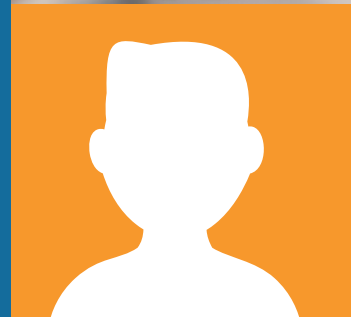


West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

2021-2023



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West Berkshire
COUNCIL

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1 Introduction

Domestic abuse is one of the most harmful crimes in society, with terrible and life threatening consequences for victims, including children, and long lasting consequences for society. The majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated in the home which is meant to be a place of safety and nurturing for families, but for victims of domestic abuse the home becomes a place of danger. Domestic abuse is the third most common cause of homelessness amongst women.

In West Berkshire, we aim to change this landscape for victims and welcome the opportunity provided by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the Act) and the new Local Authority Statutory Duty to provide support within safe accommodation, to enable more victims to remain in their homes if it is safe to do so, to increase the range of support services for victims in safe accommodation, to improve long term housing security for victims while at the same time holding perpetrators to account.

The Home Office Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) ready reckoner¹ analyses the population of any given area and gives a guiding figure that 5,229 women and girls and 2,455 men and boys aged 16-59 living in West Berkshire have been a victim of domestic abuse in the past year. The problem is much bigger than shown in official statistics provided here.

This strategy is ambitious and sets out our road map to achieve the changes required that will enable victims and their children to achieve safe, fulfilled and independent lives free from domestic abuse. We have decided to broaden the scope of the strategy beyond safe accommodation support services to take a Whole Housing Approach (WHA) to domestic abuse, which considers the safe accommodation needs of victims across all tenure types (social housing, private rented and private ownership), to include the longer-term housing options for victims and to begin to address our approach to perpetrators and housing.

This Strategy will be delivered alongside the West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-2023. As outlined within the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) model, the whole community, including every agency, has a role to play in response to domestic abuse.

Most public services are not designed with domestic abuse or violence against women and girls (VAWG) in mind, and as a result, they often struggle to protect people. Poor communication and gaps between services put survivors at risk. There is continuously a need for training, education and awareness raising and within West Berkshire we acknowledge the importance of our communities and how they can also be a source of help, if provided with the appropriate tools/resources. Therefore, we are committed to working more closely with residents in our communities in addition to our practitioners.

There will be a heightened focus on providing appropriate and good quality interventions to not only victims of domestic abuse but to families and how we work better with external agencies who engage in work to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour and place responsibility on perpetrators to be accountable, and where safe and the wishes of victims, to remove perpetrators from the family home. Furthermore, we will continue to learn from our research to improve our local interventions and strengthen our community through a multi-agency partnership approach.

Our aims are aligned with two of the West Berkshire Council priorities “Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes” and “Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships”. In addition, the strategy links to the aims of Thames Valley Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner which are to improve the response to reports of domestic abuse, to improve outcomes for victims of domestic and sexual abuse and to identify and implement best practice in the management of perpetrators. Finally, this is also written to be aligned with the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The actions identified to meet our aims have been decided through a range of multi-agency conversations, focusing on what we can implement and change over the next three years.

It should be acknowledged that there is ongoing work being undertaken outside of our developed strategy which is ‘business as usual’ to address domestic abuse in West Berkshire.

2 Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. It brings wide reaching changes in protective legislation and provides a new statutory definition of domestic abuse which explicitly includes economic abuse, recognises children as victims of domestic abuse, and defines coercive and controlling behaviour between ex-partners and family members.

Part 4 of the Act introduces a Statutory Duty on all Local Authorities to provide safe accommodation support services. In line with the Act the term victim will be used to refer to people who have been or are subject to domestic abuse. The terms perpetrator will be used to refer to the person committing the abuse.

In West Berkshire, we will treat the Statutory Duty as a minimum standard and will work hard to ensure that all victims are treated fairly and justly and have access to safe accommodation at their point of need.

“It brings wide reaching changes in protective legislation and provides a new definition of domestic abuse which explicitly includes economic abuse and recognises children as victims of domestic abuse.”

