the refuge, to be traced).

Some refuges have space for many women and children, and some are small houses. Some refuges are specifically for women from particular ethnic or cultural backgrounds - for example Black, Asian or South American women -and many refuges have disabled access, and staff and volunteers who can assist women and children who have special needs.

You may be worried you are not eligible for refuge but even if your situation feels complex or you have multiple needs, we can help with a referral to No Woman turned away. https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/i-work-with-survivors/no-woman-turned-away/

You will be asked to sign a License agreement which will include the terms under which you can stay in the refuge, how long you can stay, and any necessary rules to ensure the safety of yourself and other residents – for example, regarding the use of alcohol or drugs, confidentiality, visitors, and so on. Refuges also have their own codes of conduct regarding the day-to-day running of the house.

Most refuges do not have a large amount of storage space, so you are unlikely to be able to take large items such as furniture with you to the refuge. Refuges cannot generally take house pets, some will have arrangements with local pet fostering schemes, if not your outreach worker can help with finding a pet fosterer.

Cats protection
https://www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/cp-lifeline

The Dogs Trust
https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/how-we-help/ownership/freedom

How long can I stay at the refuge?
You will usually be able to stay as long as you need to - from a couple of days to several months - though some refuges have a maximum length of stay. Many women stay in refuges for a break from the abuse, a breathing space with time to think away from danger. Some women decide to return to their partners. There is support and advice, available but no-one at the refuge will make you do anything you don't want to do.

What about my permanent housing situation?

You can return home from the refuge at any point. You may decide to return with an injunction. You may decide you want to be re-housed elsewhere. The choice is yours, and refuge workers will give you information about the various options to help you to decide what you want to do. They will also help you to get advice regarding joint property and mortgage agreements. Do not agree to sign any documents relating to the tenancy or ownership of your home until you have taken legal advice.

Sanctuary Scheme

The Sanctuary Scheme is designed to help anyone experiencing domestic abuse to stay safely within their own homes. Through the Sanctuary Scheme anyone who no longer lives with their partner can receive help to have security measures installed that will make them and/or their children safer. Security measures can include:

- Lock changes or fitting additional locks to windows and doors
- Purchasing mobile phones or credit
- Installing a safe room within the home to provide added protection should the abuser attempt to return to the property

Installation of security measures will be carried out following a security assessment of your home by a police Designing Out Crime Officer and fire & rescue service Risk Manager. An ESDAS outreach worker or trained volunteer will also attend to support you. Although the police are required to carry out the assessment it is not necessary to report the abuse to them to receive support via the Sanctuary Scheme.

The scheme is co-ordinated by ESDAS in partnership with -

- Surrey Police
- Surrey Fire & Rescue Service
- Mole Valley District Council
- Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
- Tandridge District Council
- Raven Housing Trust

Contact Details for your Local Authority Housing Department

Mole Valley District Council

Opening hours: Monday-Friday 8.30am-5pm.
Phone: 01306 870614 / 879213 / 879210

Website: www.molevalley.gov.uk

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.45am- 5pm, Friday 8.45am- 4.45pm.
Phone: 01737 276790
Website: www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk

Tandridge District Council

Opening hours: Monday-Thursday 8.30am- 5pm, Friday 8.30am- 4.30pm.
Phone: 01883 73281 or 7322824
Website: www.tandridge.gov.uk

Other support and advice

Shelter

Telephone: 0808 800 4444

Website: www.shelter.org.uk

Money

If you are thinking about leaving your abusive partner, or have recently separated, you may be worried about how you can support yourself, and your children if you have any with you. You may have had to give up your job –perhaps because you have had to move to a different area, or because you were afraid your abuser would contact you there. You may find you have to rely on benefits for the first time in your life. Or perhaps your abuser kept

control of the finances, and you may never have been allowed to have any money of your own before, so you are concerned about how you will manage.

Supporting yourself

If you have left your abusive partner and are living on your own (perhaps with your children), your most likely sources of income will be one or more of the following:
• earnings from employment.
• state benefits.
• maintenance for your children (and possibly for yourself) from a former partner.

In many cases, your income could be less than it was when you were with your partner: however, you alone will now be in control of spending it.

Employment

If you have a job, or had one while you were with your abuser, you may want to continue working when you leave. It will probably be advisable to tell your employer what is happening - partly for safety reasons (if your abuser tries to contact you at work), but also because - if your employer has a domestic abuse policy - you may be able to have some additional time off to help you sort out your situation.

If you have not had a job for some time, but are thinking about returning to work, it's worth taking some time to consider what kind of work and for how many hours would be best for you - particularly if you have children.

If you have children, you will need to consider childcare arrangements and costs. Even if your children are at school, you are likely to need care after school and during school holidays. You may be able to get some help with childcare costs if you use a registered childminder, nursery or other childcare scheme run by an approved provider.

Benefits

There are various types of benefits that you may be entitled to, even if you are working. Most single benefits have been replaced by Universal Credit. The benefits system can feel complicated, so we recommend that you check you're getting your full entitlements, by going to your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

An application for Universal Credit can be made online, if you need support your ESDAS outreach worker or volunteer might be able to assist you.

https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim

Turn2Us also have a benefits calculator which can help you work out what you might be entitled to.

https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/

There is a specific payment to help with housing rental costs called Discretionary housing payment (DHP). Discretionary housing payments are in addition to payments of housing benefit. They are paid to people who need more help to pay their rent, either to a private landlord or social landlord. When people rent their homes privately and claim housing benefit, there is a limit to the housing benefit they get. This is based on the Local Housing Allowance rate or by a valuation of the rent set by the Valuation Office Agency. This sometimes means people get less housing benefit than the actual rent due. Discretionary housing payments can be paid to make up for the difference.

Payments can also be used to help people to secure new accommodation, and can sometimes cover deposits or rent in advance, and some other housing costs. To enquire about help with a new property you will need to first contact the Housing Options team of your local authority, there are other services that can help with this such as Next Step, but this will require a referral from the housing options team.

Some people can pay the rest or can negotiate a lower rent with their landlord. However, other people find the shortfall between their rent and their benefit causes financial strain and hardship. These are the survivors who should apply for discretionary housing payments.

Discretionary housing payments can also be claimed by survivors renting their homes from registered housing providers, or social landlords. This can cover people affected by the spare bedroom subsidy (also known as the bedroom tax) if they have a spare room, or cover on going payments if extra help is needed.

Payments are normally paid for set periods to give people time to get budgeting advice or find work. They may be used to help a family through a particularly tough period, or in some instances be paid for longer periods. Each application is considered on its own merits.

Debt

Many people find that their abusive partners have left them with debts. ESDAS have a special relationship with an agency called PayPlan.

At PayPlan, they provide Financial Conduct Authority regulated free debt advice to anyone who finds themselves struggling with multiple debts.

This collaboration is more than just about offering financial advice; it's about ensuring individuals facing financial hardships, including those affected by domestic abuse, receive the assistance they deserve in a compassionate and understanding manner.

Through their partnership with ESDAS, individuals who have experienced domestic and economic abuse now have a direct and safe route to access debt advice.

Your outreach worker can refer directly to PayPlan so that you are quickly connected to an advisor in their Specialist Advice Team. You can quickly access our wide range of debt solutions, including:

- FCA regulated debt advice
- Economic abuse support
- Debt write-off
- Debt solutions (some insolvency plans do incur a fee)

Further help

National Debt line 0808 808 4000

https://nationaldebtline.org/

https://www.stepchange.org/ on 0800 138 1111. Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9am to 2pm

https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/i-need-help/

Other Help

Your ESDAS worker will be able to refer or signpost you to other sources of material aid. There are foodbanks across the area that can assist as well as food clubs. If you need clothes for your children, they can collect items on your behalf from Stripey Stork.

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/surrey-crisis-fund

Your civil and criminal legal rights

Survivors have legal protections under both civil and criminal law.

Criminal Law Protections:

- Domestic abuse is a criminal offence under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Police protection: You can call 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-emergency support.
- Restraining Orders**:** Can be issued to prevent the abuser from contacting you.
- Coercive Control: Criminal offence since 2015.
- Clare's Law**:** You can request information on a partner's past abusive history from the police.

