

# Domestic **VIOLENCE**



## Take **Control**

Information pack by

Epping Forest

Domestic Violence Action Group

*Epping Forest Domestic Violence Action Group*



# What is this information pack about?

This pack has been put together by Epping Forest Domestic Violence Action Group.

It is about domestic violence, what you can do about it and where you can get help, advice and support if you, or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence.

The pack is for anyone who is in a violent relationship, including men and people in gay or lesbian relationships.

Domestic violence includes any form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse between people in a close relationship. It can take a number of forms such as physical assault, sexual abuse, rape, threats and intimidation. Intimidation can be degradation, mental and verbal abuse, humiliation, deprecation, systematic criticism and belittling.

## **Important information to consider if you are in a close relationship -**

- You are not the only one suffering in this way
- You are not to blame
- You cannot change your abuser's behaviour
- Ignoring violence is dangerous
- Break the silence – do not remain isolated
- There is life after an abusive relationship

# Basic Benefits

**Child Benefit** – This is payable to the mother of dependant children while they are in full-time education. It is for a fixed amount per child and is not means tested. It is deducted for Income Support, but not from Working Families Tax Credit.

**Income Support** – This is a "top up" benefit which means it is means tested – that is most income you receive from other sources will be deducted from it. This includes any maintenance payments. You must not be available for work and not in full-time work. You will be allowed to keep up to £15 from any part-time work. The rest is deducted from your benefit.

**Working Families Tax Credit** – This is also a "top-up" benefit, but maintenance is not taken into account.

**Child Support Agency** – If you go onto Income Support or Income-based Jobseekers Allowance you will be contacted by the CSA regarding maintenance. If your partner is violent, or there is risk of harm, you do not have to give his name or any information that will identify him. The Secretary of State is then not obliged to pursue any claim for maintenance.

**Housing Benefit** – This is help for your rent only and is means tested. You put your claim into Epping Forest District Council Civic Offices.

**Council Tax Benefit** – This is help with your Council Tax and you claim this from the Civic Offices. If you are a single adult you may be eligible for a 25% reduction and should apply for it. If you are on Income Support you will not have to pay any Council Tax as long as you apply for it.

**Jobseekers Allowance** – If you wish to sign on as available for work then this is done at the Jobcentre. Income is the same as Income Support.

# Citizens Advice Bureaux

The CAB provides a service for both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

They can advise on all issues involved in the situation, including separation, rights to housing, income and responsibilities towards children.

Basic information is available on injunctions, but reference to a solicitor is necessary if you wish to take one out. On the other hand trained CAB staff will just listen if you need someone impartial to talk to.

They do not see both parties to a dispute and will refer the second party to another agency.

Although CAB staff cannot act as your legal representatives a 20 minute consultation with a solicitor can be arranged by appointment.

Specialist appointments for advice on money matters, welfare rights, employment and income tax are available on referral by a general advisor.

Branches of the CAB in Epping Forest District are located at:

## **Epping –**

**50a Hemnall Street, Epping, CM16 4LS, telephone 01992-574989.**

Open 10am – 2pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Wednesday 5pm – 7pm. No appointment necessary.

## **Loughton –**

**St. Mary's Parish Centre, High Road, Loughton, IG10 1BB, telephone 020 8502 0031.**

Open 10am – 1pm Monday to Friday and 2pm – 4pm Monday and Wednesday. Staff are also available 10am – 1pm Tuesday and Thursday at the library in Rectory Lane, Loughton, just a short walk from the Debden London Underground station.

## **Waltham Abbey –**

**Town Hall (side entrance) Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1ED telephone 01992-710353.**

Open 10am – 1pm Monday to Friday and 6pm – 8pm Monday evening.

# Crisis Planning

Admitting to yourself and others that you are experiencing domestic violence may seem very difficult BUT it is an important step in the journey towards seeking protection for yourself and your children.

**It is not your fault. You are not alone. You have the right to live your life free from fear.**

Sometimes victims of domestic violence leave home in a hurry in order to escape from assault or to make a break for safety and sanity.

**It can help if you make some plans.**

- **Making a Crisis Plan is a way of feeling more in control, more positive and confident. Here is a suggested plan of action that you can add to or change to suit your circumstances:**
- Find somewhere with quick and easy access to a 'phone, maybe a neighbour, friend or other contact
- Make – and always carry with you – a list of emergency numbers. Include friends, relatives and local police as even well known numbers can be forgotten in a panic
- Try to save some money for bus, train, taxi fares
- Have an extra set of keys cut for your home and car
- Keep the keys and a set of clothes for you and your children packed and ready in a bag somewhere easily accessible
- Explain to your children, if they are old enough to understand, that you might have to leave home in a hurry. Assure them you will take them with you or arrange for them to join you as soon as possible.  
Discuss your Crisis Plan with them

