

HOME FOR GOOD

Housing First for domestic abuse survivors

February 2023



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About the Centre for Social Justice

Established in 2004, the Centre for Social Justice is an independent think-tank that studies the root causes of Britain's social problems and addresses them by recommending practical, workable policy interventions. The CSJ's vision is to give people in the UK who are experiencing the worst multiple disadvantages and injustice every possible opportunity to reach their full potential.

The majority of the CSJ's work is organised around five "pathways to poverty", first identified in our ground-breaking 2007 report, Breakthrough Britain. These are: educational failure; family breakdown; economic dependency and worklessness; addiction to drugs and alcohol; and severe personal debt.

Since its inception, the CSJ has changed the landscape of our political discourse by putting social justice at the heart of British politics. This has led to a transformation in government thinking and policy. For instance, in March 2013, the CSJ report It Happens Here shone a light on the horrific reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. As a direct result of this report, the Government passed the Modern Slavery Act 2015, one of the first pieces of legislation in the world to address slavery and trafficking in the 21st century.

Our research is informed by experts including prominent academics, practitioners and policy-makers. We also draw upon our CSJ Alliance, a unique group of charities, social enterprises and other grass-roots organisations that have a proven track-record of reversing social breakdown across the UK.

The social challenges facing Britain remain serious. In 2022 and beyond, we will continue to advance the cause of social justice so that more people can continue to fulfil their potential.

Acknowledgements

In conducting research for this report, we have relied on some of the charities and community groups that belong to the CSJ's Alliance and support domestic abuse survivors across the country. We are grateful to their key workers and clients for granting us insights into the complex challenges that abuse survivors must overcome.

We are grateful also to the team from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office, who contributed from the outset to this report and encouraged us in our aim to support "the hidden homeless".

Finally, thank you to The Guinness Partnership for their support and to Brooks Newmark, who introduced the Housing First programme to the UK through the CSJ in 2017: his vision has fuelled our work.

Foreword

The passing of the Domestic Abuse Act of 2021 was a landmark moment for victims.

For the first time it set out in law what domestic abuse is. The definition goes well beyond physical violence and includes a much wider range of abusive behaviour including emotional and sexual abuse, coercive control and economic abuse.

Children were also recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right for the very first time, not just as witnesses. The Act also created my role as the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to champion the voices of victims and improve the response of government and other statutory agencies to these crimes.

The significance of these changes can't be underestimated but there is still far more that needs to be done.

Before becoming Commissioner, I worked on many housing related initiatives such as co-founding the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. These experiences confirmed to me that there is so much work to do to improve the housing needs for all victims and children and in particular for those least able to access help such as those with multiple complex needs.

This report by the Centre for Social Justice highlights some pioneering work which brought together specialist domestic abuse services alongside those addressing homelessness to shape and advocate for a much-needed programme of work. This, combined with the successes of multiple Housing First Pilots undertaken by both Government and the charity sector to support vulnerable homeless people with complex needs, makes the case that an adapted version should be rolled out further to specifically support homeless domestic abuse victims.

A safe home is crucial for all victims of domestic abuse and the report rightly argues that it is all the more crucial for those victims who struggle with multiple complex needs.

"Safe as Houses: Housing First for Domestic Abuse Survivors" focuses on the significant needs of this particular group of survivors and how adapting the Housing First model would really help them to transform their lives.

This would mean that homeless domestic abuse victims would get emergency housing followed by a programme of support to tackle the complex issues that they face.

Their experiences as homeless victims of abuse are often compounded by substance misuse, debt, and trauma. Their reliance on statutory services, from A&E to mental health support, is often patchy and short-term. Helping these victims to be safe and to rebuild their lives is essential but requires a lot of work, a longer-term approach as well as ongoing support.

The Housing First model, introduced to the UK by the CSJ in 2017, was trialled in ongoing pilots in Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester and evidence shows that these programmes work by providing accommodation, full needs assessment and wraparound support services – even in the long term – for homeless people with multiple complex needs.

This report suggests a new two year programme of the Housing First model for homeless domestic abuse victims funded from the £200m pot (as yet unallocated) that the government is investing in its Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP). The SHAP programme aims to support ‘adults experiencing severe multiple disadvantages’ which very aptly describes homeless victims of domestic abuse suffering from multiple complex needs.

Through a Housing First model that caters for their complex needs, we can change an individual’s circumstances to support them in overcoming their experiences and getting back into society: this way we can ensure that even the most vulnerable victims can go from domestic abuse survivor to thrive playing a valuable role in society.



Nicole Jacobs

Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales.

Working group

Polly Neate, CBE FAcSS HonDLaws is CEO of Shelter. A prominent commentator on housing and social justice, Polly was previously CEO of Women's Aid as well as Executive Director at Action for Children. She is also a trustee of the Young Women's Trust, a member of the Bayes Business School Global Women's Leadership Council, a member of the Advisory Panel of Commonweal Housing and non-executive director of Wessex Local Medical Committees. Polly was elected Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in February 2022 and holds an Honorary Doctorate of Law from the University of Bristol.

Brooks Newmark is a businessman and philanthropist whose Angels for Ukraine charity has evacuated over 17,000 women and children from war-torn zones. A former Minister for Civil Society from 15 July until 27 September 2014, Brooks sits on the Government's Rough Sleeper's Advisory Panel. In 2017 he chaired "Housing First: a housing-led solution to rough sleeping and homelessness", a report with the Centre for Social Justice and Crisis.

Marie Hardeman is Head of Customer Support at the Guinness Partnership, supporting communities to be safe in their home and customers to sustain their tenancies. This includes people experiencing domestic abuse and anti social behaviour, with safeguarding concerns. Guinness is a 65,000 home housing association delivering housing services to 140,000 residents across England. Prior to her career at Guinness, Marie led local government welfare services for 16 years.

Baljit Banga is Executive Director at Imkaan, the only national umbrella women's organisation dedicated to addressing violence against black and minoritised women and girls. She is on the board of WAVE and served as director of London Black Women's Project (LBWP) from 2007 to 2019. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from York University and a Masters in Planning and Policy from Heriot Watt University at Edinburgh. She is currently completing her Doctorate at the University of Bath at the Institute of Policy Research. She is the recipient of the United Nations Women (for the United Kingdom) award for grassroots campaigning and advocacy work (2022).

Amanda Bloxsome is Best Practice and Partnership Lead for Housing First in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Amanda has worked within the homelessness sector for the past 20 years, and was the lead for one of the first successful housing first services in England, which she developed and managed for 6 years. She is also an accredited member of the European Hub Housing First Trainers.

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DISCLAIMER: Participation in the working group does not indicate that each participant agrees with all recommendations in the final report

Executive summary

Homelessness is a national crisis. Between January and March 2022, 74,230 households in England became homeless or were at imminent risk of becoming homeless – of these, 10,560 were in full-time work and 25,610 were families with children.¹ In 2021, 290,170 households in England made a homelessness application to their LA.² The latest data shows that there were 96,060 statutory homeless households in temporary accommodation at the end of September 2021.³ According to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities between July and September of 2022, 6,700 households were accepted as homeless by local councils because of domestic abuse, an increase of 4 per cent from the 6,440 recorded in the same quarter of 2021, and up 19.6 per cent from the 5,600 in the third quarter of 2020.⁴

It is difficult to assess causation with regards to domestic abuse and homelessness. Grassroot charities that belong to the CSJ Alliance and support homeless individuals, however, have reported that a significant proportion of their clients cite domestic abuse as the reason for their homelessness. The charities also report that although Local Authorities recognise mental health issues, substance misuse, debt and family breakdown as contributing to an individual's homelessness, they do not give enough weight to domestic abuse as a possible cause, or indeed as a priority in housing allocation. This is despite the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which calls on councils to prioritise domestic abuse survivors' need for a safe new home.

Local authorities' failure to recognise the gravity of domestic abuse places a serious burden on public services and on the taxpayers paying for these: a domestic abuse survivor suffering trauma and complex needs will cost £40,897⁵ in terms of services. Unchecked, domestic abuse risks fraying our social fabric, too. It is both a heinous crime and a public health issue affecting more than 2 million people's mental and physical health – 1.7 million women, 699,000 men, and one in five children.⁶ Police in England and Wales receive on average over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour. In 2019, the Home Office estimated the total cost of domestic abuse for survivors who were identified in a single year at £74 billion.⁷

The housing system does not cater for these vulnerable individuals. Supply of social housing, which is predominantly used for accommodating them, is shrinking. Survivors report long delays and having to meet high evidence thresholds before being housed. When housing is offered, it is often temporary, over-crowded, or far from home and the survivor's social

1 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table A1, September 2022.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Wendy Wilson & Cassie Barton, *Households in Temporary Accommodation*, House of Commons Library, February 2022.

4 DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table A2R, Column X, February 2023.

5 Standing Together, *Westminster VAWG Housing First Service Second Year Evaluation*, 2021.

6 Office for National Statistics, *Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview*, November 2022.

7 Home Office, *Tackling violence against women and girls strategy*, November 2021.

network. As a result, survivors who seek to escape an abusive situation often find themselves facing the very serious risk of homelessness. If they have children, they will worry about the impact potential homelessness will have on their welfare; and whether they will find a safe refuge that allows their children to accompany them.

One homelessness programme that includes domestic abuse survivors is Housing First. The Centre for Social Justice believes in the Housing First approach – but seeks to adapt the model to better meet the needs of this vulnerable cohort.

The CSJ was the first UK organisation to report on this successful model in 2017, with *Housing First: housing-led solutions to rough sleeping and homelessness*.⁸ Pioneered in North America, Housing First followed a simple core principle: put a roof above a homeless individual's head and assess their needs with wrap-around services. It works for clients who want to hold a tenancy and whose needs are so complex that they otherwise would use multiple (and expensive) services, from A&E through substance misuse support to domestic abuse support. When these savings are considered, the model, with its intense wrap-around support, becomes cost effective⁹.

Government accepted the CSJ's recommendation to pilot a UK-based Housing First programme, funding three regional pilots in Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham.

Five years on, national as well as international evidence shows that the programme addresses poor health, restores confidence and dignity as well as reduces homelessness.

From frontline workers in the more than 500 grassroot charities that make up the CSJ Alliance, the CSJ has learned that one significant barrier remains, however, for domestic abuse survivors to enter into Housing First: the present system relies on statutory services referring survivors.

Alliance charities report that the domestic abuse survivors they support are consistently depicting statutory services' approach as "insensitive" and "unhelpful". They report that police, health services etc often challenge survivors' testimony, or minimise their plight; and that social services take away children when there are no safeguarding reasons to do so. Survivors are reluctant to report their plight, therefore, and as a result, continue to live with abuse, or in a limbo of sofa-surfing or staying at friends', often with children in tow. This existence risks tipping them into a spiral of despair that can lead to substance misuse, petty crime or prostitution. Moreover, the cyclical nature of this trauma risks compromising their children's outcomes.

The three regional Housing First pilots already include clients who have experienced domestic abuse and were referred by statutory services to the Housing First teams. But we believe Housing First would support many more survivors (and their children) if they could:

- Engage with a local charity or grassroot voluntary organisation offering specialist support for domestic abuse survivors and their children, to be referred into the programme.
- Learn from a local outreach campaign about the availability, through trusted local charities, of support and accommodation for individuals and/or families who seek to leave their abuser but risk homelessness in doing so.

⁸ CSJ, *Housing First: Housing-led solutions to rough sleeping and homelessness*. March 2017

⁹ Baxter AJ, Tweed EJ, Katikireddi SV, Thomson H. *Effects of Housing First approaches on health and well-being of adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials*. J Epidemiol Community Health, 2019.

- Avoid statutory services -- unless serious violence raises safeguarding issues -- in order to move and keep families together.
- Engage with “by and for services”. This term applies to services that are run by the community they serve; in particular, they cater for a marginalised group that otherwise faces barriers to access support.

Our new programme would aim to:

- Conduct A/B testing to show that grassroot charities and voluntary organisations are best placed to deliver support to domestic abuse survivors at risk of, or affected by, homelessness. More survivors will report their abuse, keep their children, and quickly recover in the locality where the Housing First programme is delivered by a charity or voluntary organisation than in a similar locality where the homelessness programme is delivered by statutory services.
- Include monitoring and evaluation: an outcomes framework will measure tenancy sustainment, wellbeing outcomes, including stabilisation and improvement of mental and physical health, as well as prevention/elimination of domestic abuse. These measures will enable the programme to demonstrate cost savings.

We recommend that the model be piloted through funds from the £200m (as yet unallocated) that government that the government is investing in its Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP), which aims to support homeless individuals suffering multiple disadvantages.

Councils will play a key role in framing the need for SHAP funding at a local strategic level. Councils can work with housing associations, charities and other organisations in developing specific bids. The CSJ would strongly suggest that, given their experience and positive results in delivering the Housing First model, one of the three Local Authorities with a regional Housing First pilot (Liverpool, Birmingham or Manchester) should bid for funding.

Supporting those rendered homeless by domestic abuse would in this way involve no extra costs to the treasury, but would secure a landmark programme for vulnerable families, thus ensuring the legacy of existing Housing First pilots.

The CSJ has calculated that £ **1,451,000** would cover two years’ support for 50 survivors and their children, as well as a community-wide information campaign and monitoring and evaluation.¹⁰

Positive results will incentivise other councils to adopt our approach.

The CSJ was first to champion Housing First in the UK to meet the needs of homeless individuals with multiple complex needs. The evidence from the government’s three regional Housing First pilots shows that the approach works. Until now, however, too many survivors of domestic abuse have been unable to benefit from this programme. We seek to end this systemic flaw.

As part of a comprehensive approach to tackling domestic abuse-related homelessness, the Centre for Social Justice makes the following supportive recommendations.

¹⁰ CSJ calculations

Summary of recommendations

1. In investing in a Housing First model that focuses on domestic abuse survivors, DLUHC should demand that Local Authorities choose partnerships made up of a local housing association – their experience of homeless individuals and longer term tenancy makes them ideal; and, as delivery partner, a grassroots charity or local voluntary group, whose trusted presence in the community will enable more survivors of domestic abuse to come forward.
2. Government should ensure national stewardship for the programme involves the range of government departments that would benefit from it, including MHCLG, DHSC, the MoJ, Home Office and DWP.
3. To better support/accommodate male survivors, including the sons of women survivors, DLUHC should invest in expanding the provision of refuges and specialist accommodation for men.
4. The Government should accept the Domestic Abuse Commissioner recommendation for the Ministry of Justice to introduce a duty on local commissioners to collaborate in the commissioning of specialist domestic abuse services, conduct joint strategic needs assessments, and this duty should be accompanied by a new duty on central government to provide funding to adequately meet this need. This should make use of the opportunity afforded by the upcoming Victims' Bill.
5. Housing First services should collaborate with housing associations to run a local information campaign about domestic abuse, its impact and where to find support for those affected. Educating the housing association residents as well as local groups, organisations and services, in the role they can play in supporting survivors and their children will create a safe environment for survivors, and in time encourage them to engage fully with their community. Alerting survivors about support delivered through local charities and grassroots organisation will increase access.
6. One of the three Local Authorities hosting existing government-funded Housing First pilots should bid for the £200 million funding pot the government has pledged as part of its Single Homelessness Accommodation Project (SHAP) to support individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages. Available over two years at no extra cost to the treasury this funding would secure a landmark Housing First programme for domestic abuse survivors in this country – and ensure the legacy of the existing Housing First regional pilots.

As part of a comprehensive approach to tackling domestic abuse-related homelessness, the Centre for Social Justice makes the following supportive recommendations:

7. To increase awareness and therefore identification of domestic abuse survivors, LAs should allocate funds *from the non-ringfenced Section 31 Grant* to train their housing teams via the DAHA (or equivalent) accreditation.
8. The DWP should exempt people sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation from the benefit cap. This will be of particular benefit for Housing First clients in high pressure housing markets, where the cap has prevented renters from benefitting from LHA rates at the 30th percentile. It will help improve the range of housing options for services where affordable housing is most scarce.

9. DLUHC should integrate a perpetrator behavioural change programme such as Drive/ Respect and For Baby's Sake into already existing Housing First pilots to address perpetrators already within the system.
10. The DWP should ensure that sufficient funding is provided to train JobCentre Work Coaches so that they may assess someone's risk of homelessness, identify key needs and help guide them through a range of services.
11. The Home Office should invest in accessible accommodation for disabled individuals fleeing domestic abuse.
12. The DLUHC should invest in larger refuge spaces for women with four or more children.
13. The Home Office should review the model for DVA refuge funding to ensure women and men who cannot claim housing benefit are not excluded from support.
14. Money for DVA refuges should be ringfenced and LAs should cooperate closely with local specialist women's and men's organisations to organise refuge provision.
15. Social housing tenancy agreements should include a covenant prohibiting domestic violence or abuse, so that claims for possession may be brought alleging breach of contractual terms.
16. LAs should ensure that they offer Discretionary Housing Payments to domestic abuse survivors who hold tenancy in the homes they flee.
17. The Department of Health and Social Care should ring-fence funding for VAWG services run 'by and for' black and minority ethnic women.
18. The Home Office should extend eligibility for the Domestic Violence (DV) Rule and Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC), so that every migrant survivor can access routes to regularise/confirm their immigration status and can secure public funds while doing so, as the Domestic Abuse Commissioner recommended in her recent report *Safety Before Status: The Solutions*.
19. LAs should copy the model established by the Greater Manchester Community Led Homes Hub. This community resource provides advice, training, funding and practical support to local groups, councils and developers looking to develop community-led housing. Scaling this model beyond the GM area, would incentivise the building of social housing.

Chapter 1: The current picture of homelessness in England

The Homeless Population

Last year, **290,170** households in England made a homelessness application to their LA.¹¹ The latest data shows that there were 96,060 statutory homeless households in temporary accommodation at the end of September 2021.¹² This was a 1.5 per cent increase on the number a year previously and is part of a long-term increase. 85 per cent of rough sleepers are male.¹³

Over half (53 per cent) of all homelessness applications in 2020/21 account for people losing accommodation provided by family or friends, or becoming homeless due to relationship breakdown or domestic abuse.¹⁴ 33 per cent of female clients supported by St Mungo's homeless charity said that domestic abuse contributed to them becoming homeless while 35 per cent of women who have slept rough left home to escape violence.¹⁵

Housing has become unaffordable, even for in-work households.¹⁶ The over two-thirds of private renters in the bottom two income quintiles are seeing more than 30 per cent of their disposable income eaten away by rent.¹⁷ MHCLG, English Housing Survey 2019 to 2020: headline report, 2021

A recent poll¹⁸ found 104,000 families renting private accommodation were given an eviction notice in the winter of 2020 or were behind on their rent – putting them in real danger of losing their home. Additional research from Shelter suggests 120,710 children in England are currently without a home and residing in temporary accommodation, which likens to one of every 100 children in the country.¹⁹ In 2020–21 the CSJ partnered with Stack Data Strategy to carry out a nationally representative poll of 5,000 English adults.²⁰ It found that a quarter of the English population said they found it either fairly or very difficult to pay their

11 DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table A1, February 2023.

12 Wendy Wilson & Cassie Barton, *Households in Temporary Accommodation*, House of Commons Library, February 2022.

13 DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, February 2023.

14 Crisis, *The homelessness monitor: England 2022*, February 2022.

15 Joanne Bretherton & Nicholas Pleace, *Women and Rough Sleeping: A critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*, University of York, 2018.

16 DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table A1, September 2022.

17 MHCLG, *English Housing Survey 2019 to 2020: headline report*, 2021

18 Shelter, *200,000 children under threat of eviction this winter*, 2021.

19 Shelter, *1 in every 100 children in England will wake up homeless this Christmas*, December 2022.

20 CSJ, *Exposing the Hidden Housing Crisis*, November 2021.

housing costs, this rising to 43 per cent of private renters; and that 58 per cent said building more low-cost homes to rent would 'level up' the country. Between July and September of 2022, 6,700 households were accepted as homeless by local councils because of domestic abuse, an increase of 4 per cent from the 6,440 recorded in the same quarter of 2021, and up 19.6 per cent from the 5,600 in the third quarter of 2020.²¹

The present cost-of-living crisis only exacerbates these conditions.

The different lenses of homelessness

The ONS has described the challenge of measuring homelessness in a conventional way.²² It also recognises an increase in the complexity of homeless household needs in recent years, particularly in relation to physical and mental health conditions.²³

Homelessness should be viewed as a continuum – and this is true of those who become homeless because of domestic abuse. A survivor might "sofa surf" before they sleep rough or move between a refuge and staying with friends and acquaintances.²⁴ Further detail on the on rough sleeping in England not covered in this report can be found in the CSJ's previous report *Close to Home*.²⁵

Rough Sleeping

Rough sleepers represent the biggest proportion of Housing First clients.

A recent analysis of official rough-sleeping and temporary accommodation figures shows that one in every 206 people in England is currently without a home.²⁶ The majority of rough sleepers are male, aged over 26 years old and from the UK.²⁷ Mortality rates among homeless people are far higher than for the general population.²⁸ The government manifesto commitment to eliminate rough sleeping by 2027 has also built interest in this issue.²⁹

Although the vast majority of rough sleepers are men (84 per cent), women rough sleepers face specific challenges and their experience is very often linked to domestic abuse. The majority of single parent applicants owed a duty (ie. LAs accept that the applicant is eligible for assistance, including accommodation) in England are women (89 per cent).³⁰ In England,

21 DLUHC, Live tables on homelessness, Table A2P, February 2023.

22 ONS, <https://blog.ons.gov.uk/2019/09/17/the-emerging-picture-of-uk-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping>, September, 2019.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Peter Mackie, *Nations Apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain*, London: Crisis, 2014.

25 Centre for Social Justice, *Close to Home*, February 2021.

26 Shelter, *274,000 people in England are homeless, with thousands more likely to lose their homes*, December 2022.

27 DLUHC, *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021*, March 2022.

28 Matt Downie, *Everyone In*, 2020.

29 DAHA, *Accommodation for perpetrators of domestic abuse*, April 2021.

30 Wendy Wilson and Cassie Barton, *Statutory homelessness (England)*, House of Commons Library, December 2022.

single parents with dependent children account for 23 per cent of applications owed a duty and families with dependent children account for 10 per cent.³¹ Men who sleep rough due to domestic abuse also face barriers such as a lack of domestic abuse safe accommodation, not being asked if they are survivors of domestic abuse and also a lack of recognition.³²

Hidden homelessness

The majority of homeless individuals are hidden from statistics and services as they are dealing with their situation informally, staying with family and friends, living in unsuitable housing such as squats³³ and, predominantly, “sofa surfing”. Crisis charity calculated in 2019 that 71,400 homeless families across the country were forced to sofa surf on any given night.³⁴ Informal support is often temporary: for example, Crisis found that six out of 10 sofa surfing families had moved up to four times in the space of a year, while two-fifths had moved more than five times. Episodes of sofa surfing can last a few days but for one in four it lasted between three and six months.³⁵ The transitory nature of their situation allows homeless families and individuals to operate beneath the radar of statutory services.