Local Authority Statutory Duty

Part 4 of the Act places Duties on West Berkshire Council to:

- Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it must consult as it performs certain specified functions;
- Assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims and their children who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area;
- Develop and publish a Safe Accommodation Strategy having regard to the needs assessment;
- Implement the strategy through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions;
- Monitor and evaluate local delivery and effectiveness of the strategy; and
- Report back to central government annually.

West Berkshire Council has appointed the West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Board (the DAB) as its Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board constituted under the Act which will be referred to throughout this strategy.

A full list of the measures can be found here: <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/04/29/domesticabuseactfactsheet/>

3 Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that all victims, including children, subject to domestic abuse have access to safe accommodation support services appropriate to their needs in order to live safely and that responses to perpetrators support victims/victim safety.

Aims

- To ensure all victims, including children and those from out of area and/or with No Recourse to Public Funds, have access to safe, appropriate accommodation and support services at their point of need;
- To ensure victims are able to remain safely in their accommodation if they choose and it is safe to do so;
- To provide move on accommodation options for victims to support long-term recovery and independence;
- To ensure the effective management of perpetrators enables victims to remain safe in their homes and to access safe accommodation; and
- To ensure that other duties/legislation introduced as part of the Act (secure tenancies and homelessness) are considered in the context of safe accommodation and a WHA.

4 Definition of Safe Accommodation

The Statutory Guidance defines 'safe accommodation' as:

- Refuge accommodation - a refuge offers accommodation and intensive support which is tied to that accommodation;
- Specialist safe accommodation - safe accommodation which provides dedicated specialist support, such as specialist refuges for Ethnically Diverse, LGBTQ+, and disabled victims;
- Dispersed accommodation - Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse) and self-contained:
 - i. accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge;
 - ii. 'semi-independent' accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support;
- Sanctuary Schemes - properties with local authority installed Sanctuary Schemes or other similar schemes which provide enhanced physical security measures within a home;
- Move-on and / or second stage accommodation - projects temporarily accommodating victims before they move to fully independent and permanent accommodation. There is no expectation that every victim will require this; and
- Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation - a safe place (single gendered or single sex, secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse) with domestic abuse support tied to the accommodation.

Accommodation such as generic Bed and Breakfast accommodation and homeless hostels – in that they are not solely dedicated to providing a safe place to stay for victims of domestic abuse, including expert support are not considered relevant safe accommodation.

5 Definition of Support

The following types of domestic abuse support will be provided through the new duty:

- Advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers);
- Domestic abuse prevention advice – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation;
- Specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice;
- Children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy;
- Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently; and
- Counselling and therapy for both adults and children.

“The Whole Housing Approach is referred to within the draft statutory guidance as a form of other safe accommodation.”

²<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach/>

³<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach/whole-housing-toolkit/>

6 Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment

A needs assessment has been undertaken looking at the current safe accommodation offer in West Berkshire and the gaps and needs. The new duty will cover the provision of support to victims and their children residing in some/all of the following:

- Refuge accommodation;
- Specialist safe accommodation;
- Dispersed accommodation;
- Sanctuary schemes; and
- Move-on or second stage accommodation.

The review of provision and the recommendations in this report have drawn on the Whole Housing Model² which endeavours to improve the housing options and outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse so that they can achieve stable housing, live safely, and overcome the abuse and its harmful impacts.

The model consists of 14 elements and, although some of these fall outside of the requirements of the Act, this report draws on the wider learning of the model to support West Berkshire meet the new duties. The structure is in line with the WHA Toolkit³.

The green circles below represent the accommodation/tenure types in which survivors require access to support services, and the blue circles represent the specialist support interventions that offer victims interventions that meet their needs within each form of accommodation.



7 Strategic Priorities

The following strategic priorities are based on the key elements of the Statutory Guidance for local authorities across England and a WHA.

7.1 Delivering the Safe Accommodation Statutory Duty

[Theme A: The DAB will ensure that West Berkshire has the resources and partnerships in place to undertake the Needs Assessment and implement this Strategy.](#)

We recognise that prevalence data alone is not enough for an assessment of need and does not tell us about the impact of domestic abuse or the type of support needed by the different cohorts

of victims. Therefore, this strategy draws on data from a range of local agencies and services responding to victims including their children to help us develop a more holistic understanding of unmet need. We also reference national data for comparison.

