



# COVID-19 & ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

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Under the coronavirus rules, most of us are having to spend a lot more time at home than we usually would. If you are experiencing domestic abuse and home is not a safe or comfortable place to be, the lockdown may be making you feel particularly anxious. You might be thinking about your options, including staying somewhere else.

No-one deserves to live with abuse. The guide below has more information on your options and places you can stay. To talk about this in more detail, you can contact Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline at any time on

- Tel: **0800 027 1234**
- by web chat: [www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk)
- by email: [helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk)

There is more information about support services below.

If you are in immediate danger, it is best to call the police on **999**.

## Can I leave my home if I am unsafe?

- Under the government's coronavirus guidance, it is ok to leave your home 'to avoid or escape risk of injury or harm'
- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

## Can I stay with a friend/family member?

- If necessary, you can move in with a friend or family member during this time. However, it is important to consider potential risks to people in high-risk categories – e.g. elderly people and those with underlying health conditions. If you are showing symptoms of Covid-19, it would not be advisable to move into a house with others.

### Consider:

- Writing down a list of the reasons that are making it unsafe or unreasonable to stay in your home, and taking it with you
- Contacting the police on 101 if you have concerns about travel restrictions

## I have nowhere to go, so where can I stay?

- If you have nowhere safe to stay, your local council has a duty to offer you temporary accommodation. This is known as 'emergency accommodation'.
- Contact your local council and explain that you have nowhere safe to stay and you are homeless.
- 'Homelessness', includes when it would not be safe or reasonable for you to keep staying in your home because of domestic abuse. This includes all forms of domestic abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse.
- You do not have to report the abuse to the police to get emergency accommodation.

## What about my children or other members of my household?

- If you are offered emergency accommodation, this would also include members of your household who you wish to go with you.
- This can include: children, grandchildren and other family members.
- It also includes people who you are not related to but who are part of your household (e.g. carers).

## What about my belongings?

- The council may be able to store your belongings for you, if necessary.



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## What other options are there?

- If you are a woman fleeing domestic abuse, you may be able to stay in refuge accommodation.
- Refuge accommodation is provided by local Women's Aid groups.

## How would I get to the emergency accommodation/ refuge?

- If you do not have transport, you could travel to your accommodation in a taxi or ask a friend or family member to help transport you.
- Remember that public transport services may be reduced or disrupted during this time.
- The local council or Women's Aid group may be able to help you with travel costs – you should ask about this when you speak to them.

## I have pets, so can I take them with me?

- Unfortunately, pets are not accepted in emergency accommodation. Some refuges will accept small pets, but not all of them can. You will need to check before you leave with a pet.
- If you need to leave your home in an emergency and cannot take your pet, you could arrange for a friend or family member to care for them temporarily.
- The Dog's Trust Freedom Project is a dog fostering service for people fleeing domestic abuse and going into refuge, and is still running during lockdown: [www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/hope-project-freedom-project/freedom-project](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/hope-project-freedom-project/freedom-project)
- Cats Protection also offer a fostering service for people fleeing domestic abuse: [www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/paws-protect](http://www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/paws-protect)

## Where can I get more support?

- Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline – 24-hour support for anyone looking for information and support around domestic abuse and/or forced marriage, including talking about accommodation options.
  - Phone: **0800 027 1234**
  - Email: [helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk)
  - Web chat: [www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk)
- Your local Women's Aid group, if you are a woman looking for support: [womensaid.scot/find-nearest-wa-group](http://womensaid.scot/find-nearest-wa-group)
- **Shelter Scotland** – has useful information on issues to do with housing, as well as about debt and mortgage issues.
- Your council's housing department – information on how to contact them can be found here: <https://www.sdafmh.org.uk/en/housing-contact-details/> Contact Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline if you would like support with this.

