

HOUSING RIGHTS RESOURCE

For survivors of domestic abuse and their advocates



How to use this resource

This resource contains useful information about housing and your legal rights. It is written for women who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. Specialist domestic abuse services may also find it useful as a guide for the people they support.

In this resource, you will find links to videos explaining different areas of the housing law. These were all recorded with a legal expert. These videos are accompanied by further information and helpful resources that you can use to address any issues you are facing.

This resource accompanies the 'Housing rights course for survivors of domestic abuse'



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Tenancy basics

BASIC SKILLS &
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT
YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

You may be used to renting or might be entering the rental market for the first time. Finding an affordable place to rent on one income or while receiving benefits can pose extra challenges.

First, watch Law for Life's video on the [types of housing agreements](#) that exist and the different set of legal rights you have in relation to where you live or stay.

If you find a place to live through a letting agency, most of your communication about the property will go through them. However, you have a legal right to know the **identity of your landlord**, even if you are dealing with letting agents. There is information on how to find this out [here](#).



Private renting: Dealing with disrepairs

THIS BASIC RIGHTS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES OF
LANDLORDS AND
TENANTS IN RELATION
TO DISREPAIR

First, watch Law for Life's short video on [dealing with disrepair](#) in privately rented accommodation.

You deserve and have a right to live in accommodation that is not in a state of disrepair. '[The Homes Act](#)' sets out what makes a home '**fit for human habitation**', or safe for you to live in.

Other helpful resources on dealing with disrepair include:

- Advicenow's guide on [dealing with disrepair](#) in private rented accommodation.
- Shelter's guide to the legally approved procedure for [negotiating disrepairs](#).

Private renting: Section 21 evictions

STRATEGIES FOR
DEALING WITH
EVICTIONS

A **section 21 eviction** notice is the first step a landlord takes to get you to leave your home outside of your lease agreements. They do not need to provide a reason for the eviction, which is why section 21 notices are commonly called '**no-fault evictions**'.

You will not have to leave straight away and you may be able to challenge the eviction.

Watch Law for Life's short video on dealing with [section 21 evictions](#).

Other valuable resources include:

- Advicenow's guide to dealing with [section 21 evictions](#).
- Shelter's guide on [illegal evictions](#), which includes information about your rights when the landlord doesn't follow the right procedures or tries to harass or threaten you to get you to leave.





Homelessness: Dealing with local authorities

Homelessness doesn't just refer to rough sleeping. It could also mean you are sleeping on a friend's couch, in a shelter or refuge, in a vehicle, in hostels or another type of temporary housing. Read the legal definition of homelessness [here](#).

If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness, you may need to deal with your local council. First, watch Law for Life's short video about [dealing with local authorities](#) in the context of homelessness.

Law for Life has several guides on getting help if you are homeless or if you are threatened with homelessness.

These guides run through the main points in plain English:

- [What to do if you are homeless](#)
- [What to do if you are threatened with homelessness](#)
- [How to apply for housing when you are homeless \(a chart\)](#).

Homelessness: Dealing with local authorities

STRATEGIES FOR
GETTING THE SUPPORT
YOU'RE ENTITLED TO

Frustratingly, local councils and housing officers are not always adequately trained to deal with homelessness caused by domestic abuse. The Public Interest Law Centre runs a [special project](#) on these issues and looks at options for taking legal action.

If your application is not accepted, Law for Life also has a guide on how to challenge decisions on [homelessness applications](#). You can also prepare yourself by looking at the [Homelessness Code of guidance](#) for local authorities.

If you have **no recourse to public funds (NRPF)** or if you are going through the **immigration process**, see Shelter's [helpful advice](#) on housing eligibility.

If you need more advice on housing and homelessness, Surviving Economic Abuse have information on their website to help you [find a safe place to live](#).



Living in temporary accommodation

UNDERSTANDING YOUR
OPTIONS FOR TEMPORARY
OR EMERGENCY HOUSING

There are many different types of **temporary or emergency accommodation** that offer vastly different levels of security and support.