Migrant homelessness

In its initial response to the pandemic, Government asked LAs to extend emergency assistance to everyone at risk of rough sleeping. This included individuals with no recourse to public funds. Those ordinarily ineligible for LA help were able to access emergency housing.³⁶

The Government also suspended evictions from asylum accommodations between March and June 2020, and suspended rules restricting councils’ ability to house EEA nationals. In Autumn 2020, however, the Government announced new immigration rules to make rough sleeping grounds for cancelling or refusing someone’s right to remain in the UK. This is in addition to existing Home Office powers to remove or refuse these homeless migrants’ permission to stay in the UK. The new provisions overturn a 2017 ruling from the European Court of Justice that found previous Home Office policy on rough sleeper deportations to be contrary to EU law.³⁷

Homelessness and migrant charities have raised concerns that the rules will push migrants at risk of homelessness even further from seeking out the limited support opportunities available to them.³⁸

In particular, migrant survivors can face immigration abuse from a perpetrator, who can destroy documentation, mislead them over their status, or use the threat of deportation as a route to exert control. Without documentation and status, migrant survivors can have no access to work or public funds, meaning rough sleeping is the only choice if they leave a perpetrator.³⁹

31 *Ibid.*

32 Mark Brooks, Interview with the CSJ, November 2022.

33 Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor*, April 2018.

34 Sanders,B., Boobis,S., and Albanese,F. *It was like a nightmare: the reality of sofa surfing in Britain today*. Crisis, 2019.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Groundswell, *Monitoring the impact of COVID-19 Briefing 6*, 2020; Op. cit. MEAM, *Flexible responses*, 2020.

37 Royal Courts of Justice, *R (Gureckis) v Secretary of State for the Home Department and others*, EWHC 3298, November 2017.

38 Crisis, *Over 70 homelessness organisations urge government to reconsider*, November 2020.

39 Domestic abuse Commissioner, *Safety Before Status*, 2021.

Covid-19 and homelessness

At the onset of the pandemic, the Government housed thousands who had long experience of living on the streets or in shelters in safe, stable, ensuite accommodation with specialist support. In many cases, this scheme, *Everyone In*, included access to specialist medical and mental health support. Residents and staff reported that the scheme had a positive impact.⁴⁰

Despite the huge effort behind “Everyone In”, the continuing impact of the pandemic on employment and housing security meant that the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) data for London identified that 3,444 individuals were sleeping on the streets between July and September.⁴¹

A survey of LA responses to the pandemic highlighted the challenge of moving those housed in emergency COVID-19 accommodation into permanent and secure housing.⁴²

LGBT+ Homelessness

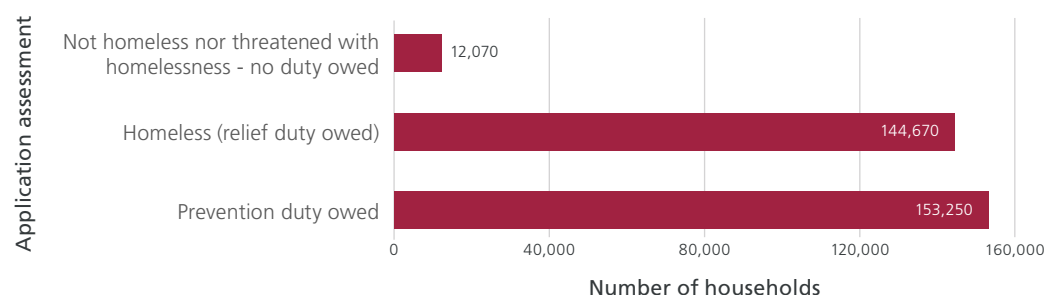
Centrepoin charity has estimated that 24 per cent of the youth ⁴³ homelessness population is LGBT+. Findings suggest that 150,000 young LGBT+ people were homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of their gender and/or sexual identity. The causes of homelessness amongst this group included parental rejection, abuse within the family and being exposed to aggression and violence.⁴⁴ The Albert Kennedy Trust found that half of LGBT+ young people who were happy to answer said that they feared expressing their identity to family members would lead to their being evicted.⁴⁵

The current approach to homelessness

Local government

Once a LA has received a homelessness application, they have a duty to make inquiries to determine if the applicant is eligible for assistance.⁴⁶

Figure 1: Assessment of homelessness applications 2021/22



Source: DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table A1, September 2022. Note: A number of households may be double counted across quarters where an initial decision was subject to review or where a household has made a new application.

40 Groundswell, *Monitoring the impact of COVID-19 Briefing 6*, 2020; Op. cit. MEAM, *Flexible responses*, 2020.

41 Rough sleeping in London (CHAIN reports) – London Datastore

42 Sophie Boobis & Francesca Albanese, *The impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain*, London: Crisis, 2020.

43 Centrepoin, *Creating safe spaces for homeless lgbtqplus youths*, February 2020.

44 *Ibid.*

45 AKT, *LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness Report*, 2021.

46 Sophie Boobis & Francesca Albanese, *The impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain*, London: Crisis, 2020.

If the applicant is deemed eligible for assistance, LAs must produce a personalised action plan, outlining any steps the applicant must make to find and retain accommodation.⁴⁷ If the applicant is deemed homeless, eligible for assistance, and in priority need, then the LA must provide interim/emergency accommodation.⁴⁸

When the LA is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible, it must take “reasonable steps” to help the applicant secure accommodation.⁴⁹ There is evidence however that, despite the legislative changes calling for domestic abuse survivors to be given priority for accommodation, LAs are “gate-keeping”: the result is that, without being classified as priority need, these individuals are homeless.⁵⁰

The Government’s housing policy agenda

The current Government aims to address the shrinking social housing stock with its Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, currently passing through Parliament. The CSJ recently recommended that the Government amend the Bill to ensure a more clearly defined regulatory framework, particularly with regards to planning provisions.

The Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy published in September 2022⁵¹ confirmed an investment of £2 billion over three years to end rough sleeping. It set out cross-government commitments to focus on prevention, intervening at crisis points, and helping people to recover with flexible support that meets their needs. The strategy also sets out for the first time a clear definition of what the government means by ending rough sleeping: “prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.”⁵²

The strategy extends until 2025 the three Government funded Housing First pilots in Liverpool, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, and pledged continued support to Housing First approaches through the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI). As part of its strategy the Government unveiled the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme, an investment of £200 million to deliver up to 2,400 homes by March 2025, including supported housing and Housing First accommodation. The funding covers both capital and support costs, and new accommodation will be aimed at adults experiencing severe multiple disadvantages.

In addition, the Government will provide £316m further funding to the Homelessness Prevention Grant to help local authorities support people before they become homeless.

47 Shelter, *Local authority duty to devise personal housing plans*, n.d.

48 s188 Housing Act 1996.

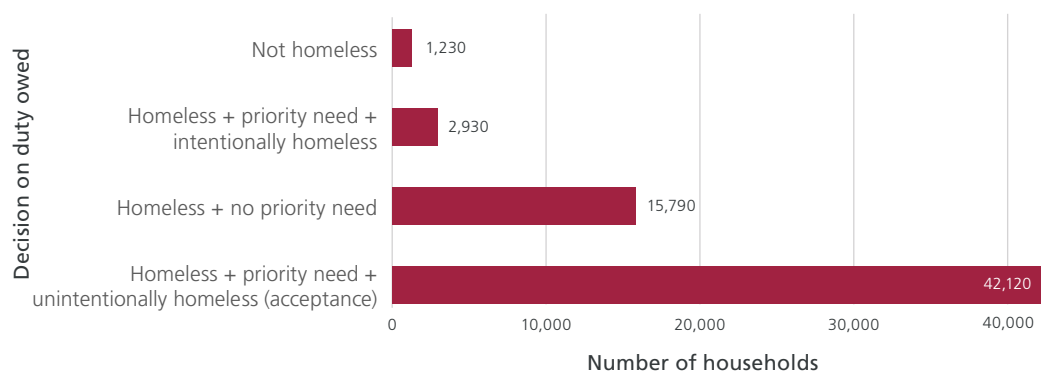
49 DHLUC, *para 16.3 and 16.4 Homelessness Code of Guidance*, June 2022.

50 Public Interest Law Centre, *Abused Twice*, September 2022.

51 Homeless Link, *A summary of the government’s new rough sleeping strategy*, September 2022.

52 *Ibid.*

Figure 2: Total main duty decisions for eligible households in 2021/22



Source: DLUHC, Live tables on homelessness, Table MD1, September 2022.

A total of 121,680 dependent children were housed in temporary accommodation.⁵³ The number of families with dependent children placed in B&B-style accommodation increased from a low point of 400 at the end of December 2009 to 1,530 at the end of September 2021. Applicants with families should only be accommodated in B&Bs as a last resort – and only for a maximum of six weeks.⁵⁴ Since bottoming out in 2010/11, total placements in temporary accommodation have almost doubled, with the overall national total rising by 4 per cent in the year to 31 March 2021.⁵⁵

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ DLUHC, *The homelessness code of guidance for local authorities*, June 2022.

⁵⁵ Crisis, *The homelessness monitor: England 2022*, February 2022.

Chapter 2: Housing first: a new approach to ending homelessness

What is Housing First - and what it is not

Housing First provides settled housing alongside intensive support for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple and complex support needs, such as domestic abuse.

Housing First aims to:⁵⁶

- Give people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home
- Provide intensive, person-centred support that is open-ended
- Place no conditions on individuals — though they should wish to have a tenancy

In England, since 2010, 105 active projects support more than 2,000 people – six times the number seen in 2017.⁵⁷

The referral pathway will depend on the local area; individuals are often referred to services by their LA.

Housing First is not a national policy. Most services are developed locally by LAs or voluntary sector providers and funded through LA commissioning (Housing Related Support). In some cases, other statutory funding sources such as public health, adult social care, and the Better Care Fund are used. Trusts and foundations, as well as philanthropists also fund services.⁵⁸

The University of York's initial evaluation of Housing First in England⁵⁹ found evidence that several of these services were highly successful responses to long-term and repeated homelessness.

56 Homeless Link, *Housing First England*, n.d.

57 The Big Issue, *What is housing first and how can it solve homelessness in the UK*, August 2022.

58 Homeless Link, *Housing First England*, n.d.

59 Joanne Bretherton & Nicholas Pleace, *Housing First in England: An Evaluation of Nine Services*, February 2015.

The cost effectiveness of Housing First

A 2020 analysis⁶⁰ of Housing First schemes in England found that 66 per cent of services receive LA funding – most commonly through Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) funding or the homelessness prevention grant. Very few receive LA funding via adult social care (9 per cent) or public health (6 per cent).⁶¹

The costs of delivering Housing First can range widely between projects in England. The following studies illustrate the range of costs per client over a year:

- A 2018 analysis of 15 Housing First services found the staffing cost to be £3,492 to £5,641 based on 268 hours of support per annum (where pay rates varied between £9 and £17 per hour and caseloads varied from 3 to 10 clients to support worker).⁶²
- A 2017 projection of the costs of delivering a high-fidelity Housing First service across the Liverpool City Region estimated staffing costs for the support service at £10,338. This is assuming support workers with salaries at £33,600 for caseload of 1:5, one team leader per 20 clients with salary at £45,400 and organisational overheads at 15 per cent.⁶³
- A 2015 analysis of nine Housing First pilots found annual support costs per client ranged from £4,056 to £6,240 based on 3 hours support per client per week. Mid-range cost is £5,304 - reflecting a range of costs per hour of £26 to £40.⁶⁴

The 2015 and 2018 comparative cost analyses included studies with a range of hourly pay rates and caseload ratios. Some of the services analysed were paying no more than national minimum wage, and some were operating with ratios above the recommended maximum 1:7.

Where £9,700 is spent on supporting a Housing First client, the taxpayer saves £15,100.⁶⁵ The cost reductions this generates is estimated at £15,073 per person per year, spread across homelessness services, the NHS, and the criminal justice system.⁶⁶

The University of York's study of nine Housing First services in England attempted to compare the costs of delivering Housing First versus 'treatment as usual' which was defined as 'the entire process of resettlement for long term homeless people which might include outreach services, supported housing and low intensity floating support for tenancy sustainment.' The study found that compared to low or medium intensity supported housing, Housing First is not always cheaper – but for individuals with extremely complex needs it was. Housing First costs worked out cheaper when compared to a stay in any form of supported accommodation for nine months or more. Savings of between approximately £4,000 (the lowest cost Housing First service) to approximately £2,600 (the highest cost Housing First service) were found.⁶⁷

60 Homeless Link, *The Picture of Housing First*, 2020.

61 *Ibid.*

62 Joanne Bretherton & Nicholas Pleace, *The Cost effectiveness of Housing First in England* London: Homeless Link, 2019.

63 Deborah Quilgars and Nicholas Pleace, *The Threshold Housing First Pilot for Women with an Offending History: The First Two Years*, 2017.

64 Op. cit. Bretherton, *Evaluation of Nine Services*, 2015.

65 Centre for Social Justice, *Close to Home*, November 2021.

66 *Ibid.*

67 Joanne Bretherton & Nicholas Pleace, *Housing First in England: An Evaluation of Nine Services*, February 2015.

An international example: Finland

Evidence from Finland suggests that spending on Housing First represents a saving to the taxpayer because participants have reduced contact with services – including homelessness, emergency health and criminal justice.⁶⁸ As Housing First is not itself low cost, the greatest potential to generate offsets comes when the programme focuses on people with high support needs who are frequent users of other homelessness services and health services and/or who have frequent contact with the criminal justice system.⁶⁹

Housing First is a central feature of Finland's homelessness strategy. Since 2012 the strategy has developed scattered sites alongside intensive floating support and prevention services. Everyone living in hostel accommodation has been provided with permanent housing and wraparound support. The programme does not require people to take up the offer of support to access housing. Clients are also given a choice over the type of housing that they want to live in. Housing is principally provided by the Y Foundation, focused specifically on housing people who have experienced homelessness.

Finland's Slot Machine Association has provided 50 per cent grants for purchasing flats from the general housing market. The Y Foundation has also received funding from the Housing Finance and Development Centre to help build new housing. Between 2008 and 2015, approximately 2,500 new dwellings were built for people experiencing homelessness and 350 new social work professionals have been employed to work specifically with this group of people.

According to FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, Finland is the only EU country in which homelessness continues to decrease.⁷⁰ During the programme period, long-term homelessness decreased by 35 per cent (1,345 people). In 2015, homelessness decreased for the first time to fewer than 7,000 people. These figures are mostly made up of people living with friends and relatives (5,503). The cost estimate for the action plan is €78 million.⁷¹

68 Op. cit. Mackie, *Ending rough sleeping*, 2017.

69 Joanne Bretherton & Nicholas Pleace, *The Cost effectiveness of Housing First in England* London: Homeless Link, 2019.

70 Ministry of Environment, *Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016–2019: Decision of the Finnish Government 9.6.2016*, Ministry of Environment: Helsinki, 2016.

71 *Ibid.*

Three Regional pilots

The Government is funding three pilots until 2025, the first examples of 'at scale' delivery of Housing First in England.

The pilots address multiple complex needs, some of which include domestic abuse; they neglect any behavioural intervention schemes for perpetrators.

Snapshot of cost benefits from the following Housing First pilots:

- The average cost of Greater Manchester Housing First support is approximately £8,400 per person per year.⁷²
- The West Midlands Combined Authority has a knock-on savings effect estimated to be £1.56 for every £1 spent.⁷³
- The Liverpool City Region Housing First programme suggests the greater proportion of time spent in tenancies might have generated a value of around £200K in reduced service usage, for the cohort analysed, though this does not generate a positive benefit cost ratio, because of the higher costs of delivering Housing First.⁷⁴

Greater Manchester Housing First

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) with funding from MHCLG has commissioned a Greater Manchester Housing First (GMHF) pilot for three years. Launched in April 2019, the GMHF pilot aims to rehouse 330 homeless individuals across all 10 Greater Manchester Boroughs.⁷⁵ The GMHF partnership consists of: Great Places Housing Group; Riverside; Petrus/Regenda; Jigsaw Homes Group; Stockport Homes Group; Greater Manchester Mental Health, The Bond Board, Humankind, Community Led Initiatives, Early Break and MASH.⁷⁶

Between March 2019 and June 2021, the GMHF pilot received 442 referrals.⁷⁷ An external evaluation of the pilot revealed an 81 per cent tenancy retention rate.⁷⁸ Given the target cohort of GMHF typically have poor engagement with services and have previously exhausted alternatives, maintaining engagement over several years is a substantial achievement.

To date, 153 referrals to the programme included domestic abuse support needs. Currently 118 of the 318 clients require domestic abuse support.⁷⁹ Most women applicants reported having been survivors of domestic abuse.⁸⁰ Ten individuals have lost accommodation whilst on the programme citing domestic abuse or threats of domestic abuse as the reason for

72 Greater Manchester Housing First, *The regional evaluation of GMHF: Costed Case Study*, December 2021.

73 West Midlands Combined Authority, *Housing First Research Project*, July 2022.

74 Campbell Tickle, *LCRCA Housing First Pilot Local Evaluation*, April 2022.

75 Homeless link, *Talking about the GMHF pilot*, n.d.

76 *Ibid.*

77 Greater Manchester Housing First, *The regional evaluation of GMHF: Evaluation*.

78 *Ibid.*

79 Greater Manchester Housing First, *CSJ GMHF Data Request*, June 2022.

80 Emily Cole, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

this.⁸¹ “There has to be transparency with social services,” Emily Cole, programme lead for GMHF, explained, “which means that if a client is abusing drugs/alcohol and a social worker asks Housing First facilitators they must be honest. A lot of clients have their children taken away either prior to or during placement.”⁸²

Cost

The average cost of Greater Manchester Housing First support is approximately £8,400 per person per year.⁸³ This figure is derived from the overall cost of the pilot’s delivery, divided by the number of people supported by the programme across the three years. Whilst this average cost has been taken for the purposes of this evaluation, the cost of support has fallen year-on-year over the life course of the programme (to £7,855 per person in year three).⁸⁴

Funding for other Housing First Services

Housing First services outside the three pilot programmes are funded by a patchwork of funding sources that include local authority housing related support budgets, public health funding, Adult Social Care personal budgets, the Better Care Fund, and funding from philanthropic Trusts and Foundations.⁸⁵ In 2020 66 per cent of services received all or part of their funding from a local authority, while 26 per cent of services receive funding from multiple sources, up from 11 per cent in 2017.⁸⁶ Over the past three years, funding for Housing First has also been increasingly provided through the Rough Sleeping Initiative and going forward will also be available through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme.

81 *Ibid.*

82 Emily Cole, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

83 Greater Manchester Housing First, *The regional evaluation of GMHF: Evaluation*.

84 GMHF, *The regional evaluation of GMHF: Costed Case Study, December 2021*.

85 Rice, *Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First*, 2018.

86 Homeless Link, *Picture of Housing First*, 2020.

Laura

I've been homeless three times and have been in services and systems before that let me down. I was in and out of an abusive relationship with my ex and felt hopeless. I went to rough sleepers; my mental health was low and wasn't getting meds. I've never had the help of my family and can't talk to them either. I wanted to commit suicide. That's when rough sleepers introduced me to Housing First and a support worker who helped me get back on my feet, got my meds. I felt comfortable talking to my worker. What she did that I've never experienced before was she listened. I've been in services before where I felt like I might as well be talking to the wall behind them. They say, "do it this way, do it that way" and I thought you don't even know me, that isn't going to work for me. With my support worker it's a relationship I've never and before, I don't know where I'd be without her. She actually asked me what I like and who I was. I told her I got an A in drama and loved poetry and she asked me if I wanted to go on the co-production panel. It's the best thing I've ever done because I feel like I'm worth something now. Self-esteem, community, feel like I can help other people. I write poems now and I went to Westminster with one of them to talk about the homeless experience.

This is the only system that's ever worked for me. I have my confidence back and want to write my own book. I'm not going to go back down that slippery slope, I feel confident in my ability to maintain a tenancy and I know I'll always have good support.

West Midlands Combined Authority Housing First

The West Midlands Combined Authority Housing First (WMCA) launched in January 2019.⁸⁷ The pilot received £9.6m in funding from MHCLG and consists of seven Housing First services with a target of housing and supporting 500 clients across seven LA (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton).⁸⁸ The WMCA LA made their own commissioning arrangements, with a commitment to work collaboratively to establish a common and coherent approach to help fidelity with the Housing First principles. The Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) were commissioned to support the development of the tendering process, including a service specification and template job description for support workers. A common support model was agreed, with caseloads of five to seven individuals per support worker and offering support and access to other services. Two authorities subsequently decided to deliver their services in-house.⁸⁹

This service is for anyone needing support and was not targeted specifically for those fleeing domestic abuse, although some of the people being supported under Housing First would have experienced abuse. As outlined in the evaluation,⁹⁰ the tenancy sustainment team includes an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) role which has supported tenants to deal with domestic abuse issues when these have arisen.

⁸⁷ West Midlands Combined Authority, *Housing First Research Project*, July 2022.

⁸⁸ Ibid, page 5.

⁸⁹ Ibid, page 19.

⁹⁰ Ibid, page 21.

Cost

It is the only one of the three national pilots that was separately commissioned by LA with each service designed to address the local context. Another unique feature is that there are different delivery models consisting of services commissioned from community and voluntary sector, council delivered and ALMO delivered services.

77.5 per cent of the total caseload that engages will need ongoing, long-term support beyond 5 years. This percentage is sustained in their housing, with all the knock-on savings, which have been estimated to be £1.56 for every £1 spent on Housing First and the positive consequences that this produces for each individual.⁹¹

Liverpool City Region Housing First

The LCRCA Housing First pilot was awarded £7.7m in funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling-Up Housing and Communities) to implement a three year Housing First pilot in May 2018.

The LCRCA pilot consists of a team of six officers (led by the Strategic Lead for Homelessness for LCRCA) responsible for commissioning, developing best practice, promoting lived experience involvement, strategic lettings, operational lettings, and an operational lead – who is responsible for six locality-based Housing First delivery teams, two located in Liverpool, one team for each of St Helen's, Sefton and Wirral and a shared team for Knowsley and Halton. Each locality team consists of a Locality Manager and a team of six support workers (although Knowsley and Halton have eight Practitioners covering the two Local Authority areas). Each support worker works with six individual clients.

The pilot was developed as a result of an initial feasibility study conducted in 2017. There was evidence of individuals not able to have their needs met, need with nearly one in three of those with the complex needs not receiving or accepting an accommodation placement. There was also evidence of high levels of multiple needs amongst the longer-term service users.

The pilot was developed in two phases, a test and learn phase of six months from July 2019 to January 2020, during which the pilot worked with 58 individuals and a second full implementation phase which built up to full staff capacity by September 2020. The second phase has been operating with a target of working with 228 people over the life of the pilot.

The LCRCA pilot is currently working with 201 service users. There are high levels of domestic abuse reported at the referral stage, this seems to be one of the complexities of the cohort of housing first.⁹² 34 per cent of the service users are female, 71 per cent of the females on the service have identified at referral as being at risk from others, and 49 per cent of the females on the service have reported that they have children who are not in their care (women traditionally being the main care giver), compared to one third of males.⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid, page 48.

⁹² Amanda Bloxome, Interview with the CSJ, November 2022.

⁹³ LCRAC, CSJ GMHF Data Request, November 2022.

