

# Domestic abuse: women's refuges

**This factsheet is about women's refuges and how you can find a place in one if you need to escape domestic abuse.**

A refuge is a safe place to live if you need to escape domestic abuse. You will also get support to help you move on.

## Finding a place in a women's refuge

Call the free 24-hour [National Domestic Violence \(NDV\) helpline](https://www.ndv.org.uk) on 0808 2000 247 to find a place in a refuge. You will probably be offered somewhere immediately but, for reasons of safety, this is likely to be away from your local area.

Refuge addresses and phone numbers are confidential and you must not give them to anyone else. Refuge staff will tell you how to get there and what you can bring with you.

Some refuges have a policy not to accept boys aged around 12 or over; the NDV helpline will advise you on your options if you have a son of this age.

## Specialist refuges

Tell the NDV helpline if you have particular needs such as alcohol or drug problems, as you might get a place in a specialist refuge. Some refuges also cater for particular religious or cultural needs.

## Living in a refuge

You will usually have a private bedroom for you and your children, and share a bathroom and kitchen with other residents. Some refuges have children's facilities, and some have self-contained family units. Children and young people can find out what refuges are like at [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

Living in a refuge can be difficult as you have to share space with other people. Refuges encourage residents to sort out problems or arguments through discussion, perhaps at a regular meeting.

## Support services

The refuge staff will develop a support plan based on your individual needs. For example, you might get counselling to help you understand your situation better. Find out more about support services in the Survivor's Handbook at [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

Your children might need support to settle into a new school, and to understand that they are not to blame for the abuse.

## Refuge rules

You must abide by the rules of the refuge, otherwise you may have to leave.

The most important rules are:

- don't give the address to anyone
- pay your rent and support charges
- work with the support service offered.

You are not allowed to smoke or take drugs in a refuge. You may be allowed to drink alcohol in your own room.

Each refuge has its own codes of conduct on day-to-day matters such as rotas for the washing machine and children's bedtimes.

## Help with paying for a refuge

The main costs are the rent, and a personal charge to cover utilities (eg gas and water). You may be able to claim benefits to help you pay the rent, but you will still have to pay the personal charge. The refuge will advise you about any benefits or other help you can claim.

## Length of stay

You can usually stay in a refuge for between six and 12 months. You will get 28 days' notice. Refuge staff will help you to find alternative accommodation.

## Help after leaving a refuge

You should get support, eg budgeting help, for around 12 weeks after you leave a refuge to help you settle into a new home. You won't get this if you go back to your partner, but you can seek a refuge place again in the future, as many times as you need it.

## Men's refuges

There are a few refuge places for men. Call the [Men's Advice Line](https://www.mensadvice.org.uk) on 0808 801 0327.

## Further advice

You can get further advice from [england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice](http://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice), local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice. If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on 0808 800 4444 for advice and information on your options.\*

\*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



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