First, watch Law for Life’s short video on how to cope with life in [temporary and emergency accommodation](#), which also covers the types of accommodation and what to expect.

You might be feeling unsettled or unsafe, or unsure how to adjust to these new circumstances. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and get support — including for your mental health — when you need it.

See the chart below to understand different types of temporary accommodation:

Type of accommodation	Used for...
Dwellings where rooms other than bedrooms are shared with other households (this includes B&Bs)	Temporary accommodation, though often not suitable for families
Self-contained units, including bedsits, flats and houses	Families
Privately owned B&Bs	Emergency accommodation
Hostels	Emergency accommodation, usually for single people
Hostels (supported accommodation)	People with care needs, including people who are homeless, or have addictions or mental health needs
Refuges	People who have experienced domestic abuse
Hotels	Emergency accommodation

Benefits & housing

SEEKING FINANCIAL
SUPPORT FOR RENT AND
OTHER ESSENTIAL NEEDS

First, watch Law for Life's short video about [benefits and housing](#).

You can see which benefits you might be able to get and whether the benefit cap applies to you by using a **benefits calculator**.

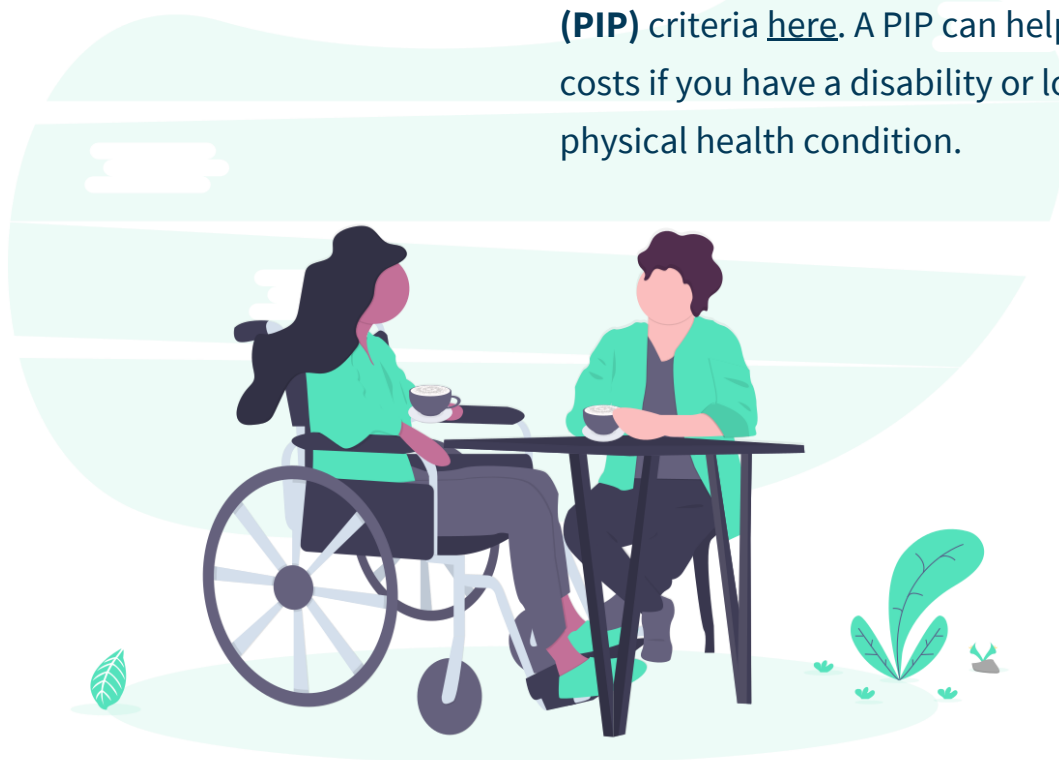
You can use any one or several of these benefits calculators to give you a rough idea of what you might receive, but always try to get proper advice before making a claim:

- [Turn2us](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [Entitledto](#)
- [Policy in Practice](#)

The online application for Universal Credit is [here](#).