The needs assessment in West Berkshire was conducted by Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse in partnership with the Building Communities Together Team in compliance with the requirements of the Statutory Guidance:

- To determine the level of need for support within safe accommodation in West Berkshire; and
- To enable the Authority to understand the barriers to safe accommodation for the diverse communities of victims regardless of whether their original residence was out of area.

7.2 Access to Safe Accommodation

[Theme B: Every victim will be supported to access safe accommodation appropriate to their needs and at their point of need.](#)

We recognise that victims of domestic abuse are not a homogenous group, we therefore look to focus on the following areas in implementing this strategy:

- Younger victims;
- Older victims;
- Black and Ethnically Diverse victims;
- Migrant victims and victims with no recourse to public funds;
- Disabled victims;
- LGBTQ+ victims;
- Victims facing severe and multiple disadvantage;
- Victims with larger families;
- Victims with older male children; and
- Victims in employment.

Victims/survivors from these groups are less likely to access support due to factors such as social isolation, increased marginalisation, discrimination and/or vulnerability, lack of culturally appropriate services and a lack of awareness about what constitutes abuse and the services that are available. West Berkshire has a comprehensive range of services working with the identities listed above but will be looking to work in partnership with these agencies to ensure there is a joined up approach moving forward. West Berkshire is committed to providing sustainable funding and commissioning opportunities for these services to provide support to these marginalised groups.

In West Berkshire, Richmond Fellowship offers 13 units of supported housing in Newbury to anyone

over 18 diagnosed with a mental health condition. The service provides flexible support packages tailored to meet individual needs ranging from long term intensive support for up to two years to brief solution focused interventions. The service helps people manage their tenancies, maintain domestic routines and play an active part in their community.

Both West Berkshire Council and the families of service users believe that safe supported living environments offer an ideal setting for many with moderate and in some cases severe learning disabilities and should be the preferred option where possible. West Berkshire Council currently funds around 215 individuals in a range of supported living settings, with c175 in West Berkshire and 40 outside, mainly in the Reading area.⁴

7.3 Refuge Accommodation

[Theme C: The DAB will ensure there is sufficient refuge provision to meet the safe accommodation needs of women and children and explore the unmet need for refuge accommodation for male victims.](#)

Refuge services are an established, essential element in delivering support to the most vulnerable victims of domestic abuse who are no longer safe at home. A refuge service provides holistic, specialist support to meet the needs of victims, including children, in a supportive, safe, and secure environment. There is no 'typical victim' supported in a refuge- victims and children will have a range of support needs, including those related to safety, criminal and family justice, disability, physical and mental health, immigration status, children's welfare and education, financial needs including debt, and social needs.

A2Dominion are commissioned to provide refuge in West Berkshire in the form of two family units accommodating one woman plus three children and two units accommodating a single woman. A license agreement is in place that residents are able to remain at the refuge for a maximum of six months, in exceptional circumstances this has been extended.

⁴<https://ipc.brookes.ac.uk/files/market-position-statements/West-Berkshire-MPS-2020-23.pdf>

A2Dominion are able to link victims with counselling, therapy or group work, provide practical day to day support to assist victims in living independently, dedicated support for children and young people in refuge and are able to liaise with other services to ensure a coordinated approach.

It needs to be explored further in West Berkshire to determine if the number of refuge units currently available is sufficient based on the population and need for the local area.

7.4 Move-on and second stage accommodation

[Theme D: The DAB will ensure there is sufficient move on and second stage accommodation with specialist support for victims ready to leave refuge.](#)

The DAB is committed to ensuring that victims and their children have access to safe, affordable move-on housing and are supported to achieve independent and fulfilled lives free from domestic abuse.

At the present time, there is a gap in our understanding of victims housing journeys- the type of tenure victims leave when they go into refuge and the type of tenure they move to when leaving refuge. In addition to the challenges of rehousing, victims often need follow up support to enable them to rebuild their lives once they are rehoused. Staffing capacity in refuges means that this can be limited.