## Crisis Planning - 2

- **If you have more time to plan, do as much as possible of the following:**
- Leave when your partner is not around
- Take all the children with you
- Take legal and financial papers, marriage and birth certificates, court orders, national health cards, passports, driving licence, child benefit books, address book, bank books, cheque book, credit cards and all other important documents
- Take any personal possessions that have sentimental value such as photographs or jewellery
- Take favourite toys for children
- Take clothing or at least several days
- Take any medicines you or your children might need
- If you have pets and are worried about them arrange for someone to care for them. An animal charity may be able to help
- If you do leave and realise you have forgotten something important you can always arrange for the protection of a police escort to return home to collect it

# Essex County Council Social Services

If your children are living in a violent situation they are considered to be "children in need" under the Childrens Act. Social Services have a duty to support families with children in need and to ensure that the children are safe from harm.

A social worker could assess your child's needs in order to offer support, counselling or therapy. If Social Services are unable to provide you with the help you need, the social worker may be able to offer advice and support in approaching other agencies. Social Services can also provide you with information about childminders, playgroups, nurseries, self-help groups and counselling services.

They understand that your problems may be of a very personal nature so all information is treated in the strictest confidence. If you are unable to contact Social Services yourself you can always ask someone else to do it for you. You can also have a friend or relative with you whenever you talk to Social Services staff.

**Contact Essex Social Service Direct on:**

**01279-426102**

**Fax: 01279-454033**

**Minicom: 01279-424197**

**OR**

**Essex County Council Social Services Helpline,**

**Monday to Thursday 9am - 5.30pm**

**Friday 9am - 4.30pm**

**01245-434090**

**Out of Hours**

**01245-434083**

# Epping Forest District Council

## Homelessness Section

The Homelessness team is based on the ground floor of the Civic Offices at the end of the High Street in Epping.

If you are a woman fleeing domestic violence staff in the homelessness section will help respond to your needs quickly. If you need an immediate place of safety they can refer you to a Women's Refuge where you can stay whilst your longer term needs are addressed.

The office is open Monday to Thursday between 9am and 5pm and 9am to 4.45pm on Friday. Afternoons and Friday mornings tend to be quieter, although you can always be sure of an interview in private. Anything discussed with a Homelessness officer is kept strictly confidential.

Epping Forest District Council tenants may wish to talk in confidence to their local housing manager. They are based at:

- Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, telephone 01992-564000.  
(For tenants living **in Ongar and surrounding villages, Waltham Abbey, Epping, Abridge and Theydon Bois**)
- 63The Broadway, **Loughton**, telephone 01992-564000. (For tenants living in Loughton)
- 661a Copperfield, Chigwell, telephone 020 8559 8883. This office is open Monday to Friday between 9am and 1pm, for tenants living in **Chigwell and Buckhurst Hill**.

# Your health matters - Look after yourself

A violent relationship will affect you both physically and emotionally.

You may feel tired and run down or depressed and unable to cope. You may feel ashamed of what is happening to you and some people turn to alcohol or drugs to try and get through it.

Although it is difficult, remember that your health is important. Talk about your feelings and remember it is not your fault.

- Talk to your GP, Practice Nurse, Health Visitor or School Nurse at a Health Centre – they will listen to you and support you
- Seek medical attention for your injuries from your GP or the hospital accident and emergency department – injuries can be serious
- Talk to a drug or alcohol Counselling Service – local organisations are listed in the telephone directory
- Contact Women's Aid, they can support you

## What about your children

Children are often harmed both physically and emotionally in violent relationships. Children will feel afraid and insecure in a violent home and they need to express their feelings too. They may be withdrawn and show signs of anxiety. If your children have been abused Social Services will help you to support them.

If you leave home you can take your children to the refuge with you. You can arrange local schools or nurseries and help your children to make a new life with you.

Discuss your child's health with the Health Visitor, School Nurse or GP.

# How the Police can help...

.....if you, or someone you know, is the victim of domestic violence.

Essex Police will deal promptly and positively with any domestic incident they are called to attend.

The Police have Domestic Violence Liaison Officers and other experts who can give advice.

Children can be victims too – the Essex Police Child Protection Unit is there to protect the welfare of children who are victims of emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Where necessary the person responsible for the violence will be arrested.

Officers will try to take action that will protect you from further abuse.

The Police work closely with other local agencies such as Women's Aid, Victim Support and Housing in order to get the support you need.

## What to do if you need help

### In an emergency always dial 999

Otherwise contact direct:

Epping Police	<b>01992-561212</b>
Loughton Police	<b>020 8502 3881</b>
Ongar Police	<b>01277-362013</b>
Waltham Abbey	<b>01992-652800</b>

You can ask the police to:

- respond quickly to your call.
- talk to you separately from the abuser
- arrest the abuser when there is sufficient evidence
- get you immediate medical treatment if you need it
- provide transport to a refuge or other safe place
- keep records of all incidents of domestic violence
- accompany you and protect you if you wish to return home to collect your belongings

# The Probation Service

Probation Officers work with offenders at most stages of the criminal justice process.

