

## Women's Refuge

There are women's refuges or safe houses in various parts of Devon and other areas of the country should you need to move well away from your local area. They offer safe emergency accommodation whether you are single or have children. They can be contacted 24 hours a day either directly or via the police or other support agencies. They provide emotional, practical, legal and financial advice and support to help you decide on your longer-term options.

## Outreach Support

Across Devon there is a network of community based specialist outreach support workers who can help you if you do not want to go into a Refuge or approach any of the statutory agencies. The kind of support they can offer includes confidential telephone and face to face advice, support and information. The service is available to both men and women victims and can be contacted either directly or via another agency or your doctor.

**The time of separation can be a risk so ensure you consider the safety of yourself and children or speak to an outreach worker about how to make a safety plan**

## Who to contact

### In an emergency ring 999

**National 24 hour helpline** 0808 2000 247

**RESPECT Helpline for perpetrators**  
0845 122 8609

**Devon MALE** 0845 064 6800

### Women's Outreach Services

**East Devon** 01392 435560

**Exeter** 01392 426483

**Mid Devon** 01392 426521

**North Devon** 01271 321946

**South Devon** 01364 644088

**West Devon** 01837 55228



For one in four households it's not 'home sweet home'. Behind these front doors there is torment, agony and suffering. Domestic violence and abuse must stop.

**It's a crime.**

**adva**  
against domestic violence and abuse  
in Devon

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**0808 2000 247**

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## What is domestic violence and abuse?

Domestic violence and abuse is essentially about the misuse of power and the exercise of control by one person over another within an intimate relationship. It can begin at any time during a relationship, is rarely a one-off event and often increases in frequency and severity over a period of time. It can take many forms not just physical violence but also sexual attacks, bullying, threats, mental and verbal abuse, humiliation, financial control and deprivation of movement.

## Who experiences domestic violence and abuse?

Anyone can be subjected to domestic violence and abuse. It is most often experienced by women but men can also be affected, as can partners in same sex relationships and in other close family relationships.

There is no single identifiable “type” of perpetrator. It cuts across all boundaries of social group, class, age, race, religion, culture, disability, sexuality, and lifestyle.

Children are always affected by living with domestic violence although their response to it will vary and may show in emotional disturbance, poor school attendance and achievement, withdrawal and bullying or aggressive behaviour. Children need to be protected from this abuse and agencies are there to help.

## What can I do about it?

**Recognise that you are in an abusive relationship** - although this is difficult you have the right to live safely and without being abused.

**Recognise it isn't your fault** - your abuser is likely to try and convince you that the violence is your fault BUT abuse is always the responsibility of the abuser.

**Recognise children are affected and need protecting** - Agencies are there to help. They will not want to take your children away from you.

### Help is out there for you

#### Police

The police take domestic violence and abuse seriously. An attack in your own home is a crime and is just as serious as an attack by a stranger. You have the right to protection in your own home.

Call the police if you feel threatened in any way. Do not be afraid to call 999 and get help as quickly as possible. The police will always respond to domestic violence incidents no matter how often or when they are called. They have a duty to investigate any complaint you make because your partner or ex-partner is hurting or threatening you or your children. Your abuser should be arrested or removed so that you can be interviewed separately. The police will arrange for medical assistance and advise you of your options, whether you want to leave or stay in your own home. Above all they will ensure you are safe and protected.

Police Domestic Violence Officers will contact you after an incident has been reported or you can phone them directly. They will provide advice on personal safety and security and can help you find other sources of help in deciding what you should do about your situation. They will also ensure you are kept informed about what action the police are taking and that you get support if the matter goes to court. You can speak in confidence to them even if you do not wish for any official police involvement.

#### Legal help

If you don't feel ready to involve the police, it is possible to get help through the civil courts by getting a protection order (also known as an injunction). These orders could make your abuser go away and stay away from you, or stop them from intimidating or harassing you. The court can also attach a “power of arrest” which means the police can arrest your abuser if the order is broken. If you have little or no income costs can be met from Legal Aid.

#### Housing

If you decide your safest option is to leave home you have the right to temporary accommodation from the housing authority. This can either be provided within your local area or elsewhere in the country. The housing authority has a duty to find you safe alternative accommodation on the day you make a claim for help. They will then assess your claim and provide the further accommodation services you require to remain safe.