The Victims' Code explains the rights you can expect to receive as a victim of crime.

How does the Victims' Code work?

- The Victims' Code applies to all criminal justice agencies, including the police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Courts Service and the Probation Service. They are responsible for making sure victims receive the rights set out in the Victims' Code.

- The Victims' Code was established by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 and came into effect in 2006. Victim Support lobbied for it to be introduced and has campaigned for it to be improved and strengthened.

- The Victims' Code sets out what each criminal justice agency must do for victims and the timeframe in which they must do it.

Your key rights under the Victims' Code

The revised Victims' Code came into effect on 1 April 2021. It has structured victim entitlements into 12 over-arching rights with further detail, including timescales and other specifics, under each one.

You have the right:

1. To be able to understand and to be understood
2. To have the details of the crime recorded without unjustified delay
3. To be provided with information when reporting the crime
4. To be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to your needs
5. To be provided with information about compensation

6. To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution
7. To make a victim personal statement
8. To be given information about the trial, trial process and your role as a witness
9. To be given information about the outcome of the case and any appeals
10. To be paid expenses and have property returned
11. To be given information about the offender following a conviction
12. To make a complaint about your rights not being met

Further details under each right can be found here

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936239/victims-code-2020.pdf

What is Clare's Law?

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare's Law, was created in 2014 after Clare Wood was killed in 2009 by an ex-partner in Greater Manchester. The aim of Clare's Law is to give you information regarding your current or ex-partner where there are concerns that this individual may be abusive, controlling and coercive, or violent - this is called a disclosure.

You can request a disclosure for yourself, or if you are concerned about someone else such as a family member, friend, colleague or neighbour if you believe they are at risk from their current or ex-partner.

A disclosure can also be given to safeguard your children, for example if you have concerns about your ex-partner's new partner.

A disclosure can provide potentially life-saving information to help people to make a more informed decision about whether to continue the relationship they're in.

You have the right to ask if your current or ex-partner has a history of domestic abuse or violence

You can make an application regarding a current or ex-partner, or if you have concerns about someone else's current or ex-partner. The police will carry out checks and will refer any information to a local multi-agency panel for a decision as to whether to make a disclosure.

You can make an application under the scheme in the following ways:

- By completing an application online on the Surrey police website
- By calling 101 and asking to make a DVDS application.
- By attending your local police station and asking to make a DVDS application.

You will initially be asked to provide information about yourself and who you are making the application for.

If your application meets the scheme criteria, a face-to-face or online visit will be held with you by an officer where we will ask you further questions.

Any disclosed information must be treated as confidential, and applicants cannot share this information with anyone else.

The Police and the Criminal Prosecution process

What the police can do

Police involvement can feel scary and overwhelming. You may feel nervous given the recent negative stories you may have heard about the police and the actions of policemen. The priority of Surrey Police should always be the safety of you and your children. Surrey Police have pledged to take positive action when dealing with domestic abuse incidents and have outlined their four priorities. These are to:
Protect the lives of both adults and children who are

- at risk of domestic abuse
- Investigate all reports of domestic abuse
- Facilitate positive effective action against offenders so that they can be held accountable through the criminal justice system
- Adopt a proactive multi-agency approach in preventing and reducing domestic abuse

Training is provided to Surrey Police on domestic abuse and one of our team works out of Reigate Police Station to support survivors of domestic abuse.

Calling the Police in an emergency

If you need to call 999 because of domestic abuse, the Police will hope to respond to your call. There is a list of things that they are expected to do. This includes Talking to you in private, away from your abuser. Checking on the welfare of you and any children at the address Completing a questionnaire called a DASH assessment. This is a series of questions about Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and honour-based violence. They will complete it with you to help them understand the risk you face in your home or relationship. Your outreach worker may also carry out this questionnaire. There are several protective orders that the police may provide that can offer you immediate protection following an incident of domestic abuse. This will give you the breathing space to consider your
options.

Police Bail

If the police arrest and charge the abuser, they will then decide whether to keep them in custody, or to release them on bail. If they release them on bail, they will attach conditions to this, aimed at protecting you, your children and any witnesses from further intimidation and violence. The police should make every effort to consult you before making conditional bail decisions. They should also inform you of any conditions they have placed on the abuser, what these conditions mean, and what action you should take if these conditions

are broken. They should give you as much information as possible and should explain that the responsibility for complying with police
bail conditions rests with the abuser.

A **Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO)** and **Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN)** are legal measures designed to protect individuals from domestic abuse. These orders are typically issued by courts and Police, their purpose is to provide immediate and longer-term protection for victims of domestic violence.

Purpose of DVPOs and DVPNs

- Provide immediate safety and security for victims.
- Give victims time to seek further legal protection, such as restraining orders or non-molestation orders.
- Allow law enforcement to intervene even if the victim does not want to press charges.

Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN)

- A **DVPN** is an emergency measure issued by the police.
- It provides immediate protection for a victim after an incident of domestic abuse.
- It can require the abuser (also known as the respondent) to leave the victim's home and prevent them from contacting the victim.
- The notice is temporary and usually lasts for **up to 48 hours**, giving authorities time to apply for a longer-term protection order.

Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO)

- A **DVPO** is granted by a court following a DVPN.
- It extends protection for the victim beyond the 48-hour period.
- It typically lasts for up to 28 days and imposes restrictions on the abuser, such as staying away from the victim's home and not making contact.
- A breach of a DVPO can result in legal consequences, including fines or imprisonment.

Will my partner, ex-partner or family member be prosecuted?

Once the Police have completed their initial investigations, they will refer the case to the Crown Prosecution Service for advice on how to proceed. They will then decide on whether a suspect should be charged, and what that charge should be.

What happens if it goes to court?

If the Crown Prosecution Service feel that there is sufficient evidence to prosecute, the perpetrator will be charged and given a date to attend court. This is usually the Specialist Domestic Abuse Court. This court operates on a Thursday at Guildford Magistrates Court.

Help through the Specialist Domestic Abuse Court

A qualified Independent Domestic Abuse Adviser (IDVA) from the Surrey Domestic Abuse Partnership (SDAP) can support you though the Specialist Domestic Abuse Court in Guildford. They are a court advocate and can explain the proceedings and keep you updated on court decisions, bail and administrative hearing as well as sentencing proceedings. They can attend court and advocate on your behalf. They will contact you in advance of the hearing to understand your wishes.

If you withdraw your support for a prosecution, the CPS will want to know why. You are likely to be interviewed by a police officer, who will try to find out why you are wanting to make this decision, and whether any pressure has been put on you. There are several reasons why you might want to withdraw your report because, for example:

- your abuser has said they are sorry, and you want to give them another chance.
- you don't want them to have a criminal record and worry that it will impact employment
- you may have been threatened, and/or you feel frightened about what the abuser or their family might do if you proceed.
- you don't want to have to give evidence in court.

In certain circumstances - for example, if you have been intimidated – your statement can be used as evidence without your being called to court. If you do decide to withdraw your statement, your wishes will be considered, but the final decision about prosecution will be taken by the CPS in conjunction with the police. They may decide that the “public interest” supports going ahead with the case, despite your wishes. If the CPS decide to proceed, the abuser will initially be taken to a magistrates' court, after which - depending on the seriousness of the charge -they will either be remanded in custody or released on bail. If bail is given, then conditions can be imposed by the court - for example, that the abuser

stays away from you and your home, or your place of work, or that he lives at a certain address. It may be several months before the full case is heard. During this time, the police may contact you again for further information. You may be asked to make a Victim Personal Statement, which will add to the information you have already given in your initial statement. This gives you a chance to talk about how the abuse has affected you.

The case may be heard in the magistrates' court or the Crown Court (Depending on the charge.) You will only be called to give evidence if your abuser has pleaded not guilty at the initial hearing. If they plead guilty, or if he is found guilty after the evidence is heard, then the court will usually adjourn for reports from the Probation Service before sentencing.

