

People experiencing domestic abuse

You should always feel safe in your home. If you feel unsafe or threatened, call the police. In an emergency, always call 999.

You should be safe from any kind of abusive behaviour. This includes physical violence, controlling behaviour, financial and sexual abuse. You can get support for any kind of situation, including staying safe in or [leaving your home](#).

The Housing Executive will never talk to your abuser about your situation. But they may want to speak to people or groups that you've reached out to, such as a solicitor, friend or family member.

Support if you're affected by domestic abuse

There are several organisations that can help you, including:

- [24-hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse helpline](#)
- [LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline](#)
- [The Men's Advisory Project](#)
- [Women's Aid NI](#)

If you're not entitled to benefits because of your immigration status, it can be harder to think about leaving an abusive situation. Speak to one of the organisations above to check if you can get help.

Staying in your home

If you decide to stay in your home, you must take measures to stay safe. You should speak to:

- [a solicitor](#) about getting a court order to keep the abuser away from you and your home
- the Housing Executive if you are one of their tenants. They may be able to help make your home safer

Keep an abuser away from you and your home

Depending on the type and extent of the domestic abuse, it can be dealt with in both the criminal and civil courts. The Belfast Area Domestic Violence Partnership has produced [information on what the law can do to help you](#).

But, the two main types of court orders that a solicitor can help you get to keep you safe from an abuser are:

- An occupation order means that an abuser must stay away from your home, and they cannot live in your home. It gives you the right to remain in the home. You can get an occupation order even if you're not the main tenant or owner, or if the abuser is the legal owner or tenant. You must call the police if the abuser breaks the court order.
- A non-molestation order prevents an abuser from harassing, threatening or attacking you. It also prevents them from coming to your home or anywhere near you. It helps give you time to stay in your home and make long-term decisions.

Get help keeping your home safe

If you decide to stay in your home, you should take action to make it safer.

If you are a Housing Executive tenant, they might be able to help you. They run a [sanctuary scheme](#) that can install proper security (such as alarms and CCTV). To access the scheme, the police will need to check your home first.

Leaving your home

If you feel that leaving your home is the best option, contact the Housing Executive. They should assess your situation to see what help they can give you. You must tell them about what has happened to you, even if it is difficult to talk about it.

The Housing Executive will have a **legal duty** to give you temporary housing if they believe that you:

- are homeless or cannot go back to your home, and
- have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence in your home. This is also known as having a 'priority need'

The Housing Executive should offer you temporary accommodation if you meet these criteria. Temporary accommodation could be a place in a hostel, B&B or a 'single let' in a privately rented house. The temporary accommodation may be outside the area where you have been living.

You should [get advice from one of our advisers](#) if the Housing Executive doesn't give you temporary accommodation. You might be able to challenge the decision.

If you need somewhere to stay at the weekend or when the Housing Executive offices are closed, you should contact:

- the [Housing Executive out-of-hours service](#) or
- one of the [hostels](#) that take self-referrals

You can get free bus or rail tickets from the Housing Executive or Women's Aid to travel to a refuge or emergency accommodation.

You might still have to pay rent on your home, even if you have left it. You can [get help paying for two homes](#) if you:

- left because of threats of violence and
- you plan to go back and
- you're entitled to benefits.

If you left because of domestic abuse and your rent is not covered by benefits, [speak to our advisers](#) for help.