Cost

Outturn figures for 2020/21 and the first seven months of 2021/22 show that the unit cost is in the region of £10,000.⁹⁴

In terms of a cost benefit, the greater proportion of time spent in tenancies might have generated a value of around £200K in reduced service usage, for the cohort analysed, though this does not generate a positive benefit cost ratio, because of the higher costs of delivering Housing First.

Housing First is 2.2 times as cost effective as the business-as-usual case in delivering outcomes for this target group.⁹⁵ If it were possible to house people in to Housing First tenancies more quickly the period of double-funding would reduce, and this would further increase cost effectiveness.

An independent study has found Liverpool City Region's Housing First programme is saving taxpayers on average £34,500 a year for each person it helps out of homelessness.

Independent consultants Beyond Better monitored 20 clients on the ground-breaking scheme over the course of a year – comparing the cost of the programme to the likely cost to the public purse if the clients had not received help.

It assigned a cost to the savings made through not requiring some public services such as the criminal justice system or health care and when taking into account the average cost of Housing First, the average saving per client, per year became £34,500.

Savings ranged from £27,000 to £66,000 per client, per year in the programme which is specifically intended for homeless people with high and complex needs.

Meanwhile, a second report, commissioned by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, evaluated the programme's activity.

Consultants Campbell Tickell found the pilot was 3.5 times more effective in supporting homeless people to secure and sustain tenancies compared to traditional methods, and while Housing First cost more, it was twice as cost effective.⁹⁶

Engagement with other services, such as drug and alcohol support had also improved for 68 per cent of Housing First clients, many of whom have personal histories characterised by multiple, long-term and severe complex trauma.

Service user 'Jane' said:

"My support worker recognised what support I needed and I spent some time in hospital improving my mental health. Housing First made sure I didn't lose my tenancy while I was getting better and now I choose not to drink or do drugs. I really think of my support worker as my friend and I love all the things we do together and how they are always there for me. I can't thank them enough for how my life has changed."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Campbell Tickle, *LCRCA Housing First Pilot Local Evaluation*, April 2022.

⁹⁷ Case study provided by Amanda Bloxsome, November 2022.

Chapter 3: Domestic abuse: challenges in the system

A surge in domestic abuse

Domestic abuse affects more than 2 million people's mental and physical health – 1.7 million women, 699,000 men.⁹⁸ On average police in England and Wales receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour. In 2019, the Home Office estimated the total cost of domestic abuse for survivors who were identified in a single year at £74 billion.⁹⁹

The number of households who were homeless and have priority need due to domestic abuse had increased 50 per cent from October to December 2021.¹⁰⁰ This reflects an increase in homelessness due to domestic abuse since the pandemic as well as the new requirement in the Domestic Abuse Act (July 2021)¹⁰¹ for LAs put those who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse in automatic priority need for temporary accommodation. With limited supply of social housing however, LAs report that meeting this statutory requirement remains a challenge.

In the last two years, the number of households owed a prevention duty by domestic abuse has increased from 8,910 to 10,370¹⁰² (An increase of 14 per cent).

The number of households owed a homelessness duty (ie, who are eligible for assistance, including accommodation) who are at risk of, or have experienced, domestic abuse has increased by 26.6 per cent since 2018/2019.¹⁰³

Helplines and support websites registered a huge increase in calls and web traffic during the pandemic. Calls to the National Abuse Hotline in the UK soared by 65 per cent,¹⁰⁴ while helplines focused on family courts and male survivors of violence also reported increased calls.

98 Office for National Statistics, *Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview*, November 2022.

99 Home Office, *Tackling violence against women and girls strategy*, November 2021.

100 DHLUC, *Statutory Homelessness October to December (Q4) 2021: England*, April 2022.

101 *Ibid.*

102 DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table A2P, February 2023.

103 DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table A3, February 2023.

104 National Domestic Violence Hotline, *Domestic violence statistics*, n.d.

The national lockdowns to contain Covid-19 had the unintended consequence of trapping survivors with perpetrators. Lockdowns also compromised traditional safeguarding, as self-isolation and school closures affected the number of service providers who could support survivors and their children.

The Government exempted women's refuges from closure, so that they could continue to offer a safe haven to survivors, but social distancing measures affected multiple occupancy in these refuges; many faced closures because of Covid-19-induced staff shortages. Survivor support – counselling, referral services, etc -- was limited to on-line, which survivors living with little privacy and in close proximity to their abuser¹⁰⁵ found difficult to access.

Counselling for perpetrators for behaviour modification was also limited to online formats.¹⁰⁶

COVID-19 led frontline charities to reduce service delivery. SafeLives, the national charity, surveyed¹⁰⁷ 119 frontline services to find that three quarters (76 per cent) of respondents said they had to reduce service delivery due to Covid-19; a third of services had reduced staff as a result of self-isolation of workers and the refusal by some schools to accept domestic abuse workers as 'key workers', which disproportionately affected the predominantly female work force in this sector.

The Home Office took steps to address this in 2020, by accepting the CSJ recommendation that domestic abuse front line workers be recognised as key workers, so that their children could stay in school, thus freeing them to continue their crucial work.¹⁰⁸

The link: Homelessness and domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is inextricably linked with housing. Survivors who seek to escape an abusive situation often find themselves facing the very serious risk of homelessness if they are to flee the perpetrators. If they have children, they will worry about the impact potential homelessness will have on their welfare; and whether they will find a safe refuge that allows their children to accompany them.

Operational leads at the three regional Housing First pilots agree that the majority of their women clients share an experience of domestic abuse; and high levels of domestic abuse are recorded amongst those experiencing rough sleeping.

Although assessing causation is difficult, research from SafeLives found that 32 per cent of homeless women listed domestic abuse as having contributed to their homelessness.¹⁰⁹

105 SafeLives, *Domestic abuse frontline service COVID-19 survey results*, March 2020.

106 Respect, *Covid-19 guidance for practitioners*, 2020.

107 SafeLives, *Domestic abuse frontline service COVID-19 survey results*, March 2020.

108 Centre for Social Justice, *Domestic abuse and the Lockdown*, 2020.

109 SafeLives, *Safe at Home: Homelessness and domestic abuse*, 2018.

Many experiencing homelessness do not, however, show up in official statistics. This is known as hidden homelessness and includes people living in squats, sofa surfing or sleeping rough in concealed places. Crisis' research into hidden homelessness found that 54 per cent of female survey respondents had experienced violence or abuse from a partner, and 43 per cent from family members or friends of the family.¹¹⁰

Poorer households show higher rates of domestic abuse, with women in these households being 3.5 times more likely to experience domestic violence than women in better off households.¹¹¹ The same is true of male domestic abuse survivors from poorer backgrounds.¹¹²

Poverty risks prolonging domestic abuse by forcing survivors to stay home as they cannot afford alternative accommodation. Housing is considered affordable when it takes less than a third of a household's income yet there is no region in England where private rented housing is affordable on women's median earnings.¹¹³ Male survivors of domestic abuse also find significant financial barriers to find safe housing.¹¹⁴

Relocation places further burdens on survivors who may struggle to maintain continuity of employment and benefits. A survivor on working-age benefits or housing benefit will need to make a new claim, through universal credit. The Benefit Cap still applies to survivors who are recognised as temporarily unable to work,¹¹⁵ and survivors risk sanctioning if they refuse to apply for jobs that would expose them to the perpetrator (for instance if they are located near their abuser's home or workplace).¹¹⁶

The cost-of-living crisis has also affected domestic abuse survivors, reducing their chance to rebuild their lives. A recent survey of survivors carried out by Women's Aid¹¹⁷ found that two thirds (66 per cent) reported that abusers were using the cost-of-living increase and concerns about financial hardship as a tool for coercive control, including to justify further restricting their access to money. Almost three quarters (73 per cent) of women living with and having financial links with the abuser said that the cost-of-living crisis had either prevented them from leaving or made it harder for them to leave.¹¹⁸

Even after receiving support, survivors of domestic abuse are unlikely to be living in sustainable housing, with 87 per cent of women leaving refuges for continued temporary accommodation.¹¹⁹ Rough sleeping exposes individuals to violence, abuse and anti-social behaviour: 80 per cent of people sleeping on the streets have suffered in this way.¹²⁰

Furthermore, refuges and domestic abuse services are struggling to stay open and accommodate survivors due to rising costs, particularly utility costs. They are also losing vital expertise, such as IDVAs, from the sector as it is not a typically well-paid sector, and staff seek better paid, more stable roles due to the cost of living crisis.

¹¹⁰ Crisis, *A Safe Home*, 2019.

¹¹¹ Child Poverty Action Group, *Domestic abuse is an economic issue*, December 2019.

¹¹² Office for National Statistics, *Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales Table 6*, November 2022.

¹¹³ Women's Budget Group, *A home of their own; housing and women*, July 2019.

¹¹⁴ Mark Brooks, Interview with the CSJ, November 2022.

¹¹⁵ Women's Budget Group, *A home of their own; housing and women*, July 2019.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Women's Aid, *The cost of living is preventing women fleeing domestic abuse*, 2022.

¹¹⁸ Women's Aid, *The cost of living is preventing women fleeing domestic abuse*, 2022.

¹¹⁹ Solace Women's Aid report, *The Price of Safety: How the housing system is failing women and children fleeing domestic abuse*, 2016.

¹²⁰ Sanders and Albanese, *It's no life at all*, 2016.

Housing as a barrier

Housing is one of the major barriers facing individuals fleeing abuse.¹²¹

The Domestic Abuse Act of 2021 requires all LAs¹²² to prioritise survivors of domestic abuse as well as plan and prioritise accommodation for survivors and their children.¹²³ LAs do not always follow the law, however: a recent report¹²⁴ highlighted a systemic issue of survivors of domestic abuse routinely being turned away from LAs.¹²⁵ By failing to give enough weight to domestic abuse as a cause of homelessness or to domestic abuse survivors' priority claim to accommodation, LAs risk forcing vulnerable individuals to live in a harmful, sometimes life-and-death situation.

Prior to the Domestic Abuse Act, nearly one quarter (23.1 per cent) of domestic abuse survivors were prevented from making a homeless application because they were told that they would not be in priority need.¹²⁶ Almost half (45 per cent) of survivors supported by the Women's Aid's No Woman Turned Away project, which provides additional support to women struggling to access refuge places, were prevented from making a valid homelessness application by their LA.¹²⁷

In their report, the Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) accuses London councils of "gate-keeping" – preventing people from applying for homeless assistance – in direct contravention of the Domestic Abuse Act:

*"One year on we continue to read of councils failing to recognise that someone might be homeless or failing to deal with an application efficiently. These accounts show that some councils still hold an old-fashioned view of domestic violence as needing to involve physical assault and have failed to acknowledge the modern broader understanding—and legal definition—of domestic abuse."*¹²⁸

In London and beyond, some councils also impose high thresholds of evidence, including, illegally, police corroboration of "incidents".

Helping a single domestic abuse survivor household into secure accommodation is expensive: analysis by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness estimated the potential indicative cost to range between £3,617 to £11,434.¹²⁹

121 Public Interest Law Centre, *Abused Twice*, September 2022.

122 Relevant local authority is defined in s.61 Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

123 Part 4 Domestic Abuse Act 2021; reg 2(e) The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Commencement No. 2) Regulations 2021 SI 2021/1038.

124 Public Interest Law Centre, *Abused Twice*, September 2022.

125 *Ibid.*

126 Miles, C & Smith, K, *Nowhere to turn*, 2018, findings from the second year of the No Women Turned Away project. Bristol: Women's Aid, 2018.

127 *Ibid.*

128 Public Interest Law Centre, *Abused Twice*, September 2022.

129 DAHA, *Accommodation for perpetrators of domestic abuse*, June 2021.

Domestic abuse survivors with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) cannot access homelessness assistance, though sometimes LAs, obeying Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989¹³⁰ will offer accommodation to their children and their parent who has experienced abuse. However, some LAs fail to understand the legislative requirement to provide both to the child and parent and instead only provide to the child. This forced separation, understandably, aggravates mental health issues for both the survivor parent and their children.

A social housing shortage

PILC highlight the appalling conditions in which survivors of domestic abuse in London are often forced to live in because of this shortage: *"overcrowded and sometimes dirty temporary accommodation"; and remote accommodation "miles away from a person's original home (and family, friends and support network)."131*

A growing proportion of council Housing Options teams report difficulties in accessing social tenancies to help prevent or resolve homelessness in their areas – 70 per cent in 2017 compared with 64 per cent in 2016.¹³²

Private Renting

The lack of investment in social rented stock has led to a much higher reliance on private renting. This trend can partly be attributed to changing tenure type for low-income households. Over the last two decades, the number of low-income households in the private rented sector doubled from one million to two million; and 4.2 million private renters are living in poverty.¹³³

Private renting is much more insecure as landlords are only required to let on a fixed term tenancy of six months. After this period, tenants may be evicted even if they have not broken the terms of their tenancy agreement. This uncertainty can tip low-income households into poverty as they struggle to save for the high cost of moving into a new tenancy.

In addition, rent levels are pulling away from housing benefit rates – while the former have been rising steadily in recent years (private renting rates have increased by 3.2 per cent in 2021-22)¹³⁴ housing benefits have failed to keep up, tipping many of the lowest quintile into homelessness. As Sarah Rowe of Crisis told the CSJ "to avoid a surge in homelessness, we need to ensure that when rent rates rise, housing benefits follow."¹³⁵

130 The National Archives, *Children Act*, 1989.

131 Public Interest Law Centre, *Abused Twice*, September 2022.

132 Op. cit. Rowe, *Moving On*, 2017

133 JRF, *Property rates by type of tenure*, 2022.

134 Office for National Statistics, *Index of Private Housing Rental Prices, UK: July 2022*, August 2022.

135 Sarah Rowe, Interview with the CSJ, November 24, 2022.

Temporary accommodation

The number of households living in temporary accommodation is now approaching levels last seen in the mid-2000s. In the last 10 years alone, it has increased by 96 per cent.¹³⁶

At the end of March 2022, there were 95,060 households living in temporary accommodation in England, including 119,840 dependent children.¹³⁷

As well as insecure and unsuitable, temporary accommodation is immensely costly. Councils in England spent £1.45 billion on the provision of temporary accommodation between April 2020 and March 2021.¹³⁸ This cost is covered in part by housing benefit and individuals having to top up their rent.

The cost of providing temporary accommodation has increased by 18 per cent in the last year and more than doubled (increased by 157 per cent) in the last 10 years.¹³⁹ This is likely to worsen during the cost-of-living crises.

Each type of temporary accommodation has its own rules on access and lengths of stay and may not always be appropriate for the individuals staying in them. Types of accommodation include night shelters, hostels B&Bs, refuges, and private social housing.

Night/winter shelters

Homeless individuals are referred to night/winter shelters by an LA. Those taking refuge in night/winter shelter are given a set time to arrive in the evening and leave in the morning.¹⁴⁰ Most shelters are free, and some include evening meals at no cost or a small fee.

One of the key features of a night shelter is that it is transitional and an option for those homeless who are not yet eligible for more stable accommodation. Night shelter staff or volunteers can sometimes help with advice on finding somewhere to live and other practical support

Hostels

Hostels offer temporary basic housing. They may provide at least one meal a day – usually breakfast or dinner. Those staying in a hostel get a furnished bedroom, which may be shared with someone of the same sex. If the hostel is for both men and women, they're usually housed in separate areas.

¹³⁶ DHLUC, *Live tables on homelessness*, November 2022.

¹³⁷ Wilson W & Barton C, *Statutory homelessness (England)*, House of Commons Library, December 2022.

¹³⁸ DHLUC, *Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2020 to 2021 individual local authority data – outturn*, October 2022.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Shelter, *Night shelters*, n.d.

Most hostels charge rent, though the amount varies amongst hostels. Homeless individuals usually need to claim housing benefits to help with the rent. Those living in hostels will need to show proof of benefits (for example, a letter from Jobcentre Plus), and identity (for example, your National Insurance card or your passport). Most hostels have a shared bathroom, kitchen, and laundry to wash clothes. Individuals may also need to pay a service charge of £10 to £35 a week for meals, heating, and laundry.¹⁴¹

Many hostels are for single homeless adult men. Some are women-only, others cater exclusively to those who have experienced domestic abuse, have slept on the streets for a long time, have mental health, and/or drug or alcohol problems. Each hostel may have rules about alcohol or pets, anti-social behaviour.

B&Bs

Authorities use a range of types of temporary accommodation, the most controversial of which is bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation.¹⁴²

B&B accommodation caters for very short-term stays only and affords residents only limited privacy. They may lack or require sharing of important amenities, such as cooking and laundry facilities.¹⁴³

The number of households in B&B-style accommodation has been rising since 2013 and saw a sharp increase after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁴⁴ In September 2021, there were 9,780 households in B&B-style accommodation. The number of families with dependent children placed in B&B-style accommodation increased from a low point of 400 at the end of December 2009 to 1,530 at the end of September 2021, although this figure represents a decrease from a peak of 3,450 in September 2016.¹⁴⁵

Those with children or who are pregnant should not have to stay in a privately owned B&B with a shared bathroom, toilet, or kitchen with other people. Similarly, there is a statutory limit for children staying in a B&B of six weeks.¹⁴⁶ The government did change the legislation, however, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, so that refugees, including families with children, from Ukraine and Afghanistan could stay in B&B beyond this statutory six week period. The move has resulted in a two tier support system – depending on an individual's entry into the UK.

141 Shelter, *Advice on homelessness*, n.d.

142 Wendy Wilson, Cassie Barton, *Households in temporary accommodation*, February 2022.

143 *Ibid.*

144 *Ibid.*

145 *Ibid.*

146 *Ibid.*

Refuges

There are over 500 refuge services in the UK.¹⁴⁷

The number of refuge spaces offering a temporary haven to survivors is also in short supply – 30 per cent lower than the Council of Europe recommends. Recent immigration policies have also affected survivors' access to housing: only 4 per cent of refuge spaces are accessible to women with no recourse to public funds.¹⁴⁸

Survivors entering refuge spaces will be asked to sign a lease agreement including rules and policies such as alcohol consumption, are expected to cook for themselves, and may stay for days or months, depending on the refuge.

The most recent ONS statistics found that the number of refuge bed spaces has increased in recent years in England to 4,332 in 2022 but remains 23.2 per cent below the minimum number of bed spaces recommended by the Council of Europe; only London and the West Midlands exceeded the minimum recommended bed spaces.¹⁴⁹

Upon exiting a refuge, 89 per cent of clients felt safer, 79 per cent felt as though their quality of life had improved, and 80 per cent felt more confident in accessing support going forward.¹⁵⁰

Refuge services include accommodation in shared, communal accommodation, self-contained properties located on the same site or dispersed properties in the community. They are distinct from other types of emergency accommodation because residents receive a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support designed to support women's recovery. This support can involve (but is not limited to) one-to-one emotional support, group work with other residents, legal advice and assistance with housing.

The refuge sector includes a considerable number of spaces which receive no LA commissioned funding (16.8 per cent of all refuge bedspaces running at 1 May 2021), with a disproportionate number of these non-commissioned spaces provided within expert services by and for black and ethnic minority women.¹⁵¹ The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's mapping of services across England and Wales found 'by and for' services were five times less likely to receive statutory funding.¹⁵²

Housing costs are higher in supported accommodation services such as refuges because of factors such as maintenance of communal areas and security arrangements.¹⁵³ This results in women in low-paid employment having to leave their jobs to access benefits to pay for their stay in a refuge. For survivors in paid employment who can cover these costs, going into a

147 Women's Aid, *What is a refuge and how can I stay in one?* May 11, 2020.

148 Public Interest Law Centre, *Abused Twice*, September 2022.

149 Office for National Statistics, *Domestic abuse survivor services, England and Wales: 2022*, September 2022.

150 SafeLives, *Insights Refuge Adult Refuge Services*, 2014.

151 Women's Aid, *The Domestic Abuse Report 2022: The Annual Audit*, 2022.

152 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, *Mapping of Domestic Abuse Services across England & Wales*, 2022.

153 *Ibid.*

refuge may still include leaving their jobs for safety reasons. If a survivor does wish to remain in paid employment and it is safe for him or her to do so, this can restrict the geographical area in which they can seek refuge as they will need to be located close to their place of work.¹⁵⁴

To provide a safe space for women and children experiencing domestic abuse, refuges will keep addresses and phone numbers confidential. Children can usually stay with their mother at a refuge, although some refuges only take male children up to a certain age (this can be as young as eleven or twelve). Most refuges are run by support workers, who assist women with issues such as benefits claims, re-housing, legal issues, or accessing other services. According to the ManKind Initiative, there are only 269 spaces available to male survivors in the UK and even then only one third are spaces that are ringfenced for men.

In 2021, 36 of the refuges in England claimed to cater to marginalised survivors and 11 per cent of these spaces were in London.¹⁵⁵ Only 18 of these 36 refuges cater to closed communities.

Hayley Avery

I met the father of my children when we were in our teens. We never married and by the time I was 31 I knew I had to leave him. The first five years of our separation were terrible: he threatened me, he would say he would break every bone in my body, smash everything in my home.

DA had given way to mental abuse and threats. He refused to pay child maintenance so I had to go through the CSA. I remember I asked him for a little bit of money just because both children had a school trip to Chessington Zoo and I couldn't afford to pay for both to go on the trip. He just shrugged: "I suggest you choose which child goes on the trip."

My ex was drinking heavily, taking drugs, was diagnosed as bipolar 2 but refused to take his medicines. He had a criminal record since he was 14 years old –including GBH.

When things were very bad with their father, I had to run to a refuge with the children... The children wanted to stay in the refuge – I think they felt safer here than at home -- but after a few days there I felt suffocated. I wasn't allowed to leave the children ever – not even to go to the kitchen and boil the kettle to make a cup of tea. The room we were in was dreary I decided to go back home -- only to have the social worker accuse me of being unable to cope with the refuge, and of being a crappy mum because I had given up on support."

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Women's Aid, *The Domestic Abuse Report 2021: The Annual Audit*. 2021.

Private temporary accommodation

The scarcity of available social housing has prompted councils to rely on expensive private providers of temporary accommodation, with total annual costs rising to £1.1 billion.¹⁵⁶ Housing benefit is on average 25 per cent more expensive in the private rented sector than the social rented sector (and even more so in more expensive areas). This has led the annual housing benefit spend on private rented housing support to more than double to £9.3 billion in the 10 years between 2005–06 and 2015–16 as the sector grew.¹⁵⁷

Private renting, as noted, have increased by 3.2 per cent in 2021–22,¹⁵⁸ and are usually more expensive than social housing rentals. They also often involve fixed term rental periods which can destabilise survivors who, having settled into the accommodation and established a network within its neighbourhood, must leave their “safety net” behind.

In the last ten years, the biggest increase in temporary accommodation has been for accommodation supplied and managed by private providers and charged at nightly rates (increased by 681 per cent) and B&B accommodation (increased by 371 per cent).¹⁵⁹

Rules and regulations for private accommodation varies widely. Some providers describe themselves as offering ‘social housing solutions’ to local authorities, even though they are not registered with the Regulator of Social Housing as providers and are in effect profit making private companies.¹⁶⁰

Legal Challenges

We have learned from our working group stakeholders that transfer of tenancies to survivors/ survivors has proved a recurring obstacle in the cases of domestic abuse. Until a domestic abuse survivor has permanently left a shared property, social housing providers have no specific legal mechanism to remove a perpetrator from a joint tenancy shared with the survivor, or to support the survivor to stay at home.