The sentence depends on the seriousness of the offence and whether your abuser has had any previous convictions. It can range from a conditional discharge to a prison sentence. The criminal law can offer you some protection - particularly if your partner is given a custodial sentence; but it is primarily aimed at dealing with the offender. A restraining order can be attached whenever criminal proceedings have been taken against your abuser - even if the conviction has not been upheld – if the court believes you are at risk. Alternatively, you could consider applying for an injunction under the civil law

Further information

For help and support with going through the prosecution process, please call and speak to ESDAS. We currently have Police Advocates based at police stations in Surrey that can help you with your case.

Click here coming to court videos for video guidance on attending court

Surrey Police have also created a useful guide about what happens when a report is made to the Police –

https://www.surrey.police.uk/syssiteassets/media/downloads/surrey/advice/surrey-police-reporting-domestic-abuse-support-booklet

Victim and witness support organisations can be found here;

https://www.surrey.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/victim-support/Victim-witness-support-organisations/

Rights of Women have developed a free guide – From court to report

https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice/criminal-law-information/from-report-to-court-digital-guide-for-adult-survivors-of-sexual-violence/

Compensation

Under certain circumstances victims can apply to criminal injuries compensation authority for compensation. The offence must have been investigated by the police, but the perpetrator does not need to have been convicted for the offence.

No compensation can make up for what you have gone through, but especially when there may have been a not guilty outcome it can go some way to help you feel validated and believed about what was done to you.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/criminal-injuries-compensation-a-guide

Civil Law Protections:

- Non-Molestation Orders: Protects against harassment and abuse.
- Occupation Orders: Can remove the abuser from the shared home.
- Divorce and Separation: Legal options for leaving an abusive marriage.
- Child arrangement orders: Courts prioritise child safety in abusive situations.

Getting an injunction

You could try to gain some protection from your abuser by applying for a civil injunction or protection order. An injunction is a court order that requires someone to do or not to do something. There are two main types of injunctions available under Part IV of the Family Law Act 1996:
• a non-molestation order
• an occupation order

A non-molestation order is aimed at preventing your partner or ex-partner from using or threatening violence against you or your child, or intimidating, harassing or pestering you, to ensure your health, safety and wellbeing of you and your children.

An occupation order regulates who can live in the family home, and can also restrict your abuser from entering the surrounding area. If you do not feel safe continuing to live with your partner, or if you have left home because of violence, but want to return and exclude your abuser, you may want to apply for an occupation order.

Who is eligible to apply for an order?

For you to apply for one of these orders you must be an "associated person". This means you must be related or associated with each other in one of the following ways:
• you are or have been married to each other
• you are or have been in a civil partnership with each other.
• you are cohabitants or former cohabitants (including same sex couples)
• you live or have lived in the same household.
• you are relatives.
• you have formally agreed to marry each other (even if that agreement has now been ended).
• you have a child together (this can include those who are parents of the same child, and those who have parental responsibility for the same child).
• you are both involved in the same family proceedings (e.g. divorce or child contact).
• although not living together, you are in an “intimate relationship of significant duration”.

If you are applying for an occupation order you either must have a legal right to occupy the home (as joint or sole tenant or owner of that home); or you must have been married to, or cohabiting with, your partner who is the owner or tenant. The court will apply a "balance of harm" test when deciding whether to make the order. When making an occupation order, the court may make other related orders imposing obligations on you or your abuser, for example relating to repair and maintenance of the home, or to payment of rent or mortgage.

Injunctions are normally for a specified period – e.g. 6 months – but can be renewed; or they may be made “until further order”. There is no limit on the length of time that non-molestation orders can be extended. Occupation orders can only be extended beyond 12 months if you have a legal right to stay in the home (i.e. as owner or co-owner, or tenant/joint tenant, or because you are or have been married to the owner/tenant).

Going to court

Applications for injunctions under the Family Law Act are held at the magistrates' family proceedings court or the county court, or in some cases the High Court. The application will be in a closed court ("in chambers") and no-one who is not directly concerned with your case will be allowed in. This means that you will be able to take in your solicitor or other legal representative. The good thing about this is that no members of the public will be there (unlike at a criminal court) and this provides a degree of privacy.
If you are concerned that your abuser might hassle you while you are waiting, you should tell your solicitor who can ask the court officers to keep him away from you. They should also be able to provide separate waiting areas.

You can ask for your address to be kept secret and not read out in court, so that the abuser does not know where you are staying. You can also request emotional support from a trained ESDAS volunteer and where possible we try to find someone that can attend with you.

How long does it take to get an injunction?

If you are in immediate danger, an application can be made to the court on the same day without your abuser being there. This is called a "without notice" or *ex parte* application. The court will need to consider whether you are at risk of significant harm, whether you will be prevented or deterred from applying if you must wait, or whether your abuser is avoiding being served notice to appear before the court. If the court grants a "without notice" order, you will have to return to court for a full hearing once your abuser has been served with notice. If there are other family proceedings already in progress (e.g. for a residence or contact order for a child) the court may wish to hear the whole case together - but they can still grant an emergency order while you are waiting for the full hearing.

What evidence will be needed?

You will need to make a sworn statement (sometimes called an affidavit) to the court about the physical and emotional abuse you have experienced. You should be as precise as possible about all the ways you have been physically or emotionally harmed, the dates and times (if you have them), and the effects on you and your children. It is important that you or your solicitor provides the court with as much evidence as possible of all aspects of harm caused by your partner or ex-partner's abusive behaviour. It will help if you have kept a record of past events, or if you have independent evidence - such as police reports or medical records. The court has discretion when deciding to make an order, and must look at all the circumstances, including the likely effect of any order on their health safety and well-being, their conduct in relation to each other, their needs, and their financial and housing resources.

The court sometimes suggests that, instead of an injunction, the abuser should make an **undertaking** (a promise) to the court not harass or threaten. The court should never accept an undertaking where violence has been used or threatened, and you do not have to agree to accept an undertaking if you do not want to. If you are applying for an occupation order, and do not have a legal entitlement to occupy the property, the court must apply a "balance of harm" test; that is, who will suffer the most harm if an order is not made?

Once an order has been made, you should have a copy, and your solicitor should arrange for a printed copy to be handed personally to your abuser. If you do not know here your abuser is sometimes the court will consider email or text service.

What happens if the abuser breaks the order?

If your abuser breaks the terms of the injunction, and you are at all fearful for your safety or that of others, you should call the police.
The police will treat any breach of such an order just like any other criminal offence: so, they should arrest your abuser, and take him to the magistrates' court, and **not** back to the county court or family proceedings court.

If, however, you are unhappy about the enforcement process being taken out of your hands, it should still be possible for you to take your abuser back to the county court or family proceedings court for contempt of court – in the same way as you must do for breach of an occupation order.
If your abuser has breached an occupation order, then you (with the help of your solicitor if you have one) may have to go back to court yourself and apply for an arrest warrant. Your abuser is in contempt of court for disobeying a court order. The court may then fine your abuser, impose a suspended sentence or commit to prison (rare for a first offence).

Getting legal advice

Although you can apply for an injunction yourself, you might find it helpful to have legal advice. ESDAS work closely with local solicitors to provide initial free legal advice. Your outreach worker can advise you on accessing legal aid, but you can check this yourself on the government website https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid/eligibility

What If I must represent myself?

A litigant in person is someone who has chosen or needs to represent themselves in proceedings. They do not have a solicitor or barrister acting on their behalf. They attend court hearings alone and are responsible for submitting their own documents and drafting them. Some people chose to self-represent as it is cheaper and gives you control of the case and sometimes it is a quicker process.

A McKenzie Friend can come to court to assist litigants in person and give them moral support and guidance. They do not represent the litigant or speak on their behalf but can assist them in what to say and can take notes on their behalf. They can help with moral support and guidance. They have knowledge on the legal language and legal process and can take notes and help draft documents. They cannot represent you, speak on your behalf in court or manage your case. Having a professional McKenzie Friend is significantly cheaper than having a solicitor or barrister. They can offer you moral support and guidance in what may be a confusing and sometimes distressing process for litigants in person.

Where possible we may be able to find a trained ESDAS volunteer to support you through the court process, like a McKenzie friend they would not speak on your behalf or represent you in court.