There is currently no move-on accommodation available in West Berkshire with victims reporting that once they leave the refuge provision they feel totally on their own. The purpose of move-on accommodation is to provide housing and support to reintegrate those leaving refuge into independent living. For many victims of abuse space for action⁵ is something that was controlled in their relationships which may have resulted in them having very limited capacity to make their own choices and decisions.

Ensuring victims and children can 'move on' from refuges is essential for supporting long-term recovery and independence and to ensure that refuge accommodation is available for women in crisis.

Second stage move on accommodation can be described as a bridge between refuge and independent living and can be particularly important for women who have continued advocacy and support needs, for example, women with unsettled immigration status who are awaiting an immigration outcome. The properties also free up refuge bed spaces for victims in crisis.

Families are able to stay in the properties while they have an active application for longer-term housing. It is anticipated that the average length of stay will be six months.

We look to monitor where victims are moving to, including refuge move on and other pathways to new accommodation as well as where they have come from to map their whole housing journeys. We will work with specialist services including; housing, refuge and other agencies to monitor the housing outcomes for victims, where there are opportunities for growth and development and what challenges and barriers might arise.

7.5 Sanctuary Scheme (Safer Spaces)

[Theme E: The DAB will ensure that West Berkshire Council continues to deliver a Sanctuary Scheme with specialist domestic abuse support for all victims who wish to remain in their home and it is safe to do so.](#)

The Sanctuary Scheme, referred to as Safer Spaces in West Berkshire, is a multi-agency centred initiative that aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures and domestic abuse support. This can, but does not have to, include a 'sanctuary room' in the victim's home. Sanctuary Schemes are only installed when the perpetrator is no longer living in the home.

⁵ Long journeys toward freedom: The relationship between coercive control and space for action-Measurement and Emerging Evidence. Liz Kelly, Nicola Sharps-Jeff, Renate Klein. February 2017.

West Berkshire Council have an agreement with Safer Partnerships Limited to deliver the Sanctuary Scheme. Referrals can be made from any organisation linked to victims. Victims can also refer themselves by contacting the Housing Operations Team.

The Scheme is available to victims who have a legal right to occupy their property including victims who are owner occupiers and those living in the private rented sector but only with the permission of the landlord. Commissioned domestic abuse support provided by a specialist domestic abuse organisation includes legal rights advice to enable victims to exercise their right to occupy.

Security measures typically include composite doors, intruder alarms, external lights, window locks/jammers and door locks. All security measures are installed at no cost to the victim or the landlord.

The Scheme is an important safe accommodation intervention for disabled victims or victims with dependents who are disabled and whose home has been adapted and is also the key safe accommodation provision in West Berkshire for male victims.

The Scheme is not available to victims with No Recourse to Public Funds (as Sanctuary constitutes use of 'public funds').

We look to identify how we can maximise the use of the scheme to keep victims as safe as possible when remaining in their homes.

7.6 Male Victims

[Theme F: The DAB will assess the safe accommodation and support needs of heterosexual, trans, non-binary, gay and bisexual victims in collaboration with local LGBTQ+ community groups and relevant national organisations to develop a safe accommodation and support pathway in response to need.](#)

There is a need to develop our understanding of the safe accommodation and support needs of male victims and to review the safe accommodation

provision in West Berkshire. A2Dominion currently support male victims through their service offer but a review should also include their longer term rehousing needs. The current picture of need is unclear.

There is currently no refuge service for male victims locally and very low provision nationally. There is demand for refuge accommodation but because it requires victims to move away from the city, this creates a barrier to access. This section identifies some of the themes emerging in connection with the safe accommodation and support needs of male victims.

West Berkshire Council looks to explore what provision can be offered to meet the needs and ensure that it is suitable and sustainable.

A report by Respect, the national male victim helpline provider, found that 1.2% of callers were signposted to refuge services and that most commonly, callers wanted help with practical issues including legal advice, help in accessing the criminal justice system and accessing a local male domestic abuse service.

We look to continue to scope the needs of male victims and ensure the provision we offer is accessible for all genders.