Some social housing providers will rely on antisocial behaviour legislation to evict the perpetrator. But even after the perpetrator has moved out of the property, if their name remains on the tenancy agreement, the survivor cannot change the locks or restrict the perpetrator’s access to the property. The survivor may obtain a court order to do this – but it will only be temporary. The perpetrator can cause rent arrears or/and damages to the property, which both the survivor and the perpetrator will be jointly and severally liable for. This can tip the survivor into debt, economic harm, eviction, and homelessness. While the perpetrator remains on the tenancy, they can limit the survivor’s access to housing benefit to solely cover the rent.¹⁶¹

Should the survivor end the joint tenancy with the perpetrator, they risk homelessness as the landlord is not guaranteed to issue a sole tenancy to the survivor.

156 Shelter, *Cashing in - How a shortage of social housing is fuelling a multimillion-pound temporary accommodation sector*, February 2020.

157 Centre for Social Justice, *Exposing the hidden housing crisis*, 2021.

158 Office for National Statistics, *Index of Private Housing Rental Prices, UK: July 2022*, August 2022.

159 Shelter, *Homeless and Forgotten: Surviving lockdown in temporary accommodation*, December 2020.

160 Regulator of Social Housing: *Current registered providers of social housing*, 23 October 2019

161 Women’s Budget Group, *A home of their own; housing and women*, July 2019.

The single biggest barrier to survivors achieving safety and housing security in the private rented sector is sharing a joint tenancy with the perpetrator. Additional barriers for survivors living in private housing, including privately rented and privately owned accommodation, are the high rental costs and mortgages as well as the benefit gaps.¹⁶²

Benefits

Conditionality and sanctioning of benefits can have a significant impact on survivors from the lowest income households. People who use homelessness services are disproportionately more likely to be affected by sanctioning, a recent report from Sheffield Hallam has shown.¹⁶³

A homeless individual is almost twice as likely to have been sanctioned, with 39 per cent of the sample surveyed reporting receiving a sanction in the past year. The report found that sanctioning also had a significant impact on a claimant's housing situation, with 21 per cent of sanctioned respondents reporting that they had become homeless as a result. In principle, Housing Benefit should be exempt from sanctioning. In practice, however, people end up having to dip into this fund to pay for other outgoings, therefore increasing their risk of homelessness. Although the Jobseeker's Allowance (Homeless Claimants) Amendment Regulations (2014) allowed Job Coaches to apply an easement to newly homeless jobseekers, which suspends conditionality on their Job Seeker's Allowance, there is evidence to suggest that homeless people continue to be sanctioned despite these regulations.¹⁶⁴

Individuals who are homeless are able to access hardship payments immediately if they receive a benefit sanction, but a more preventative approach in the benefits system would see professionals acknowledging from the outset that the primary objective of someone who is homeless must be to find a stable home.

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate is used to work out how much an individual renting privately can receive in housing benefit. At the start of the pandemic, the Government announced that LHA rates would be restored to cover the bottom third of rents – only to then freeze the rates again as of April 2021. But as private rents have grown 3.2 per cent on average in the UK in the 12 months to June 2022,¹⁶⁵ the gap between frozen LHA rates and rents will put current tenancies and risk, as well as being a barrier to individuals finding affordable homes.

The Benefit Cap, which limits the amount of money individuals can get to help pay their rent, will also have an impact on those supported by Housing First services in areas where rents are highest. Many will be forced to leave their local community to find a suitable home – and relocation in itself carries added costs in terms of severed social connections, continuity of employment, benefits etc. Parents who flee their abuser risk being disproportionately affected by the Benefit Cap¹⁶⁶ as looking for a new job can be difficult for survivors who

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Kesia Reeve, *Welfare conditionality, benefit sanctions and homelessness in the UK : ending the 'something for nothing culture' or punishing the poor?*, 2017.

¹⁶⁴ Batty E et al., *Homeless people's experiences of welfare conditionality and benefit sanctions*, London: Crisis, 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Office for National Statistics, *Index of Private Housing Rental Prices, UK: July 2022*, August 2022.

¹⁶⁶ Women's Budget Group, *Benefits or barriers? Making social security work for survivors of violence and abuse across the UK's four nations*, June 2019.

have caring responsibilities, are facing legal battles with their abuser over the children, or suffering trauma following abuse. The Benefit Cap does not apply to those eligible for No Work Requirements, but many domestic abuse survivors at risk of homelessness do not fit this category.¹⁶⁷

Local Authorities Housing Officers

Each Local Authority has (a) housing officer(s) to process applications. In their research across all London boroughs, PILC found that “some housing officers are seemingly unaware of the legal definition of domestic abuse or are deliberately disregarding it when assessing an applicant’s circumstances.”¹⁶⁸

Some of the survivors interviewed by PILC reported meeting Housing Officers who disbelieved their stories of abuse; speculated about the reasons for their abuse; and failed to understand the danger of any delay in housing a survivor (and their children). Yet the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 stresses the importance of local authorities understanding the definition of this crime: “An important factor in ensuring that an authority develops a strong and appropriate response to domestic abuse is understanding what domestic abuse is, the context in which it takes place and what the impacts are on survivors; as well as how the impacts may be different on different groups of people.”

In some cases, Housing Officers insisted on keeping survivors in their borough – even when this placed them at risk of encountering the perpetrator; the Code instead advises local authorities to “consider cooperation and reciprocal agreements to ensure survivors can be moved to safe areas.”

At other times, officers insisted on moving the survivor out of the area – disregarding the survivor’s preference to stay in familiar surroundings, schools etc.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Domestic abuse injunctions

To protect a survivor from his or her abuser, a domestic abuse injunction can be applied for. Applicants may apply for either a non-molestation order or an occupation order. A Judge or Magistrates grant these orders through the Family Court.

Following the hearing the court will make one of the following decisions:¹⁶⁹

- The respondent must make an undertaking to do or not do something
- The applicant must provide more information - the court may issue an interim order to protect the applicant while he or she provides this information
- The court will issue an order

If the court issues an order, the applicant will receive a letter telling him or her what the respondent can and cannot do and how long the order will last. The person named in the injunction can be arrested for breaking it.¹⁷⁰

From January to March 2022, the latest Family Court Statistics¹⁷¹ found 8,238 domestic violence injunction applications requesting a total of 9,517 orders; this is up by 3 per cent on the same quarter in 2021.¹⁷² Multiple orders can be applied for in a single application. Most of the orders applied for were non-molestation orders (83 per cent) compared to occupation orders (17 per cent); these proportions have remained relatively consistent in recent years.

Although the aim of these injunctions is to protect those at risk of harm, some perpetrators use these court orders against their survivors. Mark Brooks, Chair of the ManKind Initiative Charity, told the CSJ “some perpetrators are going to the police and alleging to be the survivor and getting a non-molestation order to get the survivor out of the property.”¹⁷³ In some cases, the survivor is made homeless: “I had a mother two days ago who said her son had affectively been made homeless because his abusive ex-girlfriend got a non-molestation order against him.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Gov.uk, *Get an injunction if you've been the survivor of domestic abuse, your court hearing*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Justice, *Family Court Statistics Quarterly: January to March 2022*, June 2022.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Mark Brooks, Interview with the CSJ, July 2022.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Non-molestation order

The purpose of a non-molestation order is to protect oneself or one's child from being harmed or threatened by the abuser.

Survivors and survivors of domestic abuse may apply for a non-molestation order if they want to be protected from ('the respondent') who is:¹⁷⁵

- Someone they are having or have had a relationship with
- A family member
- Someone they are living or have lived with

To be granted a non-molestation order applicants need to show the court how their health, safety or well-being or that of their children would be at risk without the order.¹⁷⁶

Applications for non-molestation in January to March 2022 were up by 3 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.¹⁷⁷

Occupation order

The purpose of an occupation order is to decide who can live in the family home or enter the surrounding area.

A survivor can apply for an occupation order if he/she:¹⁷⁸

- Owns or rents the home and it is, was, or was intended to be shared with a husband or wife, civil partner, cohabitant, family member, person they are engaged to or parent of their child
- Does not own or rent the home but is married or in a civil partnership with the owner and is living in the home (known as 'matrimonial home rights')
- Has a former husband, wife or civil partner who is the owner or tenant, and the home is, was, or was intended to be their shared matrimonial home
- Cohabits or cohabited with the owner or tenant, and the home is, was, or was intended to be their shared home

The court may also look at the harm that the applicant and any children might suffer if the order is not granted and the harm that their abuser and any children might suffer if it is.¹⁷⁹

Applications for occupation orders in January to March 2022 were up 24 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.¹⁸⁰

175 Gov.uk, *Get an injunction if you've been the survivor of domestic abuse, eligibility for non-molestation*, 2022.

176 Rights of Women, *Domestic abuse injunctions*, 2022.

177 Ministry of Justice, *Family Court Statistics Quarterly: January to March 2022*, June 2022.

178 Gov.uk, *Get an injunction if you've been the survivor of domestic abuse, who can apply for an occupation order*, 2022.

179 Rights of Women, *Domestic abuse injunctions*, 2022.

180 Ministry of Justice, *Family Court Statistics Quarterly: January to March 2022*, June 2022.

Since the introduction of the Localism Act (2011), LAs have had the power to discharge their duty through an offer of a 12-month assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector. The vast majority of domestic abuse survivors, however, move into social housing.

Men's accommodation

Despite one in three survivors of domestic abuse being male,¹⁸¹ research has focused primarily on the experiences of female survivors. Few policy discussions include male survivors and as a result male-focused services and refuges are under-represented and under-funded.¹⁸² One reason for this is men's reluctance to report their situation and refer to statutory services for domestic abuse: "For the men I work with — very few will have any contact with statutory services. Men in fact will go for decades living with abuse without coming forward... one reason is that they feel unable to express their circumstances. This is especially as our cultural attitude is that 'men are not victims' 'men are not abused' 'men are never harmed by their wives'... It is falling on the smaller organisations to look after these men." Ed Maxwell, a front line worker for Survivors UK told us.¹⁸³

Of male survivors who wanted to access refuge, only 27 per cent were able to do so.¹⁸⁴ The lack of appropriate resources for men means that they are forced to go to inappropriate forms of temporary accommodation that does not include any wraparound support.

Teenage boys fleeing with their mothers are often left behind as many refuges do not accept teenage boys accompanying their mother.¹⁸⁵ Apart from being limited by room size, to maximise the safety of residents (the majority of whom are survivors of male violence), many women-only refuges are unable to accommodate teenage males.¹⁸⁶ A 2020 Women's Aid report¹⁸⁷ found that 92.4 per cent of refuges are currently able to accommodate male children aged 12 or under. This reduces to 79.8 per cent for male children aged 14 and under, and to 49.4 per cent for male children aged 16 and under. Only 19.4 per cent of refuges can accommodate male children aged 17 or over.

The chances of older sons being accommodated in a refuge may be further exacerbated when families have additional support needs. With no appropriate housing options, these survivors and their children may be left with no option but to return to their abuser.

Although there are few options for male survivors and survivors with male children, there is demand for these facilities. ManKind Initiative, the leading men's support charity for survivors of domestic abuse, receives over 2000 calls a year on their help line.¹⁸⁸ Approximately 55 per cent of these callers are survivors with children.¹⁸⁹

The inability to obtain refuge accommodation with children, in particular teenage boys, not only increases likelihood to return to the abuser, but also presents risks of family break-up.

¹⁸¹ Office for National Statistics, *Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview*, November 2022.

¹⁸² Nicola Graham-Kevan, Deborah Powney, and Mankind Initiative, *Male Survivors of Coercive Control Experiences and Impact*, University of Central Lancashire, 2021.

¹⁸³ Interview with CSJ, December 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Domestic Abuse Commissioner *Mapping of Domestic Abuse Services Across England and Wales*, 2022.

¹⁸⁵ Refuge and NSPCC, *Meeting the needs of children living with domestic violence*, 2016.

¹⁸⁶ Women's Aid, *Nowhere to turn for children and young people*, 2020.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ ONS, *Domestic abuse survivors' services*, Table 2a,

¹⁸⁹ ONS, *Domestic abuse survivors' services*, Table 2b,

Family Break-Up

Domestic abuse affects families' physical and mental health, but also risks separating the child(ren) and the survivor. The recent independent review of children's care services identified domestic abuse as one of the main drivers of children into care.¹⁹⁰ Fear of losing their children to social services explains the latest statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, which found that 36.7 per cent of survivors remain living with their abusive partner for their children's sake.¹⁹¹

Violence between parents remains the most common factor identified at the end of assessment for children in need.¹⁹² Dame Vera Baird QC, former Survivors' Commissioner for England and Wales, has found an overlap¹⁹³ between children's experience of domestic abuse and their offending behaviour. Research shows that living with domestic abuse between parents is as psychologically harmful to children as when they are direct survivors of physical abuse themselves.¹⁹⁴

The most common reason for loss of last settled home under relief was due to domestic abuse at 9,460 or 31.8 per cent of households with children owed a relief duty. This is a 13.6 per cent increase from 2019-20.¹⁹⁵ Some of these children could stay with their families if the family were housed safely.

In 2019/20, fewer than 50 per cent of refuge vacancies posted on a central directory could accommodate a survivor with two children.¹⁹⁶ The statutory duty for LAs to provide support to survivors and their children in safe accommodation included in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 should help, but gaps in community provision remain in areas where 70 per cent of survivors access support.¹⁹⁷

A person applying for homelessness is in priority need if they have one or more dependent children living with them or who might reasonably be expected to live with them.¹⁹⁸ In 2021/22, 52 per cent of households owed a main duty by priority need were of households including dependent children.¹⁹⁹

The availability of suitable spaces will depend on the number of children the woman is fleeing with. Of the vacancies listed on Routes to Support in 2020- 21, 42.2 per cent were suitable for a woman with two children. Less than one in five vacancies (15.3 per cent) could accommodate a woman with three children.²⁰⁰

190 James MacAlister, *The independent review of children's social care*, May 2022.

191 Office for National Statistics, *Domestic Abuse: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales - Appendix Tables*, Table 22-23, November 22, 2018.

192 Department for Education, *Characteristics of children in need*, Reporting Year 2021.

193 Elaine Wedlock, and Julian Molina, *Sowing the Seeds: Children's Experience of Domestic Abuse and Criminality – Survivors Commissioner*, 2020.

194 *Ibid.*

195 MHCLG, *Statutory Homelessness Annual Report 2020-21, England*, 2022.

196 Birchall, J et al., *The Domestic Abuse Report 2021—The Annual Audit*, 2021.

197 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, *Domestic Abuse Commissioner submission to the HM Treasury Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021—Representations*, 2021.

198 s189(1)(b) Housing Act 1996.

199 DLUHC, *Live tables on homelessness*, Table MD3, February 2023.

200 Women's Aid, *The Domestic Abuse Report 2022: The Annual Audit*, 2022.

The LA does not have any duty to find a refuge for individuals – they can place even those with priority needs in a B&B, for example, as homelessness legislation is not the same as Part 4 (Local Authority Support) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which mandates safe accommodation for domestic abuse survivors.²⁰¹

There were 16,350 single households with domestic abuse support needs, up 10.3 per cent from 2019-20.²⁰²

Families fleeing abusive relationships, and leaving their home, often face a further challenge: agencies can categorise them as ‘intentionally’ homeless.²⁰³ This is particularly the case when the abusive relationship is on- and-off -- which is often the trajectory. When the survivor flees their home with children, they may be placed in hostels, B&B’s and temporary accommodation which can be extremely inappropriate, providing no sense of security or stability; they can stay homeless for a prolonged period.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, there is a shortage in refuge provision for families with children.²⁰⁵

Barnardo’s Opening Closed Doors Project

Since 2019, Barnardo’s Opening Closed Doors project delivers a whole family approach to domestic abuse support in Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent. The project’s aim is to strengthen parenting capacity to enable children and young people to recover from their experiences of domestic abuse/violence, build resilience, and enjoy better outcomes.²⁰⁶

As part of the project, Barnardo’s has developed training to frontline Social Workers and Team Managers, developed a toolkit for responding to domestic abuse, and participated in case discussions relating to domestic abuse.²⁰⁷

The Institute of Public Care found positive evidence that 79 per cent of children participating in Opening Closed Doors were living in a safer and more stable home environment.²⁰⁸

201 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/4/enacted>

202 *Ibid.*

203 Barnardo’s Cymru, *How domestic abuse affects homelessness*, July 2022.

204 *Ibid.*

205 Women’s Aid, *Nowhere to turn for children and young people*, 2020.

206 Barnardo’s, *Opening Closed Doors Programme Evaluation*, March 2021.

207 Barnardo’s Cymru, *How domestic abuse affects homelessness*, July 2022.

208 *Ibid.*

Impact on children

Domestic abuse affects one in five children.²⁰⁹ It is also one of the leading causes of homelessness for children and young people.²¹⁰ The Domestic Abuse Act 2021²¹¹ recognised for the first time children as survivors, not just witnesses, of domestic abuse. This new significant definition aimed to improve access to support.

Whilst seeking a place of solace and safety from an abusive household is, and should be, a primary consideration, a child often finds leaving their home and community extremely disruptive and damaging. This is particularly true of those leaving their support networks, including teachers, support workers, neighbours, or friends. Leaving familiar surroundings can be emotionally distressing, especially for neurodivergent children who require routine and structure in their lives.²¹²

Long-term outcomes for children in refuges are alarming. Children living in temporary accommodation are much more likely to sleep rough at some stage in their lifetime.²¹³ Poor housing conditions increase the risk of severe ill-health or disability by up to 25 per cent during childhood and early adulthood.²¹⁴ Furthermore, the separate support needs dashboard shows that 45.8 per cent of households with children who had a domestic abuse support need had one or more additional support needs.²¹⁵ Of these, the most common co-occurring support need to domestic abuse was history of mental health problems, affecting 28 per cent of households with children with a domestic abuse support need.

Children who can't follow

Children who are placed in refuges with their parents face adversity. However, they are considered some of the more fortunate survivors: in many instances, children cannot follow their mother or father into a refuge.²¹⁶

A 2015 report from Centrepont estimates that in England and Wales more than 136,000 young people present to their LA in a year asking for help because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.²¹⁷ Of these, at least 30,000 are turned away with no help and only 16,000 receive a full statutory entitlement to homelessness support.²¹⁸

209 NSPCC, *Domestic abuse*, n.d.

210 Centrepont, *Databank*, 2022.

211 Part 3, *Domestic Abuse Act*, 2021.

212 Barnardo's Cymru, *How domestic abuse affects homelessness*, July 2022.

213 Mackie P et al., *Nations Apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain*, London: Crisis, 2014.

214 Shelter, *Chance of a lifetime: The impact of bad housing on children's lives*, September 2006.

215 *Ibid.*

216 Refuge and NSPCC, *Meeting the needs of children living with domestic violence*, 2016.

217 Centrepont, *Beyond Statutory Homelessness*, September 2015.

218 *Ibid.*

The latest Annual Statutory Homelessness Report found 15,370 households with children were homeless or threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse, up 13.9 per cent from 2019-20 – this represents a fifth (20.5 per cent) of households with children owed a prevention or relief duty.²¹⁹ Domestic abuse was the most common support need for households with children owed a duty, up 6.7 per cent from 2019-20 to 12,850 households (17.1 per cent).²²⁰ Homeless children are also up to four times more likely to have mental health problems, even one year after being rehoused.²²¹

In 2020/21, 122,000 16–24-year-olds were homeless or at risk of homelessness in the UK.²²² Of the at-risk individuals in England, 62 per cent were offered support by the authority. Overall, 59 per cent of cases of homelessness were not successfully prevented or dealt with in England.²²³

The number of vacancies for a woman with three or more children is low (13.7 per cent of refuges), providing few places opportunities for a woman with three children to secure a refuge space.²²⁴

Removal of children

Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, LAs have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need and their upbringing with their families. This can include providing accommodation and/ or essential living expenses.²²⁵

Domestic abuse is one of the biggest factors for children going into care: in 2020, half of the children assessed as in need of being looked after by their local authority had experienced domestic abuse.²²⁶ The risk of children going into care is one of the leading barriers for survivors who want to leave their abuser.

A common feature in abusive family contexts is the perpetrator's use of children as a pawn.²²⁷ Survivors often lose contact with their children, who are removed due to Child Protection concerns.²²⁸ Amanda Bloxsome, Best Practice and Partnerships Lead at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Housing First Pilot, told the CSJ that, in her experiences within Housing First Services, "the data in one service showed that of the 20 women who were survivors of domestic abuse, a total of 60 children had been removed from their care."²²⁹

219 MHCLG, *Statutory Homelessness Annual Report 2020-21, England*, 2022.

220 *Ibid.*

221 *Ibid.*

222 Centrepoint, *Databank*, 2022.

223 *Ibid.*

224 Women's Aid, *Refuge vacancies in England for Women*, 2022.

225 Coram, *Local Authority (Section 17) Support for Migrant Families*, 2017. <https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/resources/section-17-support/>

226 Elain Wedlock, and Julian Molina, *Sowing the Seeds: Children's Experience of Domestic Abuse and Criminality – Survivors Commission*, 2020.

227 Cafcass Cymru, *Impact On Children of Experiencing Domestic Abuse*, June 2019.

228 Deborah Quilgars and Nicholas Pleace, *The Threshold Housing First Pilot for Women with an Offending History: The First Two Years*, 2017.

229 Amanda Bloxsome, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

The AVA charity's peer research with mothers surviving domestic abuse and child removal found that the majority of mothers reported that their children had been ordered to live with the perpetrator or a member of the perpetrator's family either temporarily or permanently after they were removed from their mother's care.²³⁰

The emotional impact of child removal for mothers was profound, including lasting feelings of fear, guilt, shame and humiliation, as well as exhaustion, powerlessness and anger: "Many women told us that their mental health deteriorated sharply after their children were removed, and a high number had considered or attempted suicide."

In some cases, social services will offer to accommodate children but not the survivor, refusing to fund a space for both the survivor and the children.²³¹

The separation of children from their primary care giver has lasting impacts on both the parent and the child, compounding the multiple and complex problems of the parent²³² and often compromising outcomes for their children. A recent longitudinal study of over 350,000 people, over a span of 42 years, reveals that being cared for in institutional or family settings is associated with increased risk of poor health and premature death decades later. Adults who grew up in any type of care setting were 70 per cent more likely to die prematurely than those who had not. Most of these deaths were due to self-harm, accidents and mental/behavioural causes.

Risk increased across the decades (1971 to 2001) for adults who had been in care and decreased for adults who had lived with their parents in childhood. Care settings had a significantly different impact: 10-, 20- and 30-years later, people who had been in residential care were 3-4 times more likely than those who had lived with parents to report poor health. The risk of poor health was 2-3 times for foster care and 1-2 times for relative care.²³³

These statistics are alarming, especially when the overall elevated risk of death in adults who had been in care increased over time, from 40 percent in the 1971 cohort to a staggering 360 percent in the 2001 cohort.²³⁴

"Housing First is a good opportunity to keep or reunite children with their parents"²³⁵ Louisa Steele, Housing First and Homelessness Project Manager at Standing Together told the CSJ. The Housing First model, with its intense wrap-around and long-term support, and specialist therapies (including for children affected by abuse) can provide the continuity of care that traumatised individuals need to recover fully.