Other forms of support and advice can be found here:

RCJ Advice

RCJ Advice, is a unique national Citizens Advice Service, staffed by lawyers in civil and family law, and assisted by hundreds of solicitor volunteers. They deliver free legal advice to people with a court case in the civil and family courts in England and Wales.

To find out more about their core services and how to access them, please see their website here: https://www.rcjadvice.org.uk/ .

They also run various other services, including domestic abuse services which we have detailed below.

CourtNav

CourtNav is an award-winning tool which aid's survivors in applying for protective injunctions. CourtNav generates the relevant court forms and the supporting statement necessary to apply for a protective order.

You can find out more about CourtNav here: https://www.courtnav.org.uk/ .

SupportNav

SupportNav is a free and confidential online support service for anyone who has experienced domestic abuse.

They are there to help survivors understand their options and make the best choices to overcome their problems.

They aim to provide:

- legal support
- help getting protection through the courts
- advice and information on any matters related to domestic abuse

This includes support with housing, contact with children, separation and divorce, police investigations, court proceedings, money and benefits, family law and immigration matters.

If they can't help, they try to find other support services that can.

You can find SupportNav here: https://supportnav.org.uk/ .

Rights of Women (ROW):

www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

The National Centre for Domestic Violence

www.ncdv.org.uk
The NCDV may be able to help you obtain an injunction to prevent further abuse from your partner. They are a non-profit-making organisation, that can advise on the range of legal remedies available. You can ask your outreach worker to refer you. If you would rather self-refer, they also have a freephone number: **08009 702070**.

Divorce

Couples who have been legally married for at least one year can apply for a divorce. No permission is not needed if only 1 party wants to be divorced. To apply for a divorce a divorce petition must be filled in and sent to court. This can be done online or by using Form D8. A divorce application costs £593.You will need your marriage certificates and name change documents (if applicable)

The minimum time for a divorce to be finalised is 6 months, it can be longer. Your spouse can no longer contest the application purely because they do not want to get divorced. There are only 3 reasons why a divorce can be contested; The court does not have jurisdiction to issue proceedings, the marriage was not valid, or the marriage has already legally ended. You can change your mind, and the application can be withdrawn any time up until the final order is granted.

Children and domestic abuse

We understand that for parents experiencing domestic abuse one of their priorities is the safety and needs of their children. We are here to help, offer practical advice and emotional support to parents and children. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognised children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right for the first time.

All children are unique and will respond and cope with their experiences in many ways. Children may become depressed, anxious and have low self-esteem, resulting in emotional, behavioural, developmental and academic problems. As children, they feel lonely and isolated and may display acts of violence themselves or become withdrawn.

Other common observable effects are:

- Changed sleeping patterns including nightmares and bed-wetting
- Excessively clingy or withdrawn behaviour
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm
- Stress related illness
- Aggressive and disruptive behaviour
- Suicidal feelings

Helpful messages for children to hear:

- Violence isn't OK.
- It isn't your fault.
- I will do everything I can to help you be safe.
- It's not your job to fix what is wrong in the family.
- I want you to tell me how you feel. It's important, and I can handle it.
- It's OK to have mixed feelings about either or both of your parents.

How denial affects children:

Having a conversation about the violence and abuse you have suffered can be incredibly traumatic and difficult. But staying silent may not support your children in overcoming their experiences and may not enable them to move onto recovery.

Staying silent is like saying "it's OK that the violence or abuse happened. Denial can affect children in many ways, which is why it is so important to find the right time and the appropriate way to talk to your children about what you have all experienced.

Otherwise, what can happen is:

- Child learns that violence or abuse is normal
- Child is afraid to talk about the abuse
- Child is confused and doesn't understand
- Blames her/himself

- Learns to deny and not to talk about own feelings
- Makes them feel like they are crazy
- Makes them feel lonely or isolated from their friends
- Learns it's not OK to ask about the abuse or discuss it
- Gives children unrealistic beliefs about the causes of violence and abuse

How to talk to children and what to listen out for:

Conversations with children can't always be planned—sometimes they just happen. The following tips will help you make the most of the conversation whether it's planned or spontaneous:

Take the lead: when you open the conversation, you're telling your child it is safe to talk and that they don't have to be alone with their thoughts and worries.

Open with messages of support, like "I care about you, and I will listen to you.

Ask what your child saw or heard or already knows about the troubling events in the home.

Support and acknowledge your children's feelings, experiences, and their version of the story.

Expect that your children will know more than you think, no matter how young they are. Sometimes when adults assume children are asleep or not paying any attention, they are listening to everything. If they are too young to get what's going on, they may fill in the gaps with their imaginations and end up worrying about something that's worse than reality.

Let your child know it is always OK to ask you questions. Often the ideas or questions that trouble children are different from the ones that adults think about. Listening to your child's questions helps you know what is really on their mind.

Talk to your children in a way that's right for their ages. Use words that you know they understand. Be careful not to talk about adult concerns or at an adult's level of understanding.

If your child asks a question, you're not ready to answer, you can say, "That's an important question. I need some time to think about it and then we can talk again."

Monitor your own feelings. If you can talk calmly and confidently, you convey a sense of security. A calm tone sends the message that you are in charge and capable.

Be alert to signs that your child is ready to end the conversation. Children who have heard enough may get restless or silly, stop listening, or stop asking questions.

Have other adults for your own support so your children are not your only support system. You don't want to put undue worry or stress on your children.

Be mindful of the age of your child. For younger children, sharing too much of your worries or fears may make them more worried or upset.

ESDAS have a children's outreach service that provide one-to-one and group support. To access this service, you must be separated from the non-abusive parent and be referred by your adult outreach worker.

Resources:

Childline:
We understand how difficult it is for children to talk about Domestic Abuse. Whether it's happening now or happened in the past.

Phone: 0800 1111 are free and confidential.
Children can also contact Childline online.
Opening hours: Childline can be contacted 24/7.

Young Minds:
Young Minds have lots of resources and tips for young people on how to support their mental health and wellbeing. They also have a support page regarding domestic abuse for parents.
Website: https://youngminds.org.uk/
Phone: 0808 802 5544 (Parents Helpline)

Victim Support:
Offers support to anyone affected by crime; not only those who experience it directly, but also their friends, family and any other people involved.
Live webchat service available.
Offers specialist support for children and young people affected by crime through their website You & Co.
Phone: 0808 16 89 111
Opening times: 24/7

Kooth

Free, anonymous support: our chat service is free, and you don't even have to give your name. Real people, not bots: the professionals you speak with in our chat service are real people who want to listen to you.

A safe space to talk: the Kooth chat service is a safe space for support accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychology (BACP).

https://www.kooth.com/

YMCA Heads together

Heads Together provides free and confidential counselling to young people aged 11-24 in East Surrey and works in partnership with Mindworks Surrey.

https://www.ymcaeastsurrey.org.uk/children/emotional-wellbeing-mental-health/heads-together-counselling/

Lucy Rayner Foundation

Counselling services for anyone in Surrey aged 14-39

https://thelucyraynerfoundation.com/

The role of the family courts

What is a Child Arrangements Order?

A child arrangement order decides who a child will live with and who they should spend time with. The order will set out how this time will be divided between the parties; it can make orders on both direct and indirect contact. The child must be under 16 years of age for an order to be applied for. Any parent of the child can apply (even if they do not have parental responsibility), any guardian or special guardian of the child, or someone in which the child currently lives with. Your outreach worker will be able to help you decide if you need to apply for the order or if due to safeguarding concerns child contact should be withheld and your ex-partner should apply for the order. They will also discuss with you if a request for support to Surrey children's social care is needed.

How to apply for a child arrangement order?

Fill out Form C100 and send it to court along with the court fee, attach a short supporting statement to the application to explain what you are seeking and why. In most cases a mediation session known as a MIAM must be attended before applying to the courts, however domestic abuse cases are exempt, and your outreach worker can provide a letter for you explaining why you're exempt. The cost of a C100 application costs £232. As a C100 can be used to apply for a child arrangements order, prohibited steps order and specific issue order which means if they are applied for at the same time then the cost will be £232. If they are applied for separately £232 needs to be paid every time a new application is issued.

How does the court decide whether to grant an order?