Initially they contribute to decisions about bail and sentence by preparing reports and giving advice to the courts.

Within this task victim issues are considered.

Offenders may be supervised whilst on a community sentence or during and after prison. Some may have committed offences of domestic violence or they may refer to the problem while being supervised for offences of a different nature.

In all cases such behaviour is confronted and actively challenged either through individual one-to-one work, groupwork or by referral to a specialist agency.

Probation Officers work jointly with other organisations within the community whenever this is appropriate.

Some offenders may be victims of domestic violence. They will be provided with information about their rights and offered support if they want to discuss their experiences.

## **Essex Probation Service**

### **West Essex Probation & Community Service Units**

**3rd Floor, Market House**

**Stone Cross**

**Harlow, CM20 1BL**

**Telephone 01279-410692    Fax: 01279-454116**

# Victim Support

Victim Support is a national organisation set up to offer emotional support and practical advice to victims of crime and other traumatic events – including domestic violence.

## What the service offers

- Locally based offices
- Trained volunteer visitors who LISTEN to you, in a safe place, without making judgments
- Practical advice about the steps you may wish to take
- Support by accompanying you to court, if necessary
- Free and confidential service

## Contact us at:

**Kingsmoor House,  
Paringdon Road,  
Harlow, Essex CM19 4QT  
Telephone 01279-641074**

or

**Town Hall,  
Highbridge Street,  
Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1DE  
Telephone 01992-650471**

# The Herts & Essex Family Mediation Service

Mediation is a way of resolving disputes that you might have in your family, particularly about your children.

Many people come to mediation to talk to each other and make practical arrangements for contact (access), residence (custody), parental responsibility (in the case of unmarried parents) and many other issues regarding children.

You can also come to mediation to make arrangements regarding finances and property whether you are married or unmarried, with or without children.

Mediators do not take sides or make decisions for you. They provide a safe environment and are trained and experienced in helping to make agreed arrangements for continued parenting and financial matters when families separate.

We see each person who wishes to come to mediation separately before arranging joint appointments. This is to assess the suitability of mediation and eligibility for free, publicly funded mediation.

If you think you and your children might benefit from using our service please give us a ring.

Our office is open from 9am – 5pm Monday to Thursday and Friday 9am - 4pm. There is an answer phone if you want to call at other times. We can give you information about mediation, begin to arrange appointments (at a time to suit you) or simply send you a leaflet.

**Our 'phone number is 01279 426749**

# Women's Aid

Women's Aid can give you and your children a safe place to stay and confidential information and advice at any time of the day or night.

## **What is a refuge?**

It is a safe house for women and children fleeing from domestic violence. You can stay while you sort out your problems and decide what to do next. Domestic violence may be physical, emotional or sexual and is often caused by husbands, fathers, sons or male relatives.

## **How do you gain access?**

You may ring direct on the 24-hour crisis-line number – **01279-836611**. Other agencies such as the Police, Social Services, your doctor, health visitor or your local housing office can also the refuge.

You will never be turned away or left in danger. If the local refuge is full a space will be found for you in another refuge and transport provided to get you there.

## **What to expect when you get there**

On arrival you will be welcomed by a worker who will book you in and explain what life is like in a refuge. You and your children will have a bedroom to yourselves. In Harlow the bedrooms include washing facilities and in Broxbourne they are bedsitter units with cooking facilities.

There are communal sitting rooms, dining rooms, shower/bath rooms and laundry facilities which you will share with other families. Both refuges have fully equipped children's rooms with qualified child workers.

During your stay you will receive help with benefits, legal rights and housing.

There are no "sleep in" staff at refuges. This is because the Women's Aid philosophy is to empower women and children to take back control of their lives. A member of staff is contactable at any time, but the most valuable source of support in a refuge is from other women in a similar situation.

# Women's Aid - 2

## **What do you need to bring with you?**

If possible bring personal belongings such as toiletries, towels, clothing for yourself and your children and favourite toys. Also some forms of ID such as birth certificates, passport or driving licence and your Income Support and Child Benefit books.

If you leave in a hurry, don't worry. Women's Aid have emergency food and clothing and can arrange for you to return home with a police escort to collect the things you need.

The refuge is fully furnished and equipped so there is no need to bring large items of furniture.

## **Children in Refuges**

There are workers in the refuge who are there to meet the needs of your children. The children's rooms are equipped to a standard that fulfils the demands of the Childrens Act. The child worker's approach is to create a safe environment for children to express their feelings without fear or judgement. Women's Aid seeks to empower children and help make them aware of their right to choose for themselves. They are also encouraged to have a good time.

Women's Aid is committed to the development of equal opportunities for all women and their children regardless of age, marital status, creed, colour, race, sexual orientation, disability or HIV status.

Its aim is to create an environment which reflects cultural diversity for residents and workers alike, where racist or sexist abuse is totally unacceptable.