In contrast to the children's care system with its ever-changing key workers, the Housing First model provides the continuity of care that allows individuals to form a trusting relationship with their key worker. In addition, being able to live with their survivor parent – provided the crucial re-education of parent and child(ren)— provides a constant in the child's changing world.

230 AVA, 2022. *Staying Mum: findings from peer research with mothers surviving domestic abuse and child removal*

231 Women's Aid, <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NWTA-2022-Final-A.pdf>, 2022.

232 Larissa Povey, *Where Welfare and Criminal Justice Meet: Applying Wacquant to the Experiences of Marginalised Women in Austerity Britain*, December 2016.

233 University College London, *Looked-after Children Grown Up*, 2020.

234 *Ibid.*

235 Louisa Steele, Interview with the CSJ, October 2022.

Pets

Pets act as an additional barrier to fleeing situations of domestic abuse. Approximately nine in ten domestic abuse survivors said that the perpetrators also target pets.²³⁶ Findings from research at the University of Bristol indicate that survivors who experience all types of abuse (emotional, physical, coercive control, sexual abuse) are more likely to have their pet murdered by the perpetrator (85 per cent of cases).²³⁷

Survivors often delay leaving their partner for fear over their pet's safety. They often describe their animals as providing comfort, camaraderie, love, escapism, and a sense of purpose in the context of abuse; in some households, survivors depict their animals as their only source of support throughout the abusive relationship.²³⁸

Survivors want safe spaces for their animals when fleeing domestic abuse: 52 per cent of domestic abuse survivors with pets want their animals fostered while they escaped to refuge, or other forms of emergency accommodation (for example, a safe house, B&B, hotel, staying with family/friends).²³⁹

Recent research by Mary Wakefield at Bristol University²⁴⁰ found that participants reported problems accessing private rented accommodation with animals due to 'no-pet' policies" which added an additional barrier to leaving the abusive relationship. Participants discussed extending the options available for humans and animals escaping domestic abuse which included accommodating animals in certain forms of emergency accommodation and abolishing the default 'no pets allowed' in private rental accommodation.

Pets are present in other Housing First pilot schemes. Amanda Bloxsome, Best Practice and Partnerships Lead in the Liverpool City Region Housing First pilot told the CSJ "animals came up quite a lot. In Housing First people are allowed pets as long as the landlord agrees. Lots of people who have lost their children have dogs because they want something to care for."

'BY AND FOR'

Domestic abuse survivors with certain characteristics – gender, race, religion, sexuality – face barriers in accessing housing. These barriers include lack of cultural understanding, language barriers, and specific needs due to their lived experience.

²³⁶ Mary Wakeham, *Bristol Doctoral College, School for Policy Studies*, 2021, pp. 1-257.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Ethnic minorities

Ethnic disparities are prevalent throughout cases of homelessness. In England, the latest figures reveal that 10 per cent of homelessness duties were owed to households with a black applicant, while black people make up 4 per cent of England's population.²⁴¹ This trend evidenced predominantly in London.

Black and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented in Housing First provision generally.²⁴² On average one in 20 are black and the same proportion are of mixed ethnicity. A very small proportion of clients are Asian.

Among women, black and minority ethnic survivors of abuse face more barriers to housing than others. Almost half of all the women that struggled to find a refuge space in 2019 (identified through Women's Aid NWTa project) were from BAME backgrounds.²⁴³ The Women Against Homelessness and Abuse (WAHA) project²⁴⁴ found that, because black and minority ethnic survivors were often unaware of available support or were waiting for a refuge space, they were more likely to stay with friends or sleep rough before moving to a refuge. Other minority ethnic women moved into inappropriate emergency accommodation, such as mixed gender B&B-style accommodation or generic refuges.²⁴⁵

The WAHA report 'A Roof not a Home'²⁴⁶ includes cases where the police, when responding to domestic violence reports involving minority ethnic women, failed to remove perpetrators from the house and/or fulfil their statutory duty to refer them to housing authorities. As a result, some women report sleeping at a police station, walking the streets at night, and feeling that they have no choice but to return or stay with their perpetrator.²⁴⁷

Baljit Banga, Executive Director at Imkaan told the CSJ that Black and ethnic minority women need to be placed in housing with specialist support: *"It makes it really difficult for women to access these services when they don't exist in areas where they're housed. For us, housing is a part of a whole package of support which addresses violence against women and girls."*²⁴⁸

Interpreting services were often unavailable for survivors who could not speak English, the report said, while local housing councils failed to inform women of their housing options and women and their children were moved to unsuitable or unsafe accommodations. Some women described how the only help they were given was a leaflet about housing support services written in English – even though they didn't speak the language.²⁴⁹ Understanding cultural and/or religious contexts is essential in determining what protection these survivors need.

241 Wendy Wilson and Cassie Barton, *Statutory homelessness (England)*, House of Commons Library, December 2022.

242 Homeless Link, *The picture of Housing First 2020*, 2020. Retrieved from

243 Imkaan, *Joint Briefing by Imkaan and the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW)*, June 2020.

244 Latin American Women's Aid & London Black Women's Project, *A Roof, not a Home: The housing experiences of Black and minority women survivors of gender-based violence in London*, 2019.

245 *Ibid.*

246 *Ibid.*

247 *Ibid.*

248 Baljit Banga, Interview with CSJ, July 2022.

249 Latin American Women's Aid & London Black Women's Project, *A Roof, not a Home: The housing experiences of Black and minority women survivors of gender-based violence in London*, 2019.

LGBT+ survivors

A significant proportion of LGBT+ individuals experience domestic abuse during their lifetimes. Recent analysis of the Crime Survey England and Wales²⁵⁰ indicates that bisexual women are three and a half times as likely (25.3 per cent) as heterosexual women (7.2 per cent) to experience domestic abuse. Lesbians (8.4 per cent) are also more likely than heterosexual women (5.1 per cent) to experience partner abuse. Gay men are similarly twice as likely to experience domestic abuse (8.2 per cent) compared to heterosexual men (4 per cent).²⁵¹

Furthermore, the Albert Kennedy Trust found 61 per cent of LGBT+ young people felt frightened or threatened by a family member before they became homeless.²⁵² They also found 20 per cent of the same cohort had been threatened or frightened by a romantic partner before they became homeless, and 18 per cent had been stopped by a romantic partner from seeing friends or family before becoming homeless.²⁵³

Despite these high rates of domestic abuse, and domestic abuse indicators, recent analysis from GALOP found only a small number of LGBT+ domestic abuse services; most are survivor support services based in London.²⁵⁴ This is reiterated by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's recent mapping of domestic abuse services across England and Wales, which found only 19 per cent of LGBT+ survivors who wanted specialist by and for support received it.²⁵⁵ There are no domestic abuse perpetrator programmes that specifically cater to LGBT+ individuals in England or Wales.²⁵⁶ Information from Respect²⁵⁷ advises that most domestic violence perpetrator programmes have been designed for men in heterosexual relationships, although some of these programmes also work with women (in heterosexual or same-sex relationships) and with gay/bi men, in a one to one setting.

Circumstances such as family abuse have an impact on the needs of the survivor/survivor, and how to address them. Housing is one such area of need. Familial abuse is one of the leading causes of homelessness for LGBT+ individuals.²⁵⁸ Due to previous experiences of abuse or hate crime based on their sexuality or gender identity, LGBT+ people are more likely to 'sofa surf' with someone they feel accepted by, rather than find other forms of accommodation.²⁵⁹

Without an ability to access accommodation, and facing family rejection due to their identity, LGBT+ survivors and survivors may return to, or stay with, a perpetrator. The dearth of services and refuge spaces leaves many survivors in vulnerable situations, such as sleeping rough. The importance of 'by and for' services are particularly important for LGBT+ survivors and survivors with 61 per cent wanting access to a 'by and for' service which can provide models and support tailored to their experience.²⁶⁰

250 Office for National Statistics, *Domestic Abuse: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales - Appendix Tables, Table 8*, March 2018.

251 *Ibid.*

252 AKT, *LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness Report*, 2021.

253 *Ibid.*

254 GALOP, *LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Service Provision Mapping Study*, February 2022.

255 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, *A Patchwork of Provision*, November 2022.

256 *Ibid.*

257 Respect, *Domestic violence prevention programmes*, n.d.

258 GALOP, *LGBT+ Experiences of Abuse from Family Members*, 2022.

259 SafeLives, *Free to be Safe*, September 2018.

260 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, *A Patchwork of Provision*, November 2022.

Closed communities

Some minority communities feature tight-knit, insular and hierarchical families, living in multi-generational households. These communities confer a sense of identity and belonging. As the CSJ has learned through interviews with charities supporting members of these communities, they often adhere to a code of behaviour rooted in strong traditions and cultural mores.

While some housing resources are available to those leaving abusive intimate or family relationships, additional barriers persist for those leaving high-control groups. People leaving controlling groups have limited resources and social connections and are thus highly vulnerable. They require multi-faceted support to rebuild all aspects of their lives. In addition, many closed communities have an uneasy relationship with statutory services. Janie Codona at the One Voice 4 Travellers charity told the CSJ that members of her community see police as “the people who tell us to move on, to go on our way” and feel the subject “of prejudice that paints all Travellers as dirty roamers who bring trouble wherever they go.”²⁶¹

The insular nature of certain communities presents a barrier to recognition of domestic abuse. In such a closed community, where adherence to a very strong code of values and behaviours is commonplace, survivors also struggle to leave what is familiar. For instance, it takes on average 11.5 years before a Jewish woman experiencing domestic abuse will seek help.²⁶² Further evidence suggests that Jewish survivors are reluctant to seek help from outside for fear of bringing their religion into disrepute, or for fear of inviting antisemitism.²⁶³

Survivors fleeing abusive relationships within closed communities want help. A recent report²⁶⁴ found that 30 per cent of individuals leaving insular communities cite housing as a key element of recovery. Many of the report respondents who had grown up in their groups had no prior experience of life outside the cult and were left homeless, destitute and alone:

“If I was seen in the street, they crossed the road. The feeling of being the great unwashed was not hidden on their faces. They whispered to each other, looked over at me in disgust and shame. This was difficult to contend with considering I was homeless and in bed and breakfasts set up by the council at the time.”²⁶⁵

‘By and for’ expert services are trusted by local communities and the individuals they support. There are additional barriers faced by women from marginalised groups which are understood when addressed and recognised ‘by and for’ experts. These services have uniquely high rates of self-referrals as many minoritised women prefer to seek support from ‘by and for’ services over mainstream support services.²⁶⁶

261 Janie Codona, Interview with the CSJ, April 2022

262 Jewish Women's Aid, *In the Jewish Community*, n.d.

263 *Ibid.*

264 The Family Survival Trust, *Coercive control in cultic groups in the UK*, July 2022.

265 *Ibid.*

266 Latin American Women's Aid & London Black Women's Project, *A Roof, not a Home: The housing experiences of Black and minoritised women survivors of gender-based violence in London*, 2019.

Hannah

I had left an abusive marriage and moved into a home that my father owned. But I was still experiencing abuse from my family. Even when my parents were abroad, I received vicious emails and texts from my father and had to block him. When this avenue was blocked to him, he had family members who were local pass on threats to me.

I went to the police to report honour-based abuse. It was so serious the circumstances that the police took my fingerprints in case I was found dead in a ditch and needed to be identified. I was told I needed to move urgently. The housing officer asked me "do you want to agree to this" but made no clarification as to what "this" is: there was no guarantee that I would be going somewhere safe, clean and appropriate, so I said no. I have several children and needed to deal with the devil that I know. I need a four-bedroom house and there were none available so that was that.

I was a student at university and working part time so I wasn't entitled to housing benefits and couldn't afford a four-bedroom house on my own.

My husband was still in my marital home but ran it into the ground. He wouldn't change burnt-out lightbulbs, he never cleaned, and he smoked inside. I would go over to drop my children off and was shocked by the state of our home. It would have been far better if he had received some kind of support during this time.

This situation and my family basically became more and more intolerant of refusal to comply with their traditional values. When lockdown ended and my family were able to visit from abroad, the abuse escalated. Because my family is the perpetrator, my perpetrator owns my home.

They have told me I have to leave, but there isn't anywhere to move to. In the meantime, I'm not legally allowed to change the locks. As soon as I finish University, I'll be able to work more hours, and I'll be entitled to financial support with housing, so I'll be able to rent somewhere privately.

I don't feel like I can trust the local housing associations as many of them are run by religious establishments. It's not just about your social support you have to be able to help your kids – I need to be close to religious facilities for us to be able to practice our faith.

There's a real need for safe community housing – a home in the community that is fixed with alarms and CCTV. There's a cost to it but better than remaining with perpetrators

No Recourse to Public Funds

Live tables from Women's Aid reveal that, in 2022, only 9 per cent of refugees would consider accepting survivors with NRPF.²⁶⁷ UK housing law specifically excludes many migrant women from support when they experience domestic abuse.

The Home Office introduced the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) in 2012 as a response to campaigning by Southall Black Sisters (SBS) and others around the rights of migrant women survivors. It allows some migrant survivors – but only those eligible to make an application for indefinite leave to remain under the domestic violence provisions of the immigration rules -- access to temporary support when they have experienced domestic violence. As a result of these restrictions, many survivors of domestic abuse with NRPF are not eligible for the DDVC and therefore also ineligible for housing support under the Housing Act.

There are other legal remedies for certain survivors under Section 21 of the Children's Act and the Care Act respectively. However, this protection is not guaranteed by a robust legal framework but is piecemeal and difficult to obtain. Other survivors with restricted entitlement to welfare benefits (such as European Economic Area [EEA] nationals and qualifying family members with pre-settled status) are routinely denied access to refuge spaces and other safe accommodation. The results of a research study conducted by Oxford University's Migration Observatory in 2020 suggest that nearly 1.4 million people in the UK have NRPF.²⁶⁸

Disabled survivors

One in seven disabled people are survivors of domestic abuse, compared with one in 20 of the rest of the population.²⁶⁹ However, only 3.9 per cent of referrals were for disabled survivors, significantly lower than the SafeLives recommendation of 16 per cent or higher.²⁷⁰

Due to their lower rates of employment and wider gender pay gaps compared to disabled and non-disabled men, disabled women survivors experience greater adversity,²⁷¹ including inaccessible services, transport and available adapted homes.²⁷²

In some cases, the disabled individual's carer is also their perpetrator. There are only five services run by and for disabled and deaf survivors of domestic abuse, despite there being more than 14 million disabled people in the country.²⁷³ During 2020/21 only 1.4 per cent of vacancies were in rooms fully accessible for wheelchairs and a further 1.2 per cent were suitable for someone with limited mobility; survivors with hearing or vision impairments are also likely to require specific facilities.²⁷⁴

267 Women's Aid, *Refuge vacancies in England for Women*, 2022.

268 The Migration Observatory, *Irregular migration in the UK*, September 2020.

269 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fa94743e-5df8-11ed-8929-890946367602>

270 SafeLives, *Disabled Survivors Too: Disabled people and domestic abuse*, March 2017.

271 Child Poverty Action Group, *Domestic abuse s an economic issue*, December 2019.

272 <https://www.sisofrida.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/UPR-Submission-September-2016.pdf>

273 *Ibid.*

274 *Ibid.*

A recent report from the Channel 4 programme *Dispatches*²⁷⁵ interviewed 2,573 frontline professionals including healthcare workers and police. Over half of interviewees said they would not know which specialist service to refer a disabled person to, or would refer them to one without specialist knowledge. Only a quarter of frontline staff have received specialist disability training.

*"I realised I had experience with abuse that I hadn't really discussed with myself let alone anybody else. There were moments when I did feel threatened and questioned my own safety and wondered where someone like me would go if I did need to get some help. Refuges aren't the most accessible places."*²⁷⁶

The government has pledged to provide £1.5 million for more by and for services, but frontline staff need more training so they are better able to communicate with disabled people. The scarcity of resources and training inhibit disabled survivors from escaping their perpetrator and finding safe refuge.

A transformative response

Many survivors of domestic abuse have endured trauma that has left them with very complex needs. Others will develop complex needs as a result of becoming homeless. These complex needs can include drug or alcohol misuse; mental health problems; physical health problems; being taken into care; or a history of offending.

Individuals with these underlying issues require housing and employment, but also services that can address their complex needs. This ensures tenancy sustainment and help break the cycle of disadvantage. St Mungo's charity found that only 34 per cent of people were classified as 'homeless only'.²⁷⁷ The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition has estimated that there are approximately 60,000 adults with complex needs at any one time in England.²⁷⁸

This cohort – survivors without a home and with highly complex needs – is ideally suited for the Housing First programme. Housing First delivers cost-effective support to homeless individuals with complex needs. Ongoing pilots show that a significant proportion of survivors of domestic abuse fall into this category. "Many of the men and most of the women who apply to the programme have domestic abuse as a part of their story," as Emily Cole, Programme Lead for the Greater Manchester Housing First, reports.²⁷⁹ The CSJ aims to use this transformative programme to address the needs of domestic abuse survivors and their children.

²⁷⁵ Channel 4, *Trapped, Disabled & Abused: Dispatches*, November 2022.

²⁷⁶ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fa94743e-5df8-11ed-8929-890946367602>

²⁷⁷ St Mungo's, *Rebuilding Shattered Lives, The final report: Getting the right help at the right time to women who are homeless or at risk*, November 2015.

²⁷⁸ Making Every Adult Matter's (MEAM), *Multiple needs and exclusions*, 2017.

²⁷⁹ Emily Cole, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

Chapter 4: Models of housing first programmes for domestic abuse survivors

In adapting a Housing First approach for homeless survivors of domestic abuse, we would be adapting the highly successful programmes already established internationally.²⁸⁰

A pilot run by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence from 2011-2014 for 681 survivors and 1000 children under 17 found that 96 per cent of survivors retained their housing 18 months after entering the DVHF programme.²⁸¹ The overwhelming majority (84 per cent) of survivors surveyed “strongly agreed” that the programme had increased their safety and their children’s safety. After three years in the programme, 76 per cent of participants were receiving minimal, low-cost services. Through all three years of funding, when survivors were asked where they would be if it weren’t for the DVHF programme, the five most common responses were (1) with the abuser, (2) relapse to alcohol and drug abuse, (3) loss of children’s custody, (4) homeless, or (5) dead.²⁸²

The Washington State model highlights the key principles of Housing First, and how they can inform domestic abuse advocacy: placing the survivor and their needs at the centre of a multi-agency support programme; ensuring stable and safe housing for survivors; allowing survivors’ children to remain with them; educating professionals – and the wider community – about domestic abuse and its impact on individuals and families. Adopting these principles helps effectively tackle and prevent homelessness compounded by domestic abuse.

Living with their family in safety, with wrap around support for their needs, survivors -- and their children – will benefit from improved outcomes.

280 Mbilinyi L., *The Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First program: Cohort 2 final evaluation report*. Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2015.

281 *Ibid.*

282 *Ibid.*

The Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First

The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence originally launched the Domestic Violence Housing First programme in 2010 and evaluated the scheme with a five-year pilot project.²⁸³ The programme, with its “unconditional approach”, aimed to help survivors live in stable housing quickly and provide the necessary support to rebuild their lives. The three key components of the Housing First programme were: survivor-driven, trauma-informed mobile advocacy; flexible financial assistance; and community engagement.

Individuals have choice and control in the Housing First model, and this meant forty-five per cent of survivors were able to stay in their own home with the support of receiving financial assistance from the programme.²⁸⁴ A main component of the DVHF approach is that advocates work collaboratively with survivors and support them in choosing their own goals.²⁸⁵ A maximum caseworker to client ratio of 1:7 is recommended, but in some cases, for example in the early phases of service development or where clients are geographically dispersed, this may need to be as low as 1:5. Caseloads of between 1:5 to 1:7 are seen by many in the field as critical to enabling people to sustain their tenancies.²⁸⁶

Throughout the pilot years, clients were primarily female (95 per cent), with the largest subsets falling between the ages of 25-34 (38 per cent) and 35-44 (32 per cent).²⁸⁷ Forty-Nine per cent of participants were parents with children in their care. The women and children assessed throughout the pilot became safer, more stable, self-sufficient, and empowered to create lives within the local community whilst maintaining a tenancy.

In this country, several on-going pilots are providing evidence of the role Housing First can play in a range of interventions for survivors of domestic abuse.²⁸⁸ Four themes emerge as key to a future pilot’s success:

- Finding suitable properties
- An option for “self-referral” (a local charity or community group specialising in domestic abuse support, as opposed to only statutory services, can refer the client) is necessary
- Survivors seek the opportunity to keep children with them
- Pilots flourish when they involve successful partnerships between LAs, housing associations and grassroot charities and voluntary groups

283 WSCADV, *Evidence from the Pilot*, n.d.

284 WSCADV, *What we’ve learned so far*, August 2019.

285 *Ibid.*

286 <https://wscadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Full-DVHF-Report-2020.pdf>

287 <https://wscadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Full-DVHF-Report-2020.pdf>

288 DAHA Whole Housing approach Toolkit: Whole Housing Toolkit – daha – Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (dahalliance.org.uk)

Successful Housing First pilots for survivors in England

Each LA had to draw on rough sleeping stats and wider data sources to decide on a formula for allocations quota. Multiagency assessment panels in each council area are responsible for overseeing access to Housing First as part of a “no wrong door approach”. Panels identify the best housing and support option for each client taking account of their individual needs. Panels are at different stages of maturity across the pilots, and membership is shaped according to local circumstances.

Standing Together

Standing Together is a domestic abuse charity based in London. In 2017, Standing Together began coordinating a Westminster Housing First pilot for female rough sleepers who have experienced violence. The pilot is funded by the domestic abuse team at the MHCLG. As a partnership between three services, Solace Women’s Aid provides appropriate support for the women; housing is provided by Peabody, Southern Housing Group, L&Q, Women’s Pioneer Housing and Octavia Housing; and Standing Together co-ordinates the housing element of the partnership and are responsible for evaluation.²⁸⁹

Service eligibility includes being over the age of 18, experiencing some form of violence, experiencing long term or recurrent homelessness, a history of non-engagement with services, poor mental health and/or alcohol or substance misuse issues.²⁹⁰ Westminster Council commissions Solace Women’s Aid to deliver the support element of the service, and it takes referrals.²⁹¹

Support for clients is delivered by two Housing First workers from Solace Women’s Aid, each supporting a maximum of five women at a time due to the complex nature of the women’s needs. The goal is the clients’ independence.²⁹²

During the first year, the Westminster VAWG Housing First pilot included 11 women.²⁹³ All 11 women have experienced homelessness, substance misuse, and one or multiple forms of VAWG – domestic abuse being the most common. Of the seven women with children, all children were removed from their care; three of the women have children who are living with family, and four have children in care.

First year tenancy sustainment was 87.5 per cent.²⁹⁴ Women experienced positive outcomes in mental and physical health, support for substance misuse, and social integration.

During the second year, service capacity increased to allow the project to support 20 women and Westminster Council funded two more Housing First workers and a service manager role. At the end of year two, the project was supporting 20 women; eight women from the first year of the project were still being supported and 12 from the second year.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/610d25ec095a1d5d08b365bd/1628251641399/First+-Year+Evaluation+Report+v5_Double.pdf

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Solace Women’s Aid, *Westminster VAWG Housing First Service First Year Evaluation*.