The courts will look at the welfare checklist.
1. The ascertainable feelings and wishes of the child
2. Educational, emotional, and physical needs of the child
3. Sex, background, age, or any other feature of the child that may be relevant
4.The range of power available to the courts
5.Any harm suffered by the child or potential risk of suffering
6.The capability of each of the parents
7.The possible impact on the child in case of any change in their circumstances ·

The older the child is the more likely the court is to grant what the child wants as they can voice their opinion and understand the case. The order will last until the child reaches 16 or either party applies to vary or discharge the order. · Often it is necessary for child arrangement orders to be varied as the child grows up to continue to meet their needs.

Threats to remove children

If you are afraid your ex-partner may try to take the children away from you, then you should seek urgent advice from your solicitor, and – if the threat is imminent - call the police. If your ex-partner has taken the children away without your consent, or kept them following a contact visit, you may need to make an application to the court for an order requiring that they are returned to you. The court can also make a "prohibited steps" order aimed at preventing their being taken away again.. If you are afraid that your children might be taken out of the UK, then you will need specialist advice.

The organisation **Reunite** provides an advice line on international child abduction: call **0116 2556 234** (available Monday to Friday 9.30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Out of office hours, their answerphone gives an **emergency contact number**.) Reunite also produces a **Child Abduction Prevention Guide**.
Contact www.reunite.org.

Useful legal sources
https://www.puzzlepiecelaw.co.uk/legal-resources

https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice/family-law-information/

https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/pdf-guide-to-children-and-the-law-when-parents-separate.pdf

Special circumstances

Women from different communities, cultural and ethnic backgrounds

Anyone whatever their background can experience domestic abuse. We are here for you - to help, support, offer advice and information.

Our partner agency North Surrey Domestic Abuse Services has a specialist IDVA offering support for people experiencing domestic abuse from diverse communities. Contact details are below.

North Surrey Domestic Abuse Services

Call: 01932 260690
Website

The specialist organisations listed below offer educational materials and emotional and practical support.

Chinese Information & Advice Centre

Phone: 08453 131 868 / 020 7692 3697 (Monday to Friday, 10.00am to 6.00pm)

Email: info@ciac.co.uk

Website: www.ciac.co.uk

Friends, Families and Travellers

A charity who seeks to end racism and discrimination against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma,

Phone: 01273 234 777

website

IKWRO - Farsi, Arabic, Kurdish, Dari, Turkish and English

IKWRO confidentially helps Middle Eastern women and girls (Iranian, Kurdish, Arab, Afghan and Turkish) with issues including domestic violence, "honour" based violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, separation and divorce, child custody, housing and benefits.

Call: 07846 310157 for Farsi, Dari, Turkish (24 hrs) 07846 275246 for Kurdish or Arabic (24 hrs)

Website www.ikwro.org.uk

Jewish Women's Aid

Call: 0808 801 0500 (9.30am - 9.30pm - Monday to Thursday)

Website: www.jwa.org.uk

Karma Nirvana

Karma Nirvana is a UK registered Charity that provides confidential support to victims and survivors of Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse.

Phone: 0800 5999 247

Website: www.karmanirvana.org.uk/help-me

Kiran: Asian Women's Aid

The Kiran Project was set up in 1990 to meet the needs of women from the Indian sub-continent & the wider Asian community experiencing domestic violence.

Phone: 020 8558 1986

Email: Kiran.admin@kiranproject.org.uk

Website: www.kiranproject.org.uk/

Southall Black Sisters (operates Nationally)

Helpline: 020 8571 0800

Website

Latin American Women's Aid
Provides refuge accommodation, a helpline and outreach for Latin American women and children experiencing domestic violence. Staff speak Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. London based.
Telephone: **0207 275 0321** Monday to Friday 9.30 a.m. – 6 p.m.

https://www.chameliuk.org/ Chameli is a Women's Organisation founded to help vulnerable Bangladeshi women (not exclusively), who are victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Forced Marriage

What is a Forced Marriage Protection Order?

Forced marriage is a form of domestic abuse and child abuse. In a forced marriage, the victim is pressured into marrying someone against their will. They may be physically threatened or emotionally blackmailed to do so. It is an abuse of your human right and cannot be justified on any religious or cultural basis. It is an issue that unfortunately can affect a lot of people but there is help to hand.

If you are being or were pressured by threat or coercion, from family or others, to marry someone without your consent, this may well constitute forced marriage. It is a violation of your human rights. The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 became law in 2008. This allows family courts to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders to protect someone

from being forced into a marriage. An Order can also be made to protect someone who has already been forced into marriage to help remove them from the situation.

To contact the Forced Marriage Unit and be directed to agencies in your area that can help you now call Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151 or email: fmu@fco.gov.uk

The Forced Marriage Unit was set up in 2005 and provides support to victims as well as expert training and guidance to professionals. It is jointly run by the Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In 2011 they dealt with over 1400 calls in relation to forced marriages.

UK Cases
The FMU offers information and support to those who fear they will be forced into marriage and can talk with them about their options.

Overseas Cases
The FMU can assist British nationals facing forced marriage abroad by helping them to a place of safety and helping them to return to the UK. It can assist non-British nationals facing marriage abroad by referring them to local organisations that can help.

Immigration Cases
Help is also available to those who have already been forced into marriage to explore their options, including assisting those who are being forced to sponsor a spouse's visa for settlement in the UK.

http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/

https://www.gov.uk/apply-forced-marriage-protection-order

Immigration Advice for Domestic Abuse Survivors

It is against the law for ESDAS to provide immigration advice, but we can help you find your nearest specialist service and an immigration solicitor who can help you.

If you are on a visa and experiencing domestic abuse, you may be eligible for:

- **Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Destitution Concession (MVDAC):** Short-term financial support.
- **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR):** If you are on a spouse/partner visa, you may apply for ILR.

- **Asylum Protection:** If returning to your country is unsafe, you may seek asylum.

Organisations such as **Rights of Women, Southall Black Sisters, and Refugee Council** can provide specialist immigration advice.

Immigration and asylum law information | Rights of Women

ESDAS have access to interpretation through Language is Everything and where possible use the same interpreter each time we talk to you and an interpreter of your preferred gender.

Further information
These are some organisations which may help you, and provide free and confidential services:

Southall Black Sisters: 020 8571 9595
Provides advice and information on domestic violence, racial harassment, welfare and immigration, primarily for Asian, African, and African-Caribbean women. Casework primarily undertaken in London Borough of Ealing but deals with enquiries on a national basis.
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

The Refugee Council: 020 7346 6777
The Refugee Council provides advice and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. They have a range of services for asylum seekers recently arrived in the UK, asylum seekers settled in the UK, and also offer advice to those who have received an asylum decision. Their offices can be visited in person or advice can be given by telephone, subject to the availability of interpreters.
Their website gives up to date information on legislation relating to asylum.
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
Email info@refugeecouncil.org.uk

National Asylum Support Service (NASS) for housing and financial support if you have made an application for asylum or on human rights grounds. NASS main switchboard: **0845 602 1739**
To obtain NASS support, you will need to go to the Refugee Council One Stop Service in your area (Check your phone book for your local number, call 020 7346 6700 or visit their website www.refugeecouncil.org.uk. Unless there are exceptional reasons to stay in your locality, in an emergency, you are likely to be housed anywhere in the country.

Refugee Legal Centre: 020 7377 5123
Free legal advice, advocacy and representation for refugees and asylum seekers concerning their status for remaining in the U.K.

Disability

If you are disabled, your abuser may also be your carer or your personal assistant (P.A.), and you may be reliant on him or her for personal care or mobility. You can be subject to physical, psychological, sexual or financial violence in any or all of the ways that non-disabled people are abused, but in addition you may experience the following forms of abusive behaviour:

• Your abuser may withhold care from you or undertake it neglectfully or abusively.
• Your abuser may remove mobility or sensory devices that you need for independence.
• Your abuser may be claiming state benefits to care for you – enabling him to control your finances more effectively.
• Your abuser may use your disability to taunt or degrade you.

If you are experiencing domestic violence, and you are disabled, you may find it harder to protect yourself or to access sources of help.