7.7 Children and Young People

[Theme G: In line with the Domestic Abuse Act and the Part 4 Statutory Guidance, children and young people will be recognised as victims in their own right and receive specialist support appropriate to their need including while in safe accommodation.](#)

West Berkshire Council have implemented the Family Safeguarding Model, a way of keeping families together where it is safe to do so. This is achieved through a more collaborative way of working where parents are motivated to identify the changes needed within their own families. This helps achieve better outcomes for children. Family safeguarding sees specialist adult-focused practitioners – with expertise in domestic abuse, mental health or substance misuse – integrated within children's safeguarding teams – with the aim of providing comprehensive support.

We welcome the decision to include children and young people in the new statutory definition of domestic abuse as victims in their own right.

One in seven children and young people under the age of 18 will have lived with a domestic abuser at some point in their childhood⁶.

The impact of domestic abuse on children can result in life long trauma which manifests itself in multiple ways. Very young children who are exposed to domestic violence and abuse at home can experience so much added stress that it can negatively affect brain development and impact on cognitive and sensory growth⁷.

Part 4 Statutory Guidance defines safe accommodation support services for children as:

- Children's support – including play therapy and child advocacy; and
- Counselling and therapy (including group support) for both adults and children, including emotional support.

The benefit of specialist and tailored support for children has been well evidenced as critical to their recovery and it is important to remember that children and young people as well as their mothers have experienced trauma before fleeing the perpetrator⁸.

In line with the Act, there are currently no Children's Refuge Worker posts in West Berkshire. Therefore, we look to improve our provision for children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse and ensure measures are sustainable.

7.8 Perpetrators of Abuse

[Theme H: The DAB will ensure the development of an effective risk-managed perpetrator housing pathway and support in order to increase victim safety and housing security and prevent further domestic abuse.](#)

There is an urgent need to consider what happens to the perpetrator when a victim leaves a property

as many will remain in the home consequence free. Housing providers that intervene earlier with victims can help them to remain in their home when it is their choice to do so and yield costs savings related to repairs, arrears and evictions. Safe engagement with the perpetrator is also vital and requires that housing providers work in partnership with victims to offer effective interventions.

There are currently two provisions available in West Berkshire; The National Probation Service offer Building Better Relationships (BBR), a group designed to promote lifelong changes in behaviours and attitudes which, in the past, have resulted in male service users being convicted of intimate partner violence. However, this provision is only available for those convicted and have a sentence of 18 months or it is written into their license agreement. It is not used for women who have used violence or abuse.

The Family Safeguarding Service consists of two locality teams, one based in Calcot and the other in Newbury. FSS hold two posts of DA Practitioner (Perpetrator Workers) in the Family Safeguarding Service working with Social Workers, Family Support Workers, Mental Health Workers and a Substance Misuse Worker providing comprehensive and specialist assessments of risk and need in relation to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Rehousing perpetrators may be ethically and practically challenging and appear to incentivise harmful behaviour but the option to remove and rehouse a perpetrator will allow the victim and children to remain in their home without disruption to children's education, victim employment, existing community and support networks and the financial hardship of moving into temporary accommodation and relocation. Victims frequently do not want their ex-/partner and parent of their children to be homeless.

There are several tools, options and opportunities for removing perpetrators from the home. These will often require a multi-agency approach, for example: the new statutory Domestic Violence

⁶ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-victims-handbook/children-and-domestic-abuse/>

⁷ Patchy, piecemeal and precarious: support for children affected by domestic abuse (2019) Action for Children

⁸ Nowhere to Turn for Children and Young People (2020) Women's Aid England

Protection Notices (DVPN) and Orders (DVPO) enable Police and the Courts to put in place protection for a victim in the immediate aftermath of a domestic abuse incident by removing the perpetrator from the property and liaison between Neighbourhood Community Safety Officers and Housing Patch Managers in response to complaints of anti-social behaviour.

We look to work in a CCR⁹ model and engage with perpetrators working with local services, including Thames Valley Police, to hold perpetrators to account.

7.9 Social Housing

[Theme I: The DAB will work with social housing providers in West Berkshire to ensure they have a policy setting out how they will address domestic abuse including how they will take action against perpetrators.](#)

Social housing tenancy agreements often include domestic abuse as a breach of tenancy and therefore as grounds for eviction. Paragraph 14A of Part 2 of the Housing Act 1988 provides that a social landlord may gain possession of a property where it is occupied by a couple and one partner is forced to leave the property as a result of the other's domestic abuse towards them or any of their family living with them. It is a discretionary ground meaning that a judge can decide on the reasonableness of granting possession. Social landlords can also consider using the mandatory ground for possession where there has been a criminal conviction for a serious offence including an offence under Section 5 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.