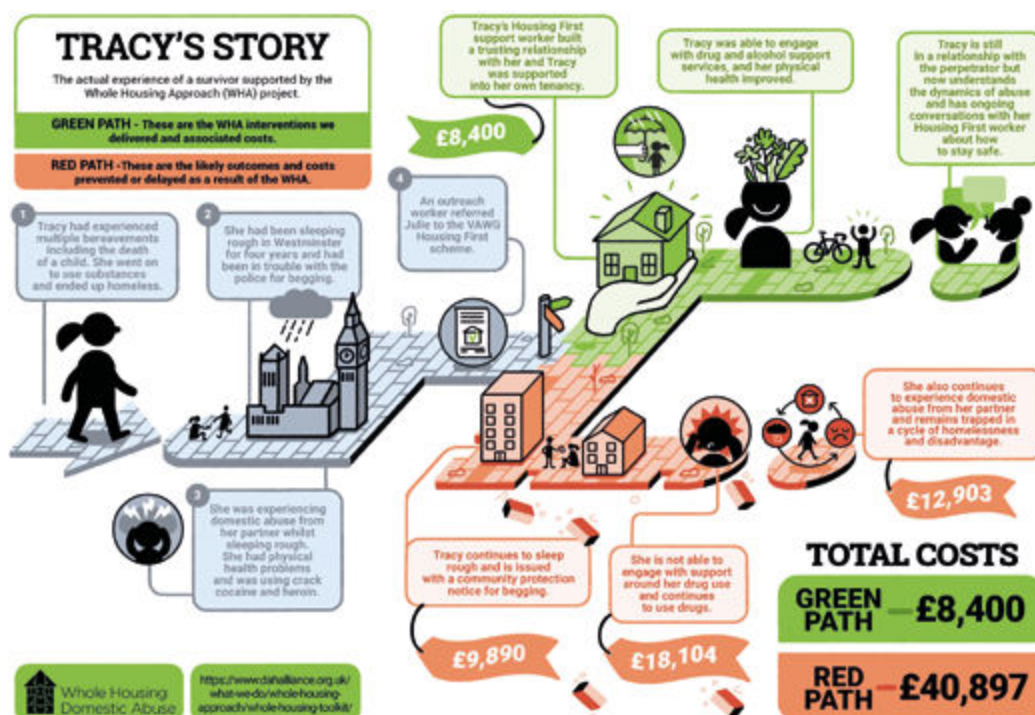
²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Standing Together, *Westminster VAWG Housing First Service Second Year Evaluation*, 2021.

The second-year evaluation²⁹⁶ revealed a 90 per cent tenancy sustainment and positive outcomes around physical and mental health and substance/alcohol use.

Common barriers during both the first- and second-year evaluations included addressing the clients' relationships with their perpetrators. Louisa Steele, Housing First and Homelessness Manager for Standing Together told the CSJ "to be able to work with survivors you have to interact with perpetrators. In order to support this group of women you really have to interact and make sure the perpetrator's needs are met."²⁹⁷

The Housing First team also highlighted that an ineffective multi-agency response had a negative impact on women's safety.²⁹⁸ Steele told the CSJ "the generic Housing First model needs work in terms of being gender informed. Staff needs to commit to whole team training on domestic abuse, sexual violence, and how women's needs are different. Specialist services include this, but traditional homelessness provision needs to think more about how women's needs are different."²⁹⁹



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Source: Westminster VAWG Housing First Service Second Year Evaluation.

296 Ibid.

297 Louisa Steele, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

298 Standing Together, *Westminster VAWG Housing First Service Second Year Evaluation*, 2021.

299 Louisa Steele, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

Threshold/Jigsaw

Threshold Housing First, now acquired by Jigsaw Support, was piloted in 2015 for female offenders with multiple complex needs.

The evaluation by the University of York³⁰⁰ found there was clear evidence of effective support that was highly valued by the pilot participants and partnering agencies. Although there were some difficulties in sourcing properties, much like other Housing First pilots, tenancy sustainment was between 85 and 90 per cent retention.

Women enrolled in the Threshold Housing First scheme had experienced trauma, with a history of domestic violence being near-universal (94 per cent).³⁰¹ Supporting women with experiences of domestic violence meant linking women with specialist services, ensuring that properties were secure, and giving access to personal alarms.

Agencies interviewed for the evaluation noted that the service had a 'protective' impact in providing stable accommodation and enabling women to leave abusive situations.³⁰² Many service users reported that the project, which often worked with women's centres, was helping them address previous domestic abuse in their lives.

The Threshold pilot uniquely aimed to keep mothers with their children. Amanda Bloxsome, Best Practice and Partnerships Lead for the Liverpool City Region Housing First pilot told the CSJ "In the Threshold pilot, told the CSJ "we started looking at the data and could see that all of those women enrolled in the pilot had been survivors of domestic abuse and we looked at the numbers of children who had been removed – out of 20 women 60 children had been placed into care."³⁰³ The separation of children from their mothers can be necessary in certain circumstances, such as when the mother's substance misuse puts the children at risk; but it always has devastating implications. Bloxsome reported that "once these women lost their children their complex needs got worse."³⁰⁴

An early assessment of the Threshold pilot³⁰⁵ found a cost benefit ratio of 1:2.51. Since the beginning of the pilot, every £1 invested saved £2.51. By enrolling in the Housing First scheme, clients were significantly less likely to reoffend, thus saving demand on public services.³⁰⁶

300 Deborah Quilgars and Nicholas Pleace, *The Threshold Housing First Pilot for Women with an Offending History: The First Two Years*, 2017.

301 *Ibid.*

302 *Ibid.*

303 Amanda Bloxsome, Interview with CSJ, June 2022.

304 *Ibid.*

305 David Hoyle, *Threshold: Housing First Service Impact Profile*, November 2016.

306 *Ibid.*

Single Homelessness Project

In February 2014, Single Homeless Project (SHP) was awarded a grant of £7.4 million by The Big Lottery to deliver the Fulfilling Lives Housing First pilot in Islington and Camden project (FLIC) over an eight-year period.³⁰⁷ Today, SHP delivers Housing First services in Islington, Camden, Newham and Redbridge.³⁰⁸

FLIC did not originally plan to focus on supporting women experiencing domestic abuse. When the project began, the target client group were men or women who were experiencing multiple disadvantages in the four key areas of homelessness, offending behaviour, substance misuse and mental ill health. Referrals were made through the LA, via the MARAC Coordinator. The original referrals were women who had presented at MARAC multiple times and for whom there had been no successful outcome in reducing harm.³⁰⁹ The project included five female clients, four of whom had had their children removed prior to enrolment.

Lucy Campbell, SHP's head of Multiple Disadvantage Transformation, told the CSJ "we could have filled 20 or 30 units really quickly. Our referral process started with highest risk cases via MARAC but if we had more units, we would have also gone to domestic abuse services and homeless services."³¹⁰

The overall engagement rate for the pilot was high (80 per cent).³¹¹ Women interviewed for the evaluation highly valued the supportive, non-judgemental, holistic, consistent model.³¹² There are significant positive outcomes related to domestic abuse and VAWG, although some women remained in abusive relationships. Some of these outcomes included:³¹³

- MARAC referrals reduced by 20 per cent, one client has left a domestic abuse relationship
- 80 per cent are now in contact with domestic abuse services additional to the pilot, two clients have reported abuse to the police, one client pursued a court order
- 100 per cent of clients are now openly discussing domestic abuse issues, trauma and healthy relationships; there has been joint working with perpetrator services, safeguarding support, attendance at MARAC PLUS meetings and recognition of the need for a multi-agency response in one case
- 80 per cent of clients have been assisted with links to family or community

The pilot presented several challenges. Access to statutory housing provision clients was difficult and Housing First staff experienced issues with multiple contact points, unclear escalation routes, waiting times and lack of understanding of domestic abuse issues and multiple disadvantages.³¹⁴ This often led to inappropriate offers. Staff also found a lack of understanding of VAWG and multiple disadvantages more widely within services. This includes clients being labelled as "chaotic" by other services.³¹⁵

307 SHP, *Housing First pilot for homeless women experiencing domestic abuse and multiple disadvantage*

308 SHP, *Housing First*, n.d.

309 SHP, *Housing First pilot for homeless women experiencing domestic abuse and multiple disadvantage*

310 Lucy Campbell, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

311 SHP, *Housing First pilot for homeless women experiencing domestic abuse and multiple disadvantage*

312 *Ibid.*

313 *Ibid.*

314 *Ibid.*

315 *Ibid.*

Though several women successfully left their abusive relationships, the presence of perpetrators persisted as a challenge throughout the pilot. Campbell told the CSJ “housing for perpetrators is so essential for survivors to stay safe. The moment the survivor decides to get him out and call the police he needs to have somewhere to go. I would really advocate for that to be available to perpetrators.”³¹⁶

The programme has since ended but the lessons learned are taken forward as legacy work as part of SHP.

Basis Housing First

Basis began their Leeds-based Housing First pilot in November 2016, funded by the Big Lottery and WY-FI's Innovation Fund to relieve homelessness, alcohol and drug use, reoffending, and mental health issues in West Yorkshire. Tenants were identified by Basis or referred from WY-FI, St Giles Trust or Joanna Project as potentially suited to the project.³¹⁷ The pilot funded six Housing First tenancies for 12 months, along with a dedicated caseworker from Basis and a housing support worker from Foundation.³¹⁸

Basis identified the potential value of a Housing First project for women with some of the most complex needs who were continuously accessing homelessness services. For instance, in terms of health service savings, stable and secure housing would allow health issues to be managed and maintained at a far lesser cost than emergency interventions at crisis points.³¹⁹ Women recruited for the project experienced a high level of support needs relating to histories of homelessness, substance use, domestic violence, mental and physical health issues, self-harm or suicide attempts, and have had children removed from their care.

As is the case in many other Housing First schemes, sourcing homes was a barrier to expanding the project. Cat Tottie, a Housing Influencing Change Worker with Basis Housing, told the CSJ “we could deliver so much more if there were properties to put them in. The housing is a barrier so much more often than the support.”³²⁰

The pilot showed positive outcomes across a range of key indicators. With the exception of a woman who abandoned her property shortly after starting her Housing First tenancy, and another who moved on after deciding that she didn't need the intensive support, all six Housing First tenancies were sustained over the 12 months.³²¹

Perpetrators played a relevant role in many of the pilot clients' lives. Throughout the project, women had partners who had spent time in custody for violence, including one whose violent ex-partner is currently remanded for 6 months until trial. Cat Tottie explained to the CSJ “a lot of clients have perpetrators in their lives. We try to link the perpetrator with whoever is working with them, such as a parole officer, to manage that element.”³²²

316 Lucy Campbell, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

317 Homeless Link, *Basis Housing First: The Story So Far*, 2017.

318 Basis Housing First, *Basis Housing First Final Upload*, June 2018.

319 Basis Housing First, *The Story so far*, September 2017.

320 Cat Tottie, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

321 Basis Housing First, *Basis Housing First Final Upload*, June 2018.

322 Cat Tottie, interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

Women housed with Basis Housing First are supported to reach levels of independence where other services have failed. Three of the women housed have ended their intensive support towards the end of the project.³²³

Cost effectiveness of Housing First for domestic abuse survivors

Snapshot of costs from the following domestic abuse Housing First pilots:

- A 2017 evaluation of the high-fidelity Threshold Housing First pilot for women with an offending history identified an annual support cost of £9,192, creating a total cost savings of £12,196 per year³²⁴
- Single Homelessness Project estimates that a total cost of £5974 in support and health costs, including £672 for GP time and the outpatient appointments, creates a saving of £18,638 per person. This is compared to the illustrative health care, support and criminal justice costs of £24,612.
- The first-year evaluation³²⁵ of the Standing Together pilot found cost of the VAWG Housing First intervention was £8,400. The results are persuasive in showing that harmful outcomes were likely prevented for each case study with a potential total savings of £83,686.60 to the public purse. The second-year evaluation³²⁶ found cost of the VAWG Housing First intervention was £9,625 and harmful outcomes were likely prevented for each case study with a potential total savings of £113,835 to the public purse.

323 Basis Housing First, *Basis Housing Evaluation*, 2018.

324 Deborah Quilgars and Nicholas Pleace, *The Threshold Housing First Pilot for Women with an Offending History: The First Two Years*, 2017.

325 Solace Women's Aid, *Westminster VAWG Housing First Service First Year Evaluation*.

326 Solace Women's Aid, *Westminster VAWG Housing First Service Second Year Evaluation*.

Chapter 5: Principles for a successful domestic abuse housing first model

Learning from previous and existing local models of Housing First programmes, the CSJ has identified key principles which a Housing First programme for domestic abuse survivors should adopt in order to enable a successful implementation.

These principles are: accommodation; information; referral through a trusted community group (unless there are serious safeguarding concerns); inclusivity; improved data sharing.

Key stakeholders for accommodation: Housing Associations and LAs

Housing First is built on the core principle that housing is a right, for even the most vulnerable individuals, struggling with the most complex needs. Yet as we have seen accommodation, and in particular social housing stock, in this country is scarce. To overcome this challenge, a Housing First programme is only possible with the involvement of housing suppliers.

As registered providers of social housing, housing associations have traditionally been recognised as playing a key role in addressing homelessness. “With funded support, social rented homes can help people in the most challenging circumstances, including addressing homelessness ... This in turn saves money in the long term.”³²⁷

The approximately 1500 housing associations in England rely on a mixture of government grant money, cross-subsidy and private loans to fund their work. All housing providers seeking grant money for sub-market rental homes are required to register with and be regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.

“The majority (around 70 per cent) of our allocations,” Marie Hardeman, Head of Customer Support and Tenancy Enforcement at the Guinness Partnership told the CSJ, “are through LA nominations either directly or via the LA Choice Based Lettings. Approximately 15 per cent go to internal transfer or management moves based on existing customers’ needs and location preference. Nine per cent are low demand homes marketed directly to the public via Zoopla,

327 NHF, *Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021*, September 2021.

TGP available now homes on the TGP website or through local letting agents. The remaining are referrals from LA, homeless charities e.g. Crisis for Housing First schemes, assisting LAs to move families out of B&B and other urgent rehousing needs from the LA (refugees) or local voluntary organisations catering for domestic abuse survivors, care leavers etc.”³²⁸

For Housing Associations to accept Housing First tenancies, they would need to suspend some demands – for instance, they need to understand that nominees for Housing First tenancies do not need to pass the normal tests used to judge whether people are ‘tenancy ready;’ and should not be turned down because of previous tenancy history.

Early intervention

Early engagement with social housing providers is critical to roll out a Housing First programme exclusively aimed at domestic abuse survivors. Social landlords have experience in working with clients with complex needs, such as individuals living with the trauma of domestic violence or abuse. Familiarity with this cohort will prove useful with Housing First tenancy management. In a CSJ call for evidence for its 2021 report, “Close to Home”, Housing First services reported that staff prefer to access social housing for their clients, as it was more likely to be offered with long term tenancies and to be affordable.³²⁹

Housing associations submitting evidence to the CSJ made a plea for service commissioners to engage with social landlords at the earliest opportunity when plans for Housing First are being developed, and to give social landlords a voice in shaping systems for allocating homes and for resolving issues once the service is up and running.

Because it aligns with their organisational objectives regarding addressing all forms of housing need and includes fully-funded support, Housing First is an attractive model³³⁰ for housing associations. Nor is the model more expensive to manage than a general needs property.

Assessment Panels

Housing First has its own assessment criteria for considering clients’ eligibility. The CSJ has heard from our working group that the use of multi-agency assessment panels help proper assessment of survivors with multiple complex needs.

In the case of domestic abuse, Housing First teams have reported that risk assessment leading to early intervention can prevent homelessness.

³²⁸ Marie Hardman, Interview with the CSJ, 21 November, 2022.

³²⁹ Centre for Social Justice, *Close to home*, 2021.

³³⁰ National Housing Federation, *Experiences of housing associations delivering Housing First*, December 2020.

Private rentals

The scarcity of available social housing has led councils to rely on expensive private providers of temporary accommodation, with total annual costs rising to £1.1 billion. Although private rentals have increased housing supply and in this way can extend Housing First provision for domestic abuse survivors, the CSJ continues to argue that housing benefit spend on private rental is inefficient. It amounts to an income transfer to private landlords, who produce scant additional housing in the process, whereas spending directed at social landlords is reinvested into the construction of new homes.³³¹

The CSJ has learned from Crisis homelessness charity that private landlords are concerned about rent arrears levels, suspecting Housing First clients of being more likely to be in arrears than other clients.³³² Evidence from the three Housing First pilots shows otherwise – and should be part of the wider information campaign described above, familiarising local landlords (including social housing landlords) with Housing First.

LA housing

LAs receive a settlement every year to address homelessness in a strategic way. The Homelessness Prevention Grant (£315.8 million) supports services and accommodation for individuals referred through statutory services. The grant varies according to a formula which reflected relative homeless pressures, while at the same time aiming to protect those LAs with high levels of Temporary Accommodation. The fund covers a domestic abuse “new burdens” element, which could support a Housing First programme that focused on supporting survivors and their children.

The Greater Manchester Community-led Homes Hub is a recently established community resource that provides advice, training, funding and practical support to local groups, councils and developers looking to develop community-led housing. This model could be scaled beyond the GM area, as an incentive to increase the stock of social housing available.

LAs, like Housing Associations, should feel justified in bringing possession claims against persons who commit domestic abuse in a wider range of circumstances than ever before. LAs should introduce tenancy agreements that include a covenant prohibiting domestic violence or abuse, so that claims for possession may be brought alleging breach of contractual terms.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) held a consultation on setting a rent ceiling on social housing from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The LGA response to the consultation made the case for not following through with a rent cap, which risked having a negative impact on LAs’ ability to maintain and increase its housing stock and safely house the most vulnerable residents – including those domestic abuse survivors seeking accommodation.³³³ In his Autumn Statement, however, the Chancellor confirmed a 7 per cent rent cap for social landlords from April next year.

³³¹ Local Government Association, *Comprehensive Spending Review 2020: LG submission*, 2020

³³² Sarah Rowe, Interview with the CSJ, November 24, 2022.

³³³ Local Government Association, *LGA responds to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) consultation on social housing rents*, October 2022.

An important factor in ensuring that an LA develops an appropriate response to domestic abuse is understanding what domestic abuse is, the context in which it takes place in and what the impacts are on survivors; as well as how the impacts may be different on different individuals. This calls for specialist training for staff and managers so that they may identify applicants, and the housing options which are safe and appropriate to their needs. Housing authorities should offer training delivered by specialist domestic abuse organisations (see below the DAHA example) and provide risk assessment training to support staff and managers with responsibility for assessing applications from survivors of domestic abuse.

DAHA training

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) is the only specialist organisation dedicated to supporting LAs and housing providers to properly address domestic abuse.³³⁴ Their training offers a choice of two levels: early Identification for all housing practitioners and upskilling for housing practitioners with a domestic abuse focus in their role.

The accreditation is a standard of best practice for housing providers responding to domestic abuse, with 8 key priority areas including policies/procedures, training, case management, risk management, inclusivity/accessibility, perpetrator management, partnership working, training and publicity/awareness raising. To effectively deliver their statutory duty, LA teams should attain DAHA accreditation, or an equivalent accreditation, which will equip them with the necessary training, policies, procedures, risk management systems and partnerships with specialist domestic abuse experts, which will enable staff to have the skills, support, and resources to effectively provide effective support within safe accommodation to survivors and hold perpetrators to account.

DAHA training is not compulsory. Only nine LAs are accredited and 56 LAs are undergoing accreditation.³³⁵ The CSJ recommends that all LA Housing Officers undertake and complete DAHA (or equivalent) training, in order to better identify and support vulnerable survivors of domestic abuse.

An information campaign

This calls for an information campaign for social landlords, addressing their concerns and driving home the message that by co-designing a system with the Housing First team they can put in place protocols for service level agreements, taking into consideration survivors' needs, support services, and other residents. Housing First services should collaborate with housing associations to run a local information campaign about domestic abuse and its impact. Educating the housing association residents as well as local groups, organisations and services, in the role they can play in supporting survivors and their children will create a safe environment for survivors, and in time encourage them to engage fully with their community.

The campaign would also inform individuals living with abuse about support services in their community, thus offering a safe route out of their situation.

³³⁴ DAHA, *Training*, n.d.

³³⁵ Data received from Louisa Steele, Standing Together, November 2022.

Our working group also report social landlords' concerns about the implications of short-term support funding, and the risks this poses to landlords. Establishing longer term funding streams, as the CSJ recommends for Housing First, would address this critical risk.

Social housing landlords should be able to bring possession claims against persons who commit "*domestic abuse*" in a wider range of circumstances than ever before, including cases of coercive or economic control, psychological harm, or honour-based abuse.³³⁶

Ground 2A, Schedule 2 Housing Act 1985 and Ground 14A, Schedule 2 Housing Act 1988 had outlined the grounds for bringing possession claims against persons who commit domestic abuse – but they only apply where abuse has been carried out by a spouse or cohabiting partner. They will not apply to 'domestic abuse' committed by other family members or persons who are "personally connected". The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has missed a valuable opportunity to align the Housing Acts with its definition of "*domestic abuse*", and to assist housing associations and LAs wishing to support domestic abuse survivors. This omission should be rectified with an amendment to the Act.

In addition, the CSJ recommends that all housing association tenancy agreements should include a covenant prohibiting domestic violence or abuse in their properties, so that claims for possession may be brought alleging breach of contractual terms.

Housing associations (owning the freehold or leasehold of a property) are partnering with Community-Led Housing (CLH) organisations to manage and steward new homes (whether these are new build or part of existing stock). CLH engage their community in the process of purchasing, leasing, refitting or managing affordable homes. They may offer different tenures, and outsource rent-collection, management etc. Collaboration between Housing Associations and CLH is taking place successfully in the Greater Manchester area.³³⁷

Referral through trusted community groups

With the exception of cases where violence raises safeguarding issues, a trusted local charity or grassroot voluntary organisation is best placed to refer domestic abuse survivors to our new Housing First programme.³³⁸ Unlike statutory services which, our research through grassroot charities has revealed, are associated with suspicious questioning, hostile professionals and children taken into care, a community organisation is familiar and non-threatening. More survivors of abuse are therefore likely to come forward and seek support from these groups.

Survivors report unsatisfactory interactions with statutory services. In a recent report by Women's Aid, of 184 survivors, practitioners recorded 125 system failures on behalf of the police, local authority housing team, or social services. These range from professionals lacking knowledge of domestic abuse through police failing to notify the survivor of a change in the perpetrator's bail conditions following arrest, to the local authority inappropriately contacting the perpetrator for evidence of abuse.³³⁹

336 Cornerstone Barrister, *The Domestic Abuse Act 2021: What does it mean for social housing providers?*, July 2021.

337 Community Led Homes, *Practical guide to partnerships*, December 2020.

338 Amanda Bloxome, Interview with the CSJ, January 2023.

339 Women's Aid, *Nowhere to turn*, 2022.

Moreover, many domestic abuse survivors report to the CSJ's more than 500 Alliance charities that they view social workers especially with "fear" and "suspicion"; given the social workers' power to take their children away from them, such sentiments are understandable. They place, however, an obstacle in the way of the survivors' identification, support and eventual recovery. These crucial steps are impossible when survivors stay silent and hidden from those in a position to assist them.