• You may be more physically vulnerable than a non-disabled person.
• You may be less able to remove yourself from an abusive situation.
• You may be socially isolated both because of your disability and because of your abuser's control of your social relationships.
• You may find it harder to disclose abuse because you have no opportunity to see health or social care professionals without your abuser being present.

If you are disabled, you may have concerns about moving out of your home: it may have been specially adapted for you; or perhaps a care package has been organised, and you are worried that you will lose your current level of independence if you are forced to move elsewhere. You may be reluctant to report domestic abuse from a partner whose care you depend on.

You may be reluctant to report domestic abuse, if you do not feel confident you will be believed, or that your concerns will be taken seriously. ESDAS will believe you and where appropriate help link you up with other helpful agencies such as adult social care.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, the ESDAS office has use of a hearing loop system.

Our office is accessible, with disabled toilets and a lift. Surrey also has a specialist disabilities advocate that can help you.

Domestic abuse and mental health

Domestic abuse can have an enormous effect on your mental health. If you have a mental health diagnosis, your partner may have used this to abuse you even more. For example:
• Saying you couldn't cope without him.
• Saying you're "mad".
• Not allowing you to go anywhere alone - because they are your "carer".
• Speaking for you: "You know you get confused/you're not very confident/you don't understand the issues".
• Telling you you're a bad mother and cannot look after the children properly.
• Forcing you to have an abortion because "you couldn't cope".
• Threatening to take the children away.
• Threatening to "tell Social Services" - the implication being they will take the children away.
• Deliberately misleading or confusing you.
• Withholding your medication.
• Withholding, or coercing you into using, alcohol or drugs.
• Undermining you when you disclose the abuse, or ask for help: "You can't believe her - she's mad."

These tactics will almost certainly add to your emotional distress.

Your mental health difficulties are **not** your fault, and you are not responsible for the abuse: the abuser is. You are entitled to help, as much as any other abused person, and if you have additional support needs, you should get help with them, too.

Other agencies

Deaf Health

https://signhealth.org.uk/with-deaf-people/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-service/

https://www.deaf-hope.org/

https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/branches/nassurrey-branch

LGBTQ+

Domestic abuse is a serious issue for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community. It's been reported that approximately 25% of LGBTQ+ individuals experience violent, abusive, or threatening relationships with partners or ex-partners*.

There are additional factors that may act as barriers for the LGBTQ + community to seek help:

- The fear of being 'outed' to friends, family or agencies when you are not ready.
- The misconception that domestic abuse is only physical abuse when it can be emotion, financial, sexual and psychological.
- Fear of homophobic reactions or a lack of understanding from the police, alienation from family or friend or that there is no help or refuge for someone who is LGBTQ+.
- Dependency on a partner to remain part of the 'scene' and the fear that losing the partner will result in rejection by the community that offers so much support.

If you would prefer support from a domestic abuse service that specialises in working with the LGBTQ+ community you may wish to contact:

South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Services (SWSDAS)

LGBTQ+ specialists offers support to survivors of domestic abuse

call: 01483 898884

Other sources of Help
https://galop.org.uk/

https://www.lovingme.uk/

https://catalystsupport.org.uk/services/outline-surrey/

Older victims

Domestic abuse affects people of all ages. However, older victims' experiences often differ to those of younger people, due to a variety of social, cultural and physical factors that require attention.

- For older victims, family members rather than intimate partners are most often the perpetrators of domestic abuse.

- Older women often feel expected to protect the family unit by staying with the abuser, and may fear losing relationships with adult children, family, and friends.

- For many older victims, abuse may become normalised and accepted, which can create barriers to getting help and support.

- Older victims may experience a decline in physical and cognitive health and become dependent on their abuser for support.

- In some cases older victims may also provide a caring role for their abuser which also impacts on their willingness to leave an abusive relationship.

- Ageist media and political campaigns against domestic abuse that predominantly focus on young women and children and erase the voices of older victims can contribute to barriers for older people reporting abuse and seeking help.

Specialist support is available in Surrey for older victims of domestic abuse that are 55 years or older.

https://wearehourglass.org/hourglass-services

Health and well-being and therapeutic support

The effects of domestic violence on your health

Domestic abuse has a considerable impact on yours, and your children's, health and well-being. The direct and immediate physical effects of domestic abuse include injuries such as bruises, cuts, broken bones, lost teeth and hair, miscarriage, stillbirth and other complications of pregnancy.

The impacts can also be long-term and may cause, or worsen, chronic health problems of various kinds, including asthma, epilepsy, digestive problems, migraine, hypertension, and skin disorders. Domestic abuse also has an enormous effect on your mental health, and may lead to increased use of alcohol, drugs and other substances. The health of your children is also likely to have been seriously affected from witnessing abuse directed at you and, in many cases, from abuse which they themselves may have suffered.

ESDAS has developed a short webinar exploring the impact of trauma, available on their website. Ask your outreach worker how to access this.

Getting support and immediate treatment

As a result of domestic abuse, you may need medical treatment both immediately and in the long-term. If you have sustained an injury, you should try to have it treated straight away. You could go to your GP or to an NHS Walk-in Centre, or to an Accident and Emergency Department or Minor Injuries Unit at your local hospital. For many people in East Surrey this will be at East Surrey Hospital in Redhill or Epsom hospital.

Do tell them how the injury occurred and ask them to record it – you may need this evidence later, if you are involved in court proceedings. Tell the doctor or nurse if you think you may be pregnant. In this case, you may need to be examined by a midwife, to ensure that the baby has not been affected by the abuse. Domestic abuse often starts or gets worse during pregnancy.

Sexual assault and rape and sexual health

Many people we support have experienced sexual assault or rape. We understanding that it can feel embarrassing or shameful to talk about, but this is not your fault or your shame to carry. Some people do not realise that what they have been subjected to is sexual assault or rape. People come to us with various needs, whether that is helping to report, seek medical help, find contraceptive or pregnancy advice, or counselling support.

Consent

It is helpful to understand what consent is. Consent is not ongoing and needs to be asked for every time any new form of sexual activity takes place, even if it is with an existing or previous sexual partner. A person consents if they agree by choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

Consent is not simply agreement. Someone may agree, however, without the freedom to say yes or no and the capacity to say yes or no, ('saying' here refers to both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication) there is **no consent.**

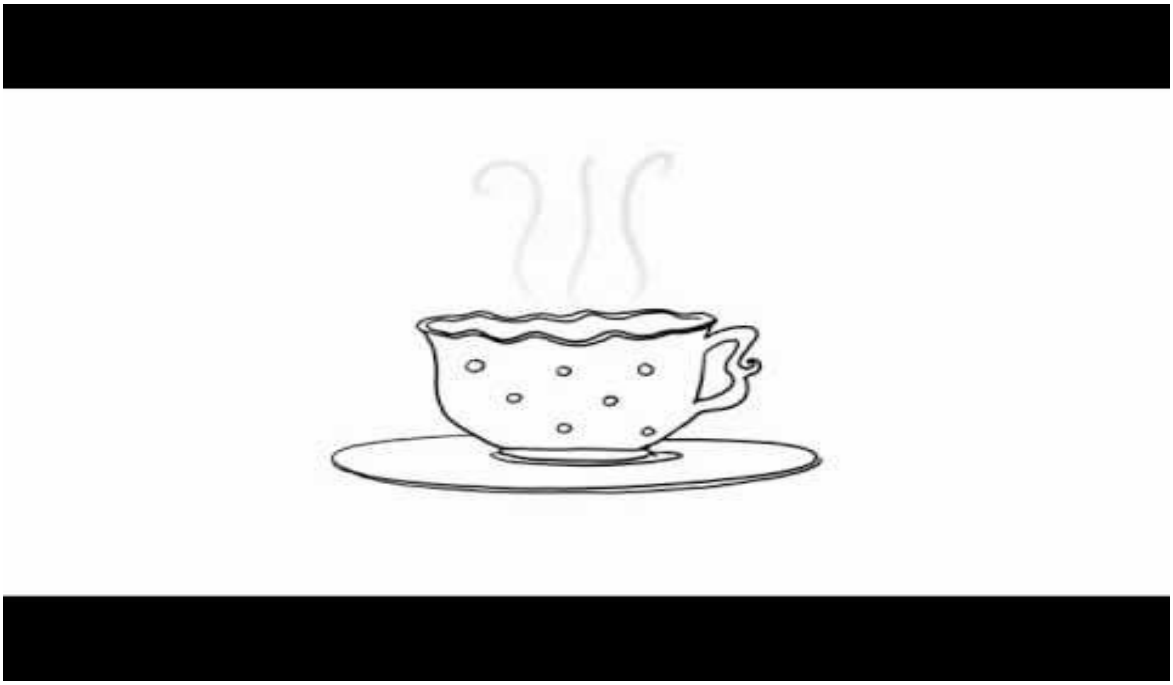
Children **12 years and under** are held as not having the capacity to legally consent to any form of sexual activity. As such, regardless of whether agreement is given, all sexual contact with a child 12 years or under is automatically non-consensual.
The legal age of consent is 16 for both men and women. This is the legal age regardless of the gender or sexual orientation and whether the activity is between people of the same of different sex. This means it is an offence for anyone to have any sexual activity with a person under the age of 16. It is important to note however, that the Home Office guidance is clear there is no intention to prosecute teenagers under the age of 16 where they are of a similar age and there is mutual consent.
It is also an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have any sexual contact with a person under the age of 18 if the older person holds a position of trust (for example a teacher or key worker).

