

## Preparing to leave



- If you can, pack a bag with the things you will need if you leave.
- Keep it in a safe place away from home or somewhere where your abuser will not find it.

### Useful things to bring

#### Identification:

- Driving licence, passport
- Birth certificates for you and your children
- Work/benefits
- Proof of your National Insurance No.
- Benefit books
- Work permit (if you're not a British citizen)

#### Money:

- Bank cards
- Bank/building society statements
- Details of any debts you may have with your partner

#### Legal papers:

- Any divorce, residence, contact or injunction papers
- Insurance documents/car registration documents

#### Medical:

- Medical cards
- Any medicines you or you children may need

#### Contacts:

- Keys
- Address book

#### Personal:

- Change of clothes, toiletries
- Nappies, baby food and baby products
- Jewellery/photos
- A photo of your abuser for ID purposes

**If you can't manage to get these things together, DON'T WORRY - it's more important that you just get out safely.**

## Domestic Abuse No Excuse

Even if you're being beaten or abused by your partner, choosing to leave your home for the safety of a refuge can be a very difficult decision.

We hope this leaflet can answer some of the questions you may have about what a refuge is like.

Berkshire Women's Aid works closely with many agencies in Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell.

BWA can offer you support, information, and help you find somewhere safe to stay if you need to leave your home.

If you're experiencing abuse in a relationship you can call:

**Berkshire Woman's Aid on  
0118 950 4003**

- Emergency: 24 hours a day if you are immediate danger
- Or Mon-Friday 9am-5pm



## Domestic Abuse?

### REFUGES

Somewhere safe to stay

Some people in abusive relationships choose to escape their abusers by moving into a confidential safe house, or refuge.

This leaflet aims to help you decide if this is the right choice for you.

We provide refuge for women; we can contact refuges for men.

## The right choice for you?

Whatever you decide and however long you stay, we hope we can make things easier for you.

We try to make sure that our refuges are safe, friendly and comfortable places to stay while you decide what to do next.

The decision to leave an abusive relationship is an extremely difficult one, and our staff can talk to you about what your options are before you decide.

Other women in the refuge will understand the mixture of terror, confusion, worry and relief you might be feeling when you arrive,

You can live quite independently once you're settled in, but you can always talk to the staff if there are things you're worried about.

If you choose to go back to the person who was abusing you, no-one from the refuge will judge you or try to make you stay, we may be able to help you obtain an injunction to help keep you and your children safe.

You can always go to a refuge again if you want or need to in the future.

We hope you will find our refuges safe, friendly and comfortable places to stay a while you decide what to do next.



## Refuge

A refuge is a safe place where you can stay temporarily if you need to escape an abusive relationship.

Some women stay for few days, other for many months.

### Rent

You'll need to pay rent during your stay, but the staff will help you sort out housing benefit or other ways to pay if you don't have much money.

### Support

There will be staff in the refuge who can help with:

- Settling in
- Finding out about your benefits situation
- Information about other organisations that can help you
- Finding long-term accommodation.



### Living arrangements

Most refuges are like any shared house – you have your own bedroom but share the sitting room, dining area, kitchen and bathroom with the other women and children.

There are washing machines and all the normal kitchen facilities.

You and your children will have your own room.

You will buy and cook your own food; and be expected to help look after the house; making sure it's clean, comfortable and welcoming.

### Rules

There will be certain rules you'll need to agree to while you're in the refuge, e.g.:

- No drugs on the premises
- No visitors and you can't tell anyone where you're living
- These rules are important so that every woman who comes to stay in the refuge can feel safe and that the confidentiality of the refuge is not compromised.