As Amanda Bloxsome Best Practice and Partnerships Lead for the Liverpool City Region Housing First pilot told the CSJ, survivors were suspicious of statutory services and that the services' involvement prevented survivors from seeking housing. "50 per cent of users had never touched a statutory service before. When these people come into refuge, they often lose their children. In a refuge we have a duty of care, so these women were losing their children – therefore these women stay in unsafe situations, so they don't lose their kids. So, we said come into our refuge with your children and we will keep your children with you."³⁴⁰

Parents also worry about causing their child to lose contact with grandparents and other relatives; being forced to start a new life in a refuge or another home. This will potentially mean a change of school, friendship groups, and neighbours. There is an added danger for older children, who may be placed in semi-independent accommodation.

According to the *Sowing the Seeds* report, these accommodations expose young people to an increased risk of criminal exploitation: "Young people who feel pushed out from the family home due to the domestic abuse, finding themselves increasingly on the street or in dangerous situations and looking for love and attention in proxy familial relationships such as gangs."³⁴¹

As Amanda Bloxsome told the CSJ, "to enable the services to work with the hidden homeless, there needs to be a self-referral option."³⁴²

Grassroot organisations

"Self-referral", in this context, means a local charity or grassroot voluntary group refers the client to the Housing First programme. With the exception of those cases where violence or the victim parent's substance misuse raise safeguarding issues, a domestic abuse charity will be able to carry out assessment and refer the survivor to appropriate support.

This is where harnessing grassroot groups and small charities can make a significant difference.

Local and therefore familiar with the context in which a survivor lives; flexible because of their smaller footprint; unburdened with negative associations such as the removal of children; these representatives of the voluntary sector can come to the rescue of those reluctant to contact statutory services.

³⁴⁰ Amanda Bloxsome, Interview with CSJ, June 2022.

³⁴¹ Elain Wedlock, and Julian Molina, *Sowing the Seeds: Children's Experience of Domestic Abuse and Criminality – Survivors Commissioner*, 2020.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

This approach calls for careful checks and balances. The grassroots organisation must be accredited and part of the wider housing benefit system; their key workers may represent the domestic abuse survivor through the assessment process to secure their accommodation and support.

Partnership working is central to a range of elements of Housing First delivery including handling referrals and assessing eligibility, getting housing options in place and providing access to essential health and care services, including mental health and substance dependency provision. Local partnership arrangements should therefore involve engagement with health and mental health services, adult social care teams and criminal justice agencies.

Small charities and grassroots groups have pioneered programmes that address the impact of domestic abuse on the family unit as a whole. Through this holistic approach key workers (often volunteers) are able to support family members – including children and (controversially) perpetrators – using interventions that range from long term, counsellor-led therapeutic sessions such as For Baby’s Sake programme;³⁴³ to families hosting survivors and their children and “modelling” good relationships over many weeks or months, as is the case with Safe Families for Children.³⁴⁴

By focusing on the whole family, voluntary groups do not raise fears of the survivor’s family being torn apart without hope, ever, of being reconstituted. This is important, as we have seen that for many survivors, the fear of losing their children keeps them trapped with their perpetrator; while some survivors are unable to leave behind their abuser, inviting them to their new accommodation once they have been resettled.

A wider network of relationships

Local groups are embedded in the community, and engaging with them allows Housing First pilots to do the same. The Washington State pilot, for example, showed the benefits of engaging with the wider community: positive relationships with community programmes enabled Housing First officers to educate the community, and ultimately improve its response to domestic violence: “Stabilizing survivors fostered healthier communities.”³⁴⁵

Among the community organisations and businesses that engaged with the Washington State programme were: housing programs, realtors, emergency shelters, hotels, auto repair shops, gas stations, phone shops, locksmiths, clinics, day-cares, health and human services, youth programs, legal services, population-specific resources (including for men, LGBTQ community), furniture and grocery stores, household appliance stores, community resources, clothing and food banks.³⁴⁶

Involving grassroots organisations in new ways to prevent and end domestic violence, the Housing First for Domestic Abuse programme could mitigate the impact of abuse and trauma on children, as well as change housing providers’ and local residents’ understanding of these vulnerable families.

343 For Baby’s Sake, *About For Baby’s Sake*, n.d.

344 *Ibid.*

345 The Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First Program, *Cohort 2 Final Evaluation Report*, February 2015

346 *Ibid.*

Evaluation and Monitoring

An evaluation and monitoring element should be included in a new Housing First for domestic abuse survivors programme. Teams in the regional pilots are already familiar with conducting evaluations to monitor outcomes; in engaging domestic abuse survivors, they will want to rely on informal surveys and, in the case of their children, on oral self-reporting. This sensitive approach will yield more reliable information about well-being and mental health; while other data points can be collected in a more structured approach. In demonstrating the value of the new, survivors-focused programme, the teams will be able to conduct A/B testing to prove that relying on grassroot organisations rather than statutory services delivers more effective support and ultimately better outcomes.

Perpetrators

Perpetrators play a key role in a programme that seeks successful outcomes for the survivors or survivor.

Several LAs have adopted sanctuary schemes to give domestic abuse survivors the option of staying in their own home. These schemes provide, free of charge, home adaptations to increase the survivor's (and their children's) security.

The present system

The number of perpetrator prosecutions is low — in the year 2020, the Crown Prosecution Service convicted 47,534 domestic abuse cases, compared with 758,491 domestic abuse related police recorded offences.³⁴⁷ This often leaves perpetrators free to remain in the family home.

The Smith family's story³⁴⁸

The Smith family was referred in to Opening Closed Doors from a LA safeguarding team following a domestic abuse incident perpetrated by the father, James, which resulted in his arrest. Following referral, the mother, Mary, disclosed that she had been the survivor of daily domestic abuse for the past 12 years. James then breached his bail conditions and continued returning to the family home. Due to the risks he posed, Mary and the children were moved into a refuge a long way from their home community.

The impact on the family has been huge. Mary and children have lost all of their connections – friends and family, they are feeling more isolated which is having a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing. In addition to this, the children have started a new school, which has been a huge challenge. Mary and children have had a complete change of lifestyle whilst James continues as normal in his community, interacting with his friends and living in comfortable surroundings in the children's home.

³⁴⁷ Nicole Jacobs, *Review of Written Evidence Submitted by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (VAW0041)*, UK Parliament, June 2021

³⁴⁸ Case study provided by Barnardo's Charity, July 2022

Responding to the perpetrator to support the survivor

Although investing in perpetrator programmes has been presented by some domestic abuse advocates as unjustly re-directing funding that should go to survivors, Louisa Steele, Housing First and Homelessness Manager for Standing Together argues that “to be able to work with survivors you have to interact with perpetrators. In order to support this group of women you really have to interact and make sure the perpetrators’ needs are met.”³⁴⁹

Housing First teams from the three government-funded pilots and beyond have told the CSJ that a considerable proportion of their clients invite their abuser to accompany them into their new accommodations or will allow them to visit these new “safe” spaces. With perpetrators remaining in survivors’ lives, domestic abuse services must address perpetrator behaviour.

The government has pledged for the year 2021/2022 an additional £25 million, more than doubling the resources for tackling domestic abuse perpetrators. It also committed to ensure that all agencies involved take steps to identify domestic abuse perpetrators whose risk requires active multi-agency management.³⁵⁰ Drive charity told the CSJ their Restart programme across five London boroughs has found the challenge lies in “the individuals who are high-risk and high harm perpetrators: they have no fixed abode, and often go looking for their former partners.”³⁵¹

CSJ has learned from some of its charities working with domestic abuse and violence against women and girls that without the option to remove a perpetrator, survivors and their children will continue to suffer by remaining trapped in abusive relationships or being forced to flee their home.³⁵²

Perpetrator housing support

Over the past year, DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) and the Drive Partnership together with other voluntary and statutory sector organisations have been building the case for perpetrator housing support. In 2021, this alliance was formalised through the establishment of the Perpetrator and Housing Working Group, under the umbrella of the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group led by DAHA.

The Group has emphasised that their model offers potential benefits for survivors: it is less disruptive – allowing them (and their children) to maintain connections with their support network; and less costly as relocation comes at a price, especially in terms of continuity of employment and benefits. For Housing First tenants (whose experience of homelessness is especially traumatic), having to move home again with all the disruption that this entails threatens the effectiveness of the intervention.

Moreover, there are wider system benefits, as the survivor and/or perpetrator are less likely to become homeless, and children are less likely to be in contact with children’s social care.³⁵³

Deidre Cartwright, chair of the Perpetrators and Housing Working Group told the CSJ: *“it’s about recognising that the family housing is affected by the perpetrators. There’s a longstanding belief that the survivor should leave but in a lot of circumstances that’s not what the survivor wants, and they often want to maintain their tenancy.”*³⁵⁴

349 Louisa Steele, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

350 Home Office, *Tackling Perpetrators*, July 2022.

351 Deidre Cartwright, Interview with the CSJ, July 2022

352 For Baby’s Sake, *About For Baby’s Sake*, n.d.

353 REFERENCE DAHA

354 Deidre Cartwright, Interview with the CSJ, July 2022

Emily Cole, Senior Team Manager for GM Housing First told the CSJ “we often have couples come into our Housing First scheme where one of them is a perpetrator. We try to give them separate accommodations because when the perpetrator continues to be a rough sleeper, they are more likely to return to the survivor’s home.”³⁵⁵

Relocating the perpetrator, however, risks sending the wrong message, some key workers fear: abuse your partner or spouse and we will give you a home. More research is needed to determine the impact of such initiatives.

Restart

The Restart pilot³⁵⁶ is an early intervention scheme for perpetrators causing harm in families working with Children’s Social Care, to prevent continued abuse. The clients are referred by children’s services and accommodation is provided to perpetrators where family safety is in question. The pilot adopts a multi-agency approach, which includes delivering Safe & Together training for social work teams and working with housing teams to innovate accommodation pathways.

The pilot received funding from Home Office with match funding from Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), mobilising from August 2021 and delivering until July 2022.³⁵⁷

This pilot project is a partnership between MOPAC, the Drive Partnership, Respect, DAHA, working with Cranstoun as delivery partner, and operating in the London boroughs of Camden, Croydon, Havering, Sutton, and Westminster.

They offer temporary accommodation to the perpetrator whilst an Accommodation Practitioner works alongside the family, Case Manager, and Partner Support Worker, and the LA Housing Team to find both suitable and more long-term accommodation options.³⁵⁸

This provision is available for those cases when the survivor expresses the need to stay safe within their own home and asks for the perpetrator to be removed.³⁵⁹ Restart has had 11 housing cases so far, eight of which are active. Four perpetrators have been successfully housed in long term accommodation.³⁶⁰

The nature of accommodation support offered depends on several factors including individual needs and circumstances of the survivor, housing circumstances of the family, and the commitment of the perpetrator to respect these arrangements and engage in behaviour change interventions.³⁶¹

³⁵⁵ Emily Cole, Interview with the CSJ, June 2022.

³⁵⁶ Drive, *Restart*, 2022.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ Hannah Candee, lead of the restart programme, Interview with the CSJ, November 24, 2022.

³⁵⁹ Drive, *Restart Information Pack*, 2021.

³⁶⁰ Deidre Cartwright, Interview with the CSJ, July 2022

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

An Inclusive Model

By and For services

Most survivors from minority ethnic communities want to receive support delivered ‘by and for’ their own community.³⁶² Specialist ‘by and for’ organisations are better able to understand the context and complexity of abuse faced by minority ethnic survivors, and can build the trust critical to effectively assess risk and provide the right support.³⁶³ Sixty-seven per cent of black and minority ethnic survivors, 68 per cent of LGBT+ survivors, 55 per cent of disabled survivors and 16 of 62 deaf survivors wanted access to a specialist ‘by and for’ organisation to provide them with the help they needed.³⁶⁴

It is therefore no surprise ‘by and for’ specialist services have high rates of self-referrals compared to mainstream support services.³⁶⁵

Imkaan research³⁶⁶ found that black and minority ethnic women reported not only dealing with the consequences of sexual violence but also uncertainty about homelessness, unemployment and ill health. Imkaan recommended to that the CSJ working group that a Housing First pilot also should recognise the value of BAME support services and invest in delivering them to BAME clients. Being able to communicate in their language was crucial for those who did not speak English, while being within BME spaces reduced women’s isolation and provided opportunities to forge alternative supportive friendships. Imkaan pointed out that the Home Affairs Select Committee has recognised the value of BME services as lifelines during two Domestic Abuse Bill inquiries as well as its recent inquiry into COVID-19 and domestic abuse.

Housing First teams must ensure that the accommodation for ‘by and for’ is in appropriate and safe areas, where they can create new social networks, rather than where they risk being subjected to racist attacks which could re-traumatise them.

Reaching BAME women represents a significant challenge: they are least likely to come in through on self-referral or through community engagement; yet, according to Imkaan, they are fearful of statutory services, by whom they report not being believed.

Male Survivors

Male survivors report to Mankind Initiative that, as is true for black and ethnic minority women, they are not believed when they self-refer. Services seldom ask rough sleepers questions to identify domestic abuse as the root cause of their circumstances – and, as Mark Brooks, CEO of Mankind Initiative told the CSJ, “the majority do not regard themselves as domestic abuse survivors. The cultural consensus is so strong – men cannot be survivors of domestic abuse – that despite statistics exposing this myth, male survivors seldom self-identify as survivors or survivors of domestic abuse.”³⁶⁷

362 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, *A Patchwork of Provision*, November 2022.

363 *Ibid.*

364 *Ibid.*

365 Imkaan, *Joint Briefing by Imkaan and the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW) Joint Briefing by Imkaan and the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW)*, June 2020.

366 Reclaiming Voice, *Key findings on sexual violence and Black and minoritised women’s interactions with the Criminal Justice System*, 2020.

367 Mark Brooks, Interview with the CSJ, November 2022.

The CSJ recommends that LAs, in training their Housing Teams and specialist support services, recognise that men can be subjected to domestic abuse, and ask questions that will lead them to self-identify. As Ed Maxwell of Survivors UK told us, “it is down to the front line worker to understand the barriers that keep men from recognising that they are in an abusive relationship.”³⁶⁸

Children

The AVA charity has adopted the Canadian Children overcoming domestic abuse (CODA) model to train specialists in delivering support groups in the community for children 4 to 21. Programme evaluation by Middlesex University found that children gained in confidence, felt they were listened to and believed, and could explore their feelings, especially anger, that had resulted from their experience of abuse.³⁶⁹

This child-centred support could become an invaluable and cost-effective element of a Housing First programme for domestic abuse. The estimated economic cost of running a group is £9,123.96 per group (12-week, concurrent child and mother groups). The cost per child is estimated at £1,303.25 (12-week, concurrent child and mother groups). Potential cost saving include providing services in-kind and approaching potential facilitators who commit to the programme for a minimum period of time such that training costs are recuperated.

The evaluation recommended that CODA be used as a preventive measure: as noted earlier, domestic violence survivors often fail to seek support from statutory services, fearful of losing their children or being undermined or challenged about their testimony. As a result they become isolated from systems of support. Offering a community-based peer group would overcome a survivor’s reluctance to seek support³⁷⁰.

Data sharing

In order to prevent homelessness caused by domestic abuse we need to know more about individuals and families at risk. SafeLives charity has drawn up the characteristics of survivors that mean they are more likely to be abused: women are more likely than men; women in households with an income under £10,000; women during pregnancy; younger people; individuals who misuse substances; individuals with mental health.³⁷¹

Better data sharing between agencies and between health, police and education professionals would flag issues among individuals and families. Identifying and supporting the most vulnerable requires coordinated action; at present concern over privacy prevents this.

368 Ed Maxwell, Interview with the CSJ, December 2022.

369 Middlesex University, 2012. Evaluation of the Community Group Programme for Children and Young People.

370 *Ibid.*

371 SafeLives, *Who are the survivors of domestic abuse*, n.d.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Tracker (MAST), funded in part by the Social Care Digital Innovation Accelerator (SCDIA) alongside NHS Digital and Walsall Council, is being piloted in the West Midlands as a solution to data sharing problems. MAST aims to improve data sharing between partners with a mandatory responsibility for safeguarding. Sharing the minimum amount of demographic data, safeguarding professionals can easily identify where individuals have had contact with multiple agencies within a certain timeframe, e.g., 12 months. Currently the scope of this project is across Children's Social Care, Adults Social Care, Police, Fire and Rescue and Health. This will run in Walsall with a proof of concept ongoing in South Wales and demonstrations to multiple other areas such as London and other local authorities in the West Midlands.

MAST is underpinned by a documented data governance structure to allow the partner organisations to share the minimum amount of demographic data with other partners to assist in the decision-making processes of safeguarding professionals. Legal frameworks are used and identified from the outset for data sharing. To comply with GDPR partners only share the minimum amount of data necessary to improve information to assist safeguarding decision-making.

In its current form, MAST shares data across Children and Adults social services (from local authorities), Police, Fire and Rescue and Health with scope to expand to other service areas with a statutory responsibility for safeguarding.

By providing both high-level information about number of contacts and also information about who is best to contact in an organisation to learn more detail about the case, MAST reduces the care professional's workload.

Chapter 6: Enabling success

To ensure a successful delivery of a Housing First programme for survivors of domestic abuse, the Government should also engage with wider structural policy changes which would enable a more robust and effective response to service users of the programme.

Improving Access to Properties

The limited access to affordable housing stock has emerged as a significant barrier to supporting domestic abuse survivors in safe accommodation.

The CSJ has been urging the Government to consider investing more in the provision of housing affordable to those on the lowest incomes.³⁷² As well as helping to limit the risk of homelessness, investing in low-cost rental accommodation would help reduce the Housing Benefit bill which rose to £16.5 billion in 2020/2021.³⁷³ Research conducted by Capital Economics found that the Government would achieve better value for taxpayers' money if it were to part fund the delivery of 100,000 new social rent homes each year, rather than continue with its existing policy.³⁷⁴

Government intervention in low-cost rented house building would prove popular, the CSJ has found – and in particular among the Red Wall voters who voted Conservative for the first time in 2019.³⁷⁵

In 2020–21 the CSJ partnered with Stack Data Strategy to carry out a nationally representative poll of 5,000 English adults, as well as a combination of cluster analysis and principal component analysis (PCA) to segment respondents into distinct groups for further investigation. With 'spoke questions' and regression modelling, Stack Data Strategy identified six segments of the population whose shared attitudes provide important implications for housing policy: New Conservatives; Shire Tories; Metropolitan Elites; Liberal Centrists; Aspirational Individualists; and the Disengaged Middle. This exercise revealed that the New Conservative segment was highly supportive of government intervention in low-cost rented housebuilding: 67 per cent said that social housing should be made a government priority. The research also found that a quarter of the English population said they found it either fairly or very difficult to pay their housing costs, this rising to 43 per cent of private renters.³⁷⁶

³⁷² Centre for Social Justice, *Close to home*, 2021.

³⁷³ Statista, *Government expenditure on housing benefit in nominal terms in the United Kingdom from 2000/01 to 2021/22*, November, 2022.

³⁷⁴ Capital Economics, *Building new social rent homes*, June 2015.

³⁷⁵ Centre for Social Justice, *Exposing the hidden housing crisis*, 2021.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The Conservative Manifesto 2019 promised “a better deal for renters” which included abolishing ‘no-fault’ evictions. The Government announced a Renters Reform Bill³⁷⁷ but this was not introduced in the 2019-21 parliamentary session. The Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Select Committee’s inquiry into Building more social housing reported in July 2020. The Committee received “compelling evidence that England needs at least 90,000 net additional social rent homes a year” and called on Government “to invest so the country can build 90,000 social rent homes a year.”³⁷⁸

The government provided a 12-point action plan to deliver “a fairer, more secure, higher quality private rented sector,” in their white paper of June 2022 “A fairer private rented sector”, including proposals to abolish section 21 evictions and introduce a simpler, more secure tenancy structure. In this way, a tenancy will only end if the tenant ends it or if the landlord has a valid ground for possession.³⁷⁹ Grounds for possession will be reformed to ensure landlords have effective means to gain possession of their properties when necessary. New grounds will be created to allow landlords to sell or move close family members into the property. Grounds concerning persistent rent arrears will be strengthened.

The reforms require legislation: a Renters Reform Bill will be introduced in this parliamentary session.³⁸⁰

Improving Benefits

Some clients of the new Housing First for Domestic Abuse programme will be in receipt of benefits; to address their homelessness, the CSJ calls for a more preventative approach in the benefits system. This would require professionals acknowledging from the outset that the primary objective of someone who is homeless must be to find a stable home. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should train JobCentre Work Coaches to identify someone who is homeless in order to make a financial assessment before a sanction is imposed to determine if this is likely to result in destitution or homelessness. The Government should also ensure that this covers Universal Credit claimants.

On day one of a UC applicant’s claim, Job Centre Plus should assess someone’s risk of homelessness so that associated needs and trigger factors are addressed as quickly as possible. Beyond budgeting and financial literacy work, households should be asked whether they have previously experienced homelessness and how future risk can be minimised. Where appropriate for example, tenants at risk of homelessness could be referred to a tenancy support team within the council or a social lettings agencies. They should also be made aware of support services offered in their community by the council and, crucially, by voluntary services.

377 Her Majesty The Queen, *Queen’s speech 2019*, May 2019.

378 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, *Building more social housing* (773KB, PDF), 27 July 2020, HC 173 2019-21

379 DHLUC, *A fairer private rented sector*, August 2022.

380 Her Majesty The Queen, *Queen’s Speech 2022: background briefing notes*, 10 May 2022.

The Benefit Cap should be removed for domestic abuse survivors, too: many will be struggling to secure affordable accommodation when they are already receiving benefits for the home they have had to leave. Moreover, some will be unable to hold down their job, or to look for a job, if they are forced to move away from their original residence. Removing the Benefit Cap would be of particular benefit for Housing First clients in high pressure housing markets, where the cap has prevented renters from benefitting from Local Housing Allowance rates at the 30th percentile. The Government must ensure that work-related conditionality is applied sensitively to domestic abuse survivors by training Job Centre Plus staff in identifying domestic abuse, which will enable them to carry out a proper assessment of their risk of becoming homeless.

Social impact investment could tap housing funds to expand available social and affordable housing stock. It could collaborate with charities who provide specialised wraparound support. Social impact investment can fund a Housing First pilot to develop an evidence base around cost savings to government, which could open additional revenue sources down the line. Charities can divert time and money spent on grant applications to funding further support.

As the CSJ has argued previously, housing benefit spent on private rents transfers funds to private landlords, without increasing social housing stock in the process; spending directed at social landlords instead is reinvested into the construction of new homes. Meanwhile, it has been estimated that every new social home built realises £780 in annual housing benefit savings.

Reforming the Commissioning Process

Adopting a Housing First programme for domestic abuse survivors calls for a significant shift in LA commissioning practice. Key to Housing First is provision of ordinary settled housing with the presumption that people will be able to remain in their home for as long as they choose (subject to meeting their tenancy obligations). Under Housing First principles an open-ended tenancy would be preferable, but where fixed term tenancies are the norm (as for example in the private rented sector) there is an aspiration that tenants would be offered a tenancy renewal where feasible, giving them the option to stay in their home.