For victims in social housing and privately rented accommodation, sharing a joint tenancy with the perpetrator presents the greatest barrier to safety and housing security¹⁰. While a perpetrator remains named as a joint tenant, he will be able to give notice to end the tenancy without the victims consent or knowledge even if he has physically left the property.

A victim will not be able to change the locks or restrict his access to the property. As joint tenants they are classed as a single legal entity meaning the victim can be left with financial liability for any damage or rent arrears if the perpetrator refuses to pay. Rent arrears are the leading reason for evictions¹¹.

Several registered providers are in place in West Berkshire with Sovereign providing the most stock in the area. Other providers include Hanover Housing Association, Stonewater and Housing 21. Stonewater is a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accredited provider and Sovereign are currently going through the DAHA accreditation process.

We look to work in partnership with social housing providers to ensure we are meeting the statutory duty including the use of legal remedies to remove the perpetrator from the property and restrict their ability to end the tenancy. Equally, achieving DAHA accreditation will enable social housing providers to use tools/resources available for perpetrator accountability.

7.10 Privately Rented Housing

[Theme J: The DAB is committed to ensuring that victims living in the private rented sector access the support they need to achieve safety and housing security. This includes, bringing PRS stakeholders into the CCR, by supporting PRS landlords, letting agents and Local Authorities PRS professionals to respond to domestic abuse and take action against perpetrators.](#)

Domestic abuse is as prevalent in the PRS as it is in any other housing sector which means that private landlords can be the first to see the warning signs of domestic abuse whether this is evidence of deliberate damage to the property, requests for lock changes, rent arrears or complaints from the neighbours about behaviour and noise.

⁹In Search of Excellence: A refreshed guide to domestic abuse partnership work-the Coordinated Community Response. Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse 2020. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/6087f76f7e98573c85c5e3fe/1619523443499/In+Search+of+Excellence+2020.pdf>

¹⁰Policy Evidence Summary 4: Justice, housing and domestic abuse, the experiences of homeowners and private renters July 2019. https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/media/10214/bristol-uni-housing-and-dva-breifing-final-210819-_report.pdf

The specialist domestic abuse services report difficulties accessing the PRS with lettings agents and landlords reluctant to take applicants on Housing Benefit/Universal Credit, requesting professional references and guarantors who are owner occupiers, or to give permissions for Sanctuary Scheme measures.

For reasons of rent affordability and insecurity of tenure, the PRS is a last resort housing option for victims who are forced to leave due to domestic abuse. There is more work to be done to make the sector accessible to those victims who currently live in or need to access the PRS and we will work proactively with landlords to resolve matters of Housing Benefit discrimination, deposits, high rents, Sanctuary measures and secure tenancies. These are all matters that require addressing in order to make the accommodation 'suitable'.

We look to work in partnership with the private rented sector to ensure we are meeting the statutory duty and working towards keeping victims and their families safe.

7.11 Privately Owned Housing

[Theme K: The DAB is committed to raising awareness of the specialist safe accommodation and support available to victims who are homeowners, to widening the CCR to include private housing stakeholders and to increasing partner understanding of the links between privately owned housing, domestic abuse and economic abuse.](#)

Research undertaken by the Justice, Inequality and Gender Based Violence Project found that the needs of victims who were owner occupiers were largely invisible. Victims were unaware of their rights and the specialist support available and faced significant barriers to safety. The private housing sector including estate agents, conveyancing solicitors, banks and mortgage lenders, lacked an understanding of domestic and economic abuse while at the same time the domestic abuse and homeless/housing sector lacked knowledge and

understanding of privately owned housing and how perpetrators use the privately owned housing system to abuse victims through:

- Home purchase and sale;
- Mortgage lending; and
- Family law response.

Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) is the leading UK charity working to raise awareness of economic abuse which forms one of the key elements of a WHA.

We look to work in partnership with local and national services to ensure we are meeting the statutory duty and working towards keeping victims and their families safe.



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