A person accused of rape needs to prove not just that they believed in consent, but that this belief was reasonable.

The onus here is not on giving of consent but is on getting of consent. That is, the offence is committed when someone cannot prove that they took reasonable steps to check whether someone else was consenting to what was happening. The most reasonable step to take to ascertain consent is to ask.

This legal standard of reasonableness means that, if for example, someone was drunk to the point they were not making much sense, of they appeared indifferent or unresponsive, then it would not be considered reasonable to believe that they wanted to have sex. Recent guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service states that all the circumstances at the time of an offence will be looked at in deciding whether it is reasonable for the perpetrator to claim they believed the survivor consented. People will be considered most unlikely to have agreed to sexual activity if they were subject to threats or fear of serious harm, unconscious, drugged, abducted, asleep, or were unable to communicate because of a disability.

Penile penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth without consent is rape. This applies whether the people involved know each other, are currently or have been previously in a relationship, or are total strangers.



A rape or sexual assault may leave visible or forensic evidence and whilst preserving evidence may be the last thing on your mind in the aftermath of an attack, if you able to go to a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) they should be able to provide specialist medical and forensic services free of charge. There is a SARC in Surrey. https://surreysolace.org/ If you make a police report they will usually refer you to a SARC.

There are various agencies that can help you no matter what you decide to do;

https://www.rasasc.org/

https://rapecrisis.org.uk/

Flashbacks and trouble sleeping are normal response to trauma. *There are also lots of useful resources on The Survivors Trust resources website and self-help guides from the Lifecentre Help! I'm having a flashback! - Lifecentre*

Self-paced online resources.

Caring for yourself after sexual violence (FREE)

Courses • Bloom

Emergency contraception advice and STI screening can be found here as well how to access a sexual health clinic.

https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/sexual-health

Counselling

The overall aim of counselling is to provide an opportunity for you to work towards living in a way that you experience to be more satisfying and resourceful.

It may be about addressing and resolving specific problems, making decisions, coping with crisis, developing personal insight and knowledge, working through feelings of inner conflict, or improving relationships. Sessions last 50 minutes in a non-judgemental and safe environment.

The counsellor will use active listening reflecting and summarising to help you feel heard and validated.

You will have time to express your thoughts and emotions which can enable you to clear confusion and lessen feelings of isolation.

Exploring is also part of the process, which can help you to identify the right path for you and to have better self-understanding.

An understanding of patterns from the past can be useful in choosing a new way of being for the future.

Also, with gentle reality checking, unhelpful beliefs you have held about yourself and your world that have stopped you living happily can change.

How can it help?

If you have experienced domestic abuse you may be struggling with feelings of fear, confusion, indecision, reduced self-esteem and powerlessness. You may even believe that the abuse is in some way your fault. This is not unusual, and you are not alone in feeling the way you do. You may also have suffered from childhood sexual or physical abuse.

Counselling can help you to understand and make sense of your feelings and help to empower you in making informed choices for your life. The counsellor will not tell you what to do but will help you to make decisions for yourself.

What we can offer

ESDAS offers a professional counselling service. Our counsellors are members of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and are bound by BACP's Codes of Ethics and Practice and its complaints procedure. We offer short term counselling using an integrative model which tailors the type of counselling relationship to meet your needs. The maximum number of sessions offered is twelve.

What will you need to do?

You need to consider what other commitments you currently have and if this is the right time to undertake counselling.

Counselling is most effective if a series of sessions are attended on a weekly basis. You need to be able to commit to at least six weekly sessions and we ca offer a maximum of 12.

You are responsible for getting yourself to the counselling sessions at our office or we can offer telephone or video call sessions.

Further support

Samaritans provide a listening service for those in distress or considering suicide.
Call 116 123 or jo@samaritans.org.uk

DHC Talking therapies
(Dorking Healthcare) Locations: Holmhurst Medical Centre (Redhill/Merstham) , Caterham Valley Medical Practice, Smallfield Surgery, Age Concern at Merstham
Tel: 01306 735 459
https://dhctalkingtherapies.co.uk/

ieso Digital health
Telephone & online service: One-to-one cognitive behavioural therapy in real time using typed conversation over secure internet connection Tel: 01954 23 066 www.iesohealth.com/surrey

Mind Matters
Locations: Redhill, Oxted, Caterham, Reigate, Dorking, Epsom Tel: 0300 330 5450 www.mindmattersnhs.co.uk
People who use this service also get access to SilverCloud which is a secure platform allowing immediate access to online CBT programmes tailored to your needs. You complete the modules at your own pace.

We Are With You (previously Think Action)
Locations: Redhill, Caterham, Reigate, Oxted Tel: 01737 225 370 Text: TALK to 82085 https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/help-and-advice/find-service/how-we-help-mental-health/

We also provide an online program 'Get Out, Get Love', which can be accessed by yourself and done in your own time. Please contact ESDAS for a log in code so you can be given free access. There is also a support group again ask ESDAS for details.
'It's a digital self-delivered recovery programme for all adults, all sexes, and ages - to support your empowerment'. It is read by a male, but you can turn his voice off. There is a lot of content within it, so do take your time.
It does have two sections that you can do separately, and we would suggest looking at these first. One is focused on self-compassion, and the other is a guided med that you can follow:

https://www.getoutgetlove.com/selfcompassion
https://www.getoutgetlove.com/guidedmed

Alcohol and other drugs

Women experiencing domestic abuse sometimes turn to alcohol or drugs as a response to and a form of escape from the abuse. If you have found that you are using alcohol and/or drugs (including prescription drugs) to help you cope with the abuse, it is important that you receive the support you need. Your ability to plan for your safety may be affected, and you are likely to feel very isolated.

Sometimes the abuse will have been so much a part of your life and for so long that you regard it as "normal" or believe that nothing can be done about it. Some women are introduced to substances by their abusive partners as a way of increasing control over them. If this is how it is for you, or if your abuser is also your supplier, then you will find it even harder to get away.

Sometimes abusers will use their partner's addiction or misuse of substances as an excuse for violent behaviour, saying they have been "provoked" into using violence. Excuses such as these are used by the perpetrator to deflect responsibility from themselves and put the focus or blame for the abuse onto the victim. Your abuser must be held accountable for his actions and should not be excused because of things you might have done.

Seeking treatment for drug or alcohol issues

Your outreach worker can make referrals to local specialist help. They can help explain what has happened to you and might be able to attend appointments. We have included a list of supportive organisations below.

Further information

https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services/drug-and-alcohol/i-access-surrey/iaccess-drug-alcohol

https://catalystsupport.org.uk/

https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/

Surviving after abuse: Looking after yourself and moving on

When the abuse is finally over - you have arranged all the practical things like housing, money, schools for the children, and you feel reasonably sure that your abuser has stopped harassing you - you may be expecting to feel great. But that is unlikely to happen straight away. Recovering from abuse by someone who was close to you is a long process, and the damage may stay with you and your children for years.