The present Government homelessness strategy has created a number of piecemeal short-term pots of funding, which forces LAs into repeated bidding. The short-term commissioning cycles and funding programmes that have typically been used to fund Housing First in England are at odds with the principle that Housing First support is provided for as long as survivors may need it. A 2020 survey of Housing First projects found that 40 per cent had funding of 12 months or less, while 43 per cent were funded for 2–3 years.³⁸¹ The same analysis for Homeless Link found that providers and their funders are usually committed to continuing services in the long term, even though funding is not guaranteed.

381 Becky Rice, *Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First*, 2018.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary House Payments (DHPs) provide financial support towards housing costs and are paid by an LA when they are satisfied that a claimant who is in receipt of either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit needs further financial assistance with housing costs, such as rent in advance, deposits, removal costs etc.³⁸²

LAs can award a DHP in respect of two homes when an individual has fled their main home because they are a survivor of domestic abuse.³⁸³

During their temporary absence, if the claimant is treated as liable for rent on both properties and there is a shortfall, it is possible to award a DHP in respect of both properties subject to the weekly or monthly limit on each property. The length of time over which a payment is made is at the discretion of the LA, who must make clear to the claimant the length and specific end date of the award.

An LA can consider making longer term awards where appropriate, for example where a claimant has on-going needs, such as a disabled person living in specially adapted accommodation.

Each LA can decide how the application process will operate.

Funding and co-ordination of commissioning for 'by and for' and community based services

In order to ensure wider service provision is available for the new Housing First programme to respond to the range of the survivors' needs, the CSJ echoes the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's call for the Ministry of Justice to introduce a duty on local commissioners to collaborate in the commissioning of specialist domestic abuse services; and conduct joint strategic needs assessments. This duty should accompany a new duty on government to provide funding to adequately meet this need. The upcoming Victims' Bill should be used for such a duty; failing this, a future legislative vehicle should be identified for this purpose.

This would ensure that local commissioning reflects local need, with specialist services supporting survivors appropriately as they respond effectively to their needs. This would also assist in reducing short term commission cycles which hamper local services.

382 *Discretionary Housing Payments guidance manual*, May 2022.

383 *Housing Benefit Regulations 2006* (S.I. 2006/213)

Chapter 7: Costings and funding for a new programme

Projected costs

The pilots featured in our report show that the Housing First approach is highly effective in moving some of the hardest to reach groups into permanent accommodation and improving their wellbeing.

Individuals with multiple and complex needs use a disproportionate amount of public services, including homelessness, domestic abuse, substance misuse and contact with the criminal justice system. Domestic abuse survivors and their children automatically qualify as having multiple complex needs: they have suffered trauma, sometimes for many years, with implications for their physical and mental health. They will rely on public services for intensive and expensive interventions – sometimes, repeatedly.

The Housing First approach has potential to deliver significant financial savings for government: the CSJ's own research estimated that moving homeless adults in England with the most complex needs into Housing First projects, would deliver an estimated saving of £200 million per annum after two years for government.³⁸⁴ In adapting the model so that survivors can refer into the programme through community groups or grassroot charities that specialise in domestic abuse, we can increase the number of survivors who come forward, sparing them the spiralling into substance misuse, petty crime and serious mental health issues that carry such a heavy cost -- to the family, our social fabric and the taxpayer.

Summary

GMHF unit cost breakdown (Source: Greater Manchester Housing First data request)

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
Staff	£ 878,035.30	£ 1,773,189.82	£ 1,922,132.49	£ 4,573,357.61
Overhead	£ 334,169.25	£ 493,448.49	£ 398,665.07	£ 1,226,282.82
Mobilisation	£ 91,478.65			£ 91,478.65
Other Service Costs	£ 422,654.80	£ 637,597.80	£ 648,628.31	£ 1,708,880.91
Total	£ 1,726,338.00	£ 2,904,236.12	£ 2,969,425.87	£ 7,600,000.00

³⁸⁴ Centre for Social Justice, *Housing First*, March 2017.



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	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
Referrals at year end	150	210	80	
Cumulative referrals at year end	150	360	440	440
Average cumulative referrals in year	93	264	430	262
Dormant clients at year end	0	90	175	
Cumulative dormant clients at year end	0	90	265	265
Average cumulative dormant clients in year	0	26	174	67
Average cumulative "net" clients in year	93	238	256	195

"net" clients are calculated as cumulative referrals less cumulative dormant clients

Cost per cumulative referral

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
All staff costs	£5,854	£4,926	£4,368	£10,394
Of which: Front line staff	£4,446	£4,213	£3,771	£8,733
Of which: Support staff	£1,407	£713	£598	£1,661
Overhead costs	£2,228	£1,371	£906	£2,787
Of which related to: Front line staff	£1,692	£1,172	£782	£2,342
Of which related to: Support staff	£536	£198	£124	£445
Mobilisation costs	£610	£0	£0	£208
Other service costs	£2,818	£1,771	£1,474	£3,884
Personalisation	£933	£583	£159	£955
Redundancy	£0	£0	£137	£137
Landlord incentives	£479	£199	£163	£490
On call costs/Out of hours support	£69	£29	£24	£71
GM Think costs	£22	£19	£17	£40
Information sharing gateway	£7	£3	£2	£7
GM Mental Health	£1,097	£674	£706	£1,632
Peer programme	£211	£264	£216	£504
Contract handover & closure	£0	£0	£50	£50
Total costs	£11,509	£8,067	£6,749	£17,273

Unit cost for whole programme total spend/ cumulative referrals

Cost per **average** cumulative referral

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
All staff costs	£9,492	£6,723	£4,470	£17,450
Of which: Front line staff	£7,210	£5,750	£3,858	£14,662
Of which: Support staff	£2,282	£973	£612	£2,788
Overhead costs	£3,613	£1,871	£927	£4,679
Of which related to: Front line staff	£2,744	£1,600	£800	£3,931
Of which related to: Support staff	£869	£271	£127	£748
Mobilisation costs	£989	£0	£0	£349
Other service costs	£4,569	£2,417	£1,508	£6,520
Personalisation	£1,514	£796	£163	£1,603
Redundancy	£0	£0	£140	£229
Landlord incentives	£776	£272	£167	£822
On call costs/Out of hours support	£112	£39	£24	£119
GM Think costs	£36	£25	£18	£67
Information sharing gateway	£11	£4	£2	£11
GM Mental Health	£1,779	£921	£722	£2,740
Peer programme	£342	£360	£221	£845
Contract handover & closure	£0	£0	£52	£85
Total costs	£18,663	£11,011	£6,906	£28,998

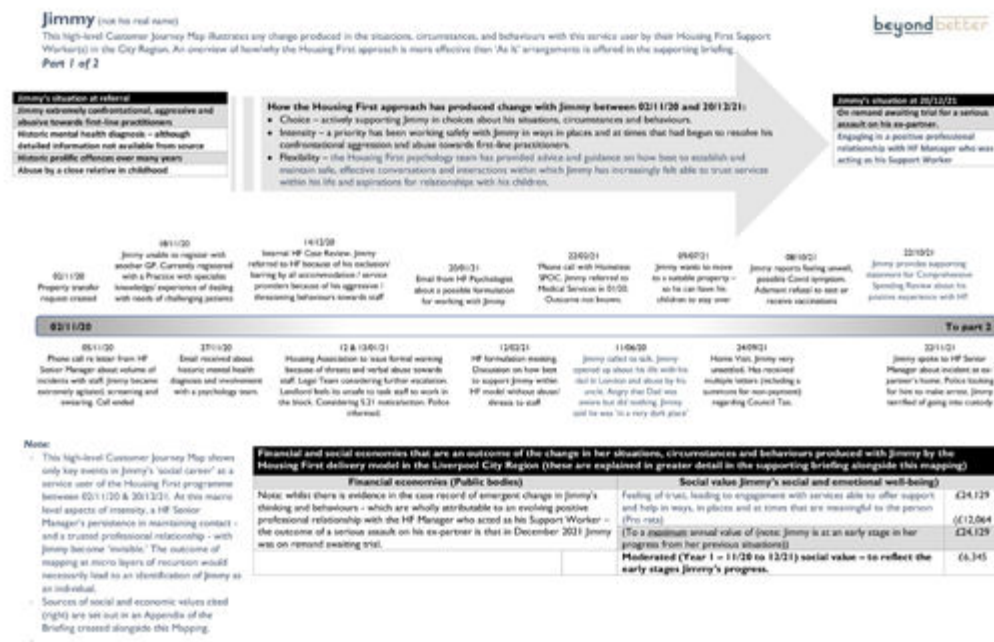
Cost per average cumulative **net client**

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
All staff costs	£9,492	£7,466	£7,496	£23,396
Of which: Front line staff	£7,210	£6,386	£6,470	£19,658
Of which: Support staff	£2,282	£1,081	£1,026	£3,739
Overhead costs	£3,613	£2,078	£1,555	£6,273
Of which related to: Front line staff	£2,744	£1,777	£1,342	£5,271
Of which related to: Support staff	£869	£301	£213	£1,002
Mobilisation costs	£989	£0	£0	£468
Other service costs	£4,569	£2,685	£2,530	£8,742
Personalisation	£1,514	£884	£273	£2,149
Redundancy	£0	£0	£234	£307
Landlord incentives	£776	£302	£280	£1,102
On call costs/Out of hours support	£112	£44	£40	£159
GM Think costs	£36	£28	£30	£90
Information sharing gateway	£11	£4	£4	£15
GM Mental Health	£1,779	£1,022	£1,211	£3,673
Peer programme	£342	£400	£370	£1,133
Contract handover & closure	£0	£0	£87	£114
Total costs	£18,663	£12,228	£11,580	£38,880

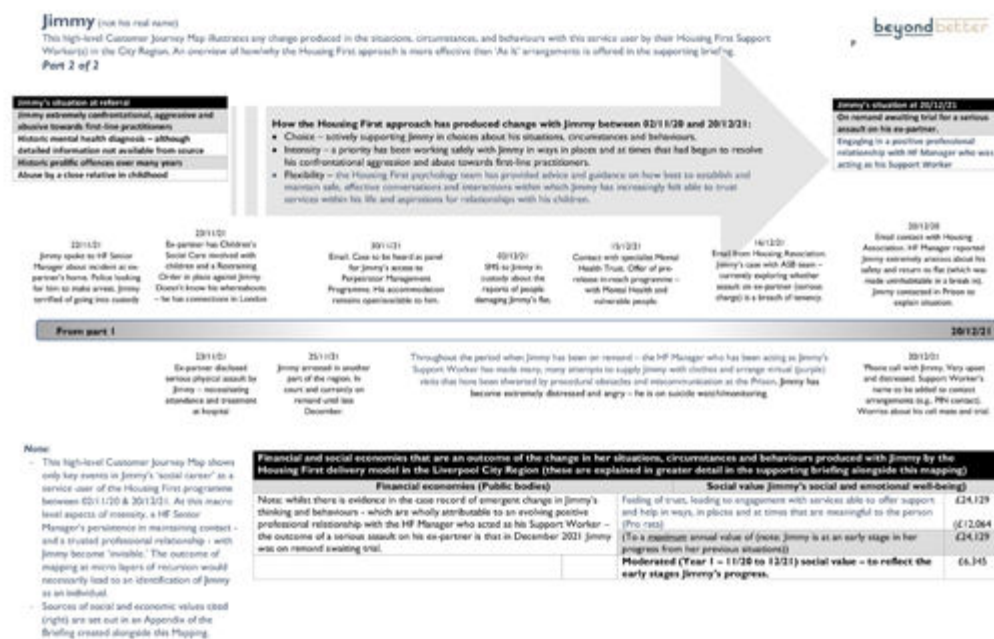
Case Study: Jimmy



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Source: Liverpool City Region data request

Programme Proposal for Housing First for Domestic Abuse Survivors

Housing First is a long-term service aiming to transform lives for a highly vulnerable group.

Evaluations of existing Housing First pilots have identified potential cost offsets for a new programme of support for domestic abuse survivors :

- Savings for LAs: the new Housing First programme stops a domestic abuse survivor with complex needs presenting multiple times.
- Savings for the NHS, including ambulances and A&E: Housing First for domestic abuse survivors should enable clients to access the NHS via GP appointment and outpatient attendance by ensuring they are registered with and make use of primary care services. Another saving lies in continuous support re domestic abuse specialist support and Community Mental Health services, rather than being treated when crises arise, via expensive emergency interventions.
- Savings for the criminal justice system: Housing First for domestic abuse survivors reduces recurrence of police call outs, court proceedings, etc.

SECTOR	ANNUAL NET COST/SAVINGS (2020/1) ³⁸⁵
A&E (per incident)	£306
Ambulance service (per incident)	£334
Hospital inpatient (per episode)	£3,030
Service provision for individual suffering anxiety/depression (per year)	£5,091
Domestic violence (per incident)	£3,253
Homelessness (Rough Sleeping)	£10,074 (LA spend per individual per year)
Criminal proceedings (arrest)	£826
TOTAL	£22,914 <i>per person per year</i>
Housing First Pilot Cost ³⁸⁶	
All Staff costs	£5,854
Overhead costs	£2,228
Mobilisation costs	£610
Other service costs	£2,818
TOTAL	£11,510 <i>per person per year</i>

³⁸⁵ Source: GMCA data request.

³⁸⁶ Source: GMCA data request.

The CSJ proposes a new Housing First for Domestic Abuse Survivors programme. The three existing regional Housing First pilots already support many individuals with a history of domestic violence, but the pilots rely on referrals by statutory services – which many survivors steer clear of.

The new programme, instead, would rely on trusted local charities or voluntary groups to refer potential clients for Housing First. Their familiarity and independence from officialdom encourages survivors to come forward to seek support before crisis point; many will be at risk of homelessness – sofa surfing or camping out in a friend's spare room -- rather than already be without a home. These survivors are also more likely to keep their children, unless there is clear safeguarding issue. We know from front line workers' reports how much child removal affects survivor parents, and how instrumental children are to the survivors' recovery.

The new programme would run over two years, providing support for 50 clients and children, to include single and multiple room accommodation.

We recommend that the new programme be funded out of the government's investment of £200 million as yet unallocated that councils may bid for as part of the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP).

One of the three Local Authorities to host the regional Housing First pilots – Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool -- would bid for the funding in partnership with a local housing association and, as delivery partner, a trusted grassroots charity specialising in domestic abuse. Embedding the programme in an existing pilot has the benefit of drawing upon the experienced Housing First team and its operational infrastructure.

The Housing First programme for domestic abuse survivors would specifically include funding for by and for services – a feature not included in current pilots. If the client identifies as BME, for example, the case worker will link the client to services provided by a suitable charity such as Imkaan. If the client comes from a closed community, the case worker would work to ensure that they have access to places of worship, any cultural necessities or legal aid.

The local charity delivery partner, offering specialist domestic abuse support, will assess the needs of the survivor. Unless there are safeguarding concerns that call for statutory services, the charity will be able to refer the homeless (or at risk of homelessness) individual into the programme.

The client's assigned case worker connects the client (and their children) to appropriate support. This may include, for example, local domestic abuse support from a community-based domestic abuse service, perpetrator intervention schemes delivered by Respect, and by and for services if the client identifies as BME. Similarly if the client comes from a closed community, the case worker would work to ensure that they have access to places of worship, any cultural necessities or legal aid.

Clients would include a proportion of existing Housing First clients as well new clients, thus enabling the programme to benefit from peer to peer learning.

Being based within one of the three existing regional pilots, the new programme will extend the use of existing capacity. Procurement would follow regulations but be linked to the existing local Housing First pilot.

Our new programme would aim to conduct A/B testing to show that grassroots charities are best placed to deliver support to domestic abuse survivors at risk of, or affected by, homelessness. More survivors will report their abuse, keep their children, and quickly recover in the locality where the Housing First programme is delivered by a charity or voluntary organisation than in a similar locality where the homelessness programme is delivered by statutory services.

Based on costings provided by the three existing pilots upon request, the CSJ has calculated that **£1,351,000** would cover two years' specialist support for 50 survivors and their children.

The CSJ recommends that the new programme includes a local consciousness raising campaign to ensure that survivors of domestic abuse know where to seek support; but also to educate the wider community (including housing officers, council housing teams etc) about domestic abuse, its markers and impact. This information campaign would serve to allay fears about survivors as residents or neighbours, including fear of anti-social behaviour, broken tenancy agreements, destruction of property etc. (**£150,000** x 2 years)

Responsibility for the programme would sit within the LA/CLA teams currently running the three existing regional pilot schemes. This calls for a new co-ordinator position, accountable to the existing Housing First Team, with commensurate annual salary. (**£50,000** x 2 years)

The new programme will enable Local Authorities to conduct A/B testing: positive results will encourage other councils to pilot similar programmes. This calls for the new programme team to commission a monitoring and evaluation over the two years of the programme. (**£50,000** x 2 years) To facilitate this, the team would adopt an outcomes framework: while the principal outcome should be tenancy sustainment, the programme should also measure wellbeing outcomes, including stabilisation and improvement of mental and physical health, reduction of domestic abuse, etc. These measures will make it easier for the new programme to demonstrate the cost savings of future Housing First for domestic abuse survivors schemes (particularly with regards to reduced pressure on health services and the criminal justice system).

The funding would secure a landmark Housing First programme for Domestic Abuse survivors and their children – and secure the legacy of one or more of the three regional pilots.

Programme cost: **£1,451,000** covering 2 years

Recommendations

This report draws on the contributions made by a working group that included experts, representatives of homeless and domestic abuse charities and the The Guinness Partnership. In addition, we drew on more than 45 on-the-record interviews with survivors of domestic abuse and front-line professionals, including some working for the CSJ Alliance of charities. The recommendations arising from this research are our own.

As part of a comprehensive approach to tackling domestic abuse-related homelessness, the Centre for Social Justice makes the following priority recommendations:

1. In investing in a Housing First programme that focuses on domestic abuse survivors, DLUHC should demand that LAs choose partnerships made up of a local housing association – their experience of homeless individuals and longer term tenancy makes them ideal; and, as delivery partner, a grassroot charity or local voluntary group, whose trusted presence in the community will enable more survivors of domestic abuse to come forward.
2. The Government should establish national stewardship for the programme, involving the government departments that would benefit from it, including DLUHC, DHSC, the MoJ, Home Office and DWP.
3. To better support/accommodate male survivors, including the sons of women survivors, the DLUHC should invest in expanding the provision of refuges and specialist accommodation for men.
4. The Government should accept the Domestic Abuse Commissioner recommendation for the Ministry of Justice to introduce a duty on local commissioners to collaborate in the commissioning of specialist domestic abuse services, conduct joint strategic needs assessments, and this duty should be accompanied by a new duty on central government to provide funding to adequately meet this need. This should make use of the opportunity afforded by the upcoming Victims' Bill.
5. Housing First services should collaborate with housing associations to run a local information campaign about domestic abuse and its impact. Educating the housing association residents as well as local groups, organisations and services, in the role they can play in supporting survivors and their children will create a safe environment for survivors, and in time encourage them to engage fully with their community. Moreover, the campaign will alert victims still living with their abuser about available support.
6. One of the three LAs hosting the government-funded Housing First pilots should bid for the £200 million funding provided through the Single Homelessness Accommodation Project to support those homeless individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages.

As part of a comprehensive approach to tackling domestic abuse-related homelessness, the Centre for Social Justice makes the following supportive recommendations:

7. To increase awareness and therefore identification of domestic abuse survivors, LAs should allocate funds from the non-ringfenced Section 31 Grant to train their housing teams via the DAHA (or equivalent) accreditation.
8. The DWP should exempt people at risk of sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation from the benefit cap. This will be of particular benefit for Housing First clients in high pressure housing markets, where the cap has prevented renters from benefitting from LHA rates at the 30th percentile. It will help improve the range of housing options for services where affordable housing is most scarce.
9. DLUHC should integrate a perpetrator behavioural change programme such as Drive/Respect and For Baby's Sake into already existing Housing First pilots to address perpetrators already within the system.
10. The DWP should ensure that sufficient funding is provided to train JobCentre Work Coaches so that they may assess someone's risk of homelessness, identify key needs and help guide them through a range of services.
11. The Home Office should invest in accessible spaces for disabled individuals fleeing domestic abuse.
12. The DLUHC should invest in larger refuge spaces for women with four or more children.
13. The Home Office should review the model for DVA refuge funding to ensure women and men who cannot claim housing benefit are not excluded from support.
14. Money for DVA refuges should be ringfenced and LAs should cooperate closely with local specialist women's and men's organisations to organise refuge provision.
15. Social housing tenancy agreements should include a covenant prohibiting domestic violence or abuse, so that claims for possession may be brought alleging breach of contractual terms.
16. LAs should ensure that they offer Discretionary Housing Payments to domestic abuse survivors who hold tenancy in the homes they flee.
17. The Department of Health and Social Care should ring-fence funding for VAWG services run 'by and for' black and minority ethnic women.
18. The Home Office should extend eligibility for the Domestic Violence (DV) Rule and Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC), so that every migrant survivor can access routes to regularise/confirm their immigration status and can secure public funds while doing so, as the Domestic Abuse Commissioner recommended in her recent report *Safety Before Status: The Solutions*.
19. LAs should copy the model established by the Greater Manchester Community-led Homes Hub. This community resource provides advice, training, funding and practical support to local groups, councils and developers looking to develop community-led housing. Scaling this model beyond the GM area, would incentivise the building of social housing.

Conclusion

The current cost of living crisis makes interventions that address the surge in homelessness and in domestic abuse all the more urgent. Individuals and families affected by these life-changing issues will be disproportionately using public services – increasing the already unprecedented pressure on these resources. The cost to the tax payer, social as well as financial, is enormous.

The Housing First model funded by government in three regional pilots has transformed the lives of homeless individuals with multiple complex needs. Independent evaluations have shown that the majority of clients have held down their tenancy, reduced their substance misuse, improved their self-confidence and well-being. All three pilots have also proved cost-effective.

Domestic abuse survivors suffer trauma with grievous implications for their physical and mental health. They have multiple complex needs that render them eligible for Housing First and can benefit from this model. Some already do – but only once their needs have escalated to crisis point, and statutory services have stepped in. A new Housing First for Domestic Abuse Survivors programme instead would rely on grassroot charities or local voluntary groups well-known and trusted in the community to refer their clients. Their familiarity and independence from officialdom enables these groups to engage with, identify and assess more survivors of domestic abuse earlier. With its provision of accommodation and wrap around support, the new programme will unlock a wide range of potential benefits for this most vulnerable of groups -- including improvements in mental and physical health, keeping or regaining their children, and reduced contact with the criminal justice system. The model would deliver benefits to the wider community too, in terms of safer neighbourhoods, less pressure on services and greater community cohesion.

The CSJ recommends that one of the LAs with an existing Housing First pilot bid for the £200 million funding pot that government has made available for its Single Homelessness Accommodation Project (SHAP). The bid would be made in partnership with a local housing association, and, as delivery partner, a local voluntary group. This could cover a two-year pilot for 50 survivors, with specialist support services. The new programme would expand the use of the existing Housing First regional pilot infrastructure, including staffing, overheads and accommodation. In this way it will extract more value from resources -- and deliver an evidence-based programme with the potential to turn around the lives of vulnerable families.



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