The **benefit cap** limits the total amount of money you can get from benefits. You can check whether this applies to you here, as well as whether you qualify for exemptions to the benefit cap. This [directory](#) lets you look up your local housing allowance.

You can find the **Personal Independence Payments (PIP)** criteria [here](#). A PIP can help you pay for extra costs if you have a disability or long-term mental or physical health condition.





Benefits & housing

DEALING WITH
DIFFICULTIES APPLYING FOR
AND RECEIVING BENEFITS

Dealing with housing and benefits problems

You may encounter problems when trying to access the benefits you are entitled to. Law for Life has many [helpful tools and guides](#) on coping with these issues, including sanctions and appeals.

You may also find the following resources useful:

- A tool for doing [PIP appeals](#).
- A simple introduction to the [claimant commitment](#) that includes instructions on who has to do what.

Getting more advice

Surviving Economic Abuse and Money Advice Plus run a [specialist benefits and debt advice service](#) for people who have experienced domestic abuse and are in financial difficulty.

They also have resources on:

- [Accessing grants, benefits and financial help](#)
- [How to safely open a bank account](#)

Resources for migrant women

DEALING WITH
BARRIERS TO SUPPORT



Migrant women face additional barriers when dealing with housing insecurity, homelessness or moving into a private rental after domestic abuse.

If you are a migrant, you may have **no recourse to public funds (NRPF)** or your rights may be attached to the perpetrator's citizenship or immigration status.

You might have difficulties finding information in your language, or may not know where to start looking for emergency accommodation.

Surviving Economic Abuse and Southall Black Sisters have a resource on [how to get legal, welfare, housing and practical support if you have no recourse to public funds.](#)

Resources for refugees

HOUSING RESOURCES
SPECIFICALLY FOR
REFUGEES

If you are a refugee, the government has a guide for refugees with **newly-granted status** on how to [access public services](#) in the UK.

You can apply for [Refugee Integration Loans](#), which can be used for a rent deposit or rent, household items, or education and training.

The [Refugee Council's Private Renting Scheme](#) helps find affordable accommodation for those who have become homeless as a result of being granted refugee status.

They also have a [Banking Guide for Refugees](#) in multiple languages. If you have trouble opening a bank account because of a lack of documentation, try a credit union. Just like banks, credit unions provide savings, loans and other services. You can find your local credit union [here](#).





The Domestic Abuse Act

UNDERSTANDING THE LAW

The **Domestic Abuse Act** contains measures to protect people from domestic abuse and to help manage the harmful effects of abuse. It came into effect in April 2021.

The government has a [factsheet](#) that provides a general overview of the Act. They also have a factsheet focusing on the rights this Act creates to [support survivors in social housing](#) to leave an abusive situation.

The Act gives survivors of domestic abuse a **priority need** for accommodation if they are at risk of homelessness. Read the [factsheet](#) on what this means and what your local authority should do, according to the Act, if this is your situation.

Other helpful documents include:

- A resource about [new measures for economic abuse](#) in the Domestic Abuse Act, developed by Surviving Economic Abuse.
- Public Interest Law Centre's [briefing](#) on the Act, which focuses on the six main changes in the act that relate to housing.

Thank you

This booklet was designed for people who participated in the '**Housing rights course for survivors of domestic abuse**'.

The course was delivered in May 2021 by **Law for Life**, with support from the **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)** and **Surviving Economic Abuse**, and funded by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. It was delivered directly to women with experience of domestic abuse, with the support of specialist domestic abuse services.

We would like to thank the domestic abuse services that took part in the pilot of the course:

- [Humraaz](#)
- [The Angelou Centre](#)
- [Advance](#)
- [Latin American Woman's Aid](#)
- [Frances House, Solace Women's Aid](#)
- [Next Chapter](#)