Once you are away from the abuse, and it is safe to allow yourself to feel again, you may have a sense of anti-climax. You are likely to experience grief, pain and a deep sense of loss: your trust will have been betrayed, your self-esteem and confidence are shattered. In many ways it is like being bereaved - and as with a bereavement, healing will take time.

Looking after yourself

Treat yourself gently - don't rush the healing process; and don't expect to achieve everything you want straight away. Maybe you want to make huge changes - by changing your whole lifestyle, joining local organisations, returning to education, looking for a (different) job. This is all fine if that is how you are feeling - but if you don't want to change anything else at this point, that is fine, too. It's good to have hopes and ambitions for the future but try to set realistic goals and move at your own pace, rather than being concerned about what others might be thinking.

You may feel lonely and isolated: sometimes when you come home to an empty house or flat, it might seem that even an abusive partner was better than no-one. Getting a pet may help the home feel less empty. Perhaps your partner cut you off from friends and family, so now you feel there is no-one you can talk to or go out with. It may not be too late to re-establish contact with past friends - and you can think about opportunities to make new friends and acquaintances.

Some of the things you might like to do:

- take time and space for yourself each day
- reward yourself for the small things
- do something you enjoy, and are good at
- take regular exercise – for example, try swimming, dancing, walking or climbing
- learn a new skill - for example, yoga, meditation, self-defence
- be creative: try drawing, painting, writing
- singing can be uplifting, look for a local rock choir
- try to get outside as much as possible, even if for short periods
- practice relaxation exercises, for example breathing exercises, Tai Chi, meditation or massage.
- play your favourite music or listen to a podcast

It's also important to eat well, and to get enough sleep, if you can. Self care needn't mean spending lots of money or taking up too much time, but it is important to start prioritising your own needs.

The Healthy Surrey website has a vast amount of information about courses available and support services you can access. Please see the link below.

ESDAS also offers a counselling service which is free of charge to anyone unable to donate, please do contact us if you would like to discuss this further.

If you felt your mental health was at breaking point you can contact the Mental Health crisis helpline on 0800 915 4644 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

In an emergency, please call 999 or go to Accident and Emergency (A&E) – many of which have psychiatric liaison services.

The Stay Alive App is a pocket suicide prevention resource, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else who may be considering suicide.
Shout UK - Crisis text line - text: 85258
The Samaritans - Tel. 116 123 (free helpline number)
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Website: **www.samaritans.org**

https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/mental-wellbeing/adults

https://thelucyraynerfoundation.com/

Gaining confidence

Living with someone who was always putting you down, criticising you, controlling you and being abusive or violent towards you, will have sapped your self-confidence and your belief in yourself. You may find it hard (or impossible) to make decisions, even about small things - because your abuser did not allow you to make choices for yourself. You may find managing money very difficult: maybe your ex-partner controlled all the household finances; you are probably having to manage on a very limited income; and perhaps you had to leave behind many of your personal possessions.

You have already taken a huge step in leaving your abuser. Give yourself credit for that. Then think of all the other things you have achieved in your life and build up a mental list that you can return to when you are feeling low.

You may find it helpful to talk about your experiences with other women who have also been in abusive relationships. Products focusing on building self-confidence - such as self-help books, podcasts and courses - are widely available. You may find the following websites helpful:

https://www.waythrough.org.uk/find-support-near-me/east-surrey-community-connections/

https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/mental-wellbeing/five-ways-to-wellbeing
https://www.maryfrancestrust.org.uk/

https://actionforhappiness.org/course

https://www.futurelearn.com/subjects/psychology-and-mental-health-courses/mindfulness-wellbeing

ESDAS are often aware of courses and events running locally so do speak to your outreach worker and check our social media for events that might be of interest.

Self compassion is a skill that can really help us to support ourselves while we navigate the path towards recovery. Self-compassion does not rely on having high self-esteem or lots of confidence but instead meets us right where we are and gently encourages us to be our own best friend. For more information search Kristen Neff via YouTube where you will find some short videos explaining the concept of self-compassion in more detail and her website for some useful resources.

Work, training, education and beyond

They may come a time when you might like to re-enter the workplace or learn a new skill. There is plenty of support to help with this. Sometimes ESDAS has access to life coaching, this can be valuable support on helping you establish your next steps.

Young people aged 18-30 can also make use of The Young Women's Trust who provide coaching, CV support and interview skills.

Get support | Young Women's Trust

The employers domestic abuse covenant - The Employers Domestic Abuse Covenant (EDAC) is a pledge by businesses to support women affected by abuse to enter or re-enter the workplace. Employers are invited to sign the covenant and identify opportunities within their businesses for women seeking sustainable employment opportunities. They post job opportunities on their website as well as life and work skills.

Build Work Skills - EDAC

Further learning opportunities can be found here;

Adult learning - Surrey County Council

Free Professional CV Templates 2025 - FutureLearn

Help if you're unemployed - Surrey Care Trust

Surrey and N.E Hants Employment Service - Waythrough

Further information

Helpful books

1. It's not you. How to identify and heal from narcissistic people by Dr. Ramani Durvasula

2. Why hasn't anyone told me this before? By Dr Julie Smith

3. What happened to you? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience and Healing by Dr. Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey

4. Atlas of the Heart by Brene Brown

5. Was it even abuse? Restoring clarity after covert abuse by Emma Rose Byham

6. The comfort book by Matt Haig

7. Should I stay or should I go? Surviving a relationship with a narcissist by Dr. Ramani Durvasula

8. Untamed by Glennon Doyle

9. The Mountain is you by Brianna Wiest

10. Atomic Habits by James Clear

Making a complaint

We are committed to providing the best possible standard of service for survivors. However, if you feel this hasn't been the case, we want to understand the situation, make every effort to resolve it and learn from it so that we can improve the service that we offer. We have a three-stage process for making a complaint.
It includes making an informal complaint in the first instance or a more formal complaint if you feel the informal process does not resolve the matter. For full details on how to make a complaint, please ask your outreach worker for a copy of our Compliments and Complaints Policy.

Compliments

Just like complaints, compliments help us develop a service that works for you. If you would like to leave a compliment you can give feedback to your outreach worker or follow the link below.

https://secure.oasiscloud.co.uk/OASISDA/Core/Public/Data/feedback.aspx?gguid=6a97f532-9145-4f16-9858-ed1fcefb032b

We store information in line with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 2018.

1. The information you provide is confidential unless:

a. You consent to information being shared **OR**

b. You or any children are likely to be seriously injured – this will usually be called 'at high risk of serious harm'

2. We will always try and tell you when information is being shared unless it is not safe for you or your children or if we can't contact you.

3. If we must share information in this situation, we will only share relevant information that will improve you and / or your child[ren's] safety.

4. If we do not have your consent to share information, we will talk this situation through with a senior member of the team (where they are not available prior to the

decision, the decision taken by the outreach worker will be reviewed within 48 hours) and will write on your case file what we have shared, why and who with.

5. You have a right to access your file, please contact the service which will advise you of the process. This can be done informally through a request through your outreach worker, or more formally though a Subject Access Request to Support@esdas.org.uk. You can find out more information about making a Subject Access Request here: A guide to subject access | ICO

6. Your record is stored on OASIS, our case management system for 6 years. If it has been over 6 years since you last had contact with our service, your case file will automatically be deleted.

Information sharing

How will we treat any information that you give us?

We will use information you give us to help keep you and any children safe. We will also use this information to improve the service we offer you and others.

- Generally, the information that you share with us about yourself, your family and others and your situation will be treated as confidential by ESDAS. This means that only authorised people at ESDAS will have access to this information unless you say otherwise.
- There may be times when it is useful for someone from ESDAS to share information about you with other agencies. Unless your situation is 'high risk' your case worker must ask for your permission to share this information, and you will be able to say yes or no.

Currently we are part of a national research programme and may share anonymised information about our work.

Nothing that could identify you or your children (for example, names, addresses, birthdays) would ever be shared or made public because of this research.