

Refuge Services Toolkit

Author: **Lucy Hadley**, Women's Aid Federation of England

Women's Aid Federation of England is a national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. Women's Aid is federation of nearly 180 organisations which provide just under 300 local lifesaving services to women and children experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls across England including refuge services, outreach, advocacy and work with children and young people. Over the past 45 years, Women's Aid has been at the forefront of shaping and coordinating responses to domestic abuse through practice, research and policy.

Purpose of the toolkit

This toolkit is a reference guide for local authorities, commissioners and partnerships. It offers practical guidance for commissioning and funding quality, safe and specialist refuge services - including:

- **Clearly defining the principles of components which should be included within a refuge service specification**, focusing on specialism, types of accommodation, staff and expertise and support for victims/survivors with protected characteristics;
- **Setting out best practice in commissioning refuge services** - including assessing the need and demand for refuge provision in order to meet the needs of all victims/survivors, commissioning approaches and working in partnership;
- Exploring existing challenges for meeting demand, resourcing the national network of refuges and sustaining provision of 'by and for' expert services, in order to guide **the development of local strategies, commissioning priorities and approaches**;
- Providing guidance on working with refuges to **ensure that the longer-term housing needs of victims/survivors moving-on from refuges are met**.

This toolkit aims to support the delivery of the new duties proposed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on funding support for victims and their children in accommodation based domestic abuse services, which includes refuge.

Introduction

The first refuges in England were set up in the 1970s by women, for women and children escaping domestic abuse. During that decade independent, women-led services developed as part of an international feminist social movement and were brought together under the umbrella of 'Women's Aid' in the UK. Alongside the establishment of women's refuges in the 1970s, there was a parallel wave of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women's groups setting up refuge and outreach services for women from BME communities in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1998, Imkaan was established as a national umbrella body representing the expertise and perspectives of this network. Refuge services now operate as a national network, accepting referrals from women and children in any part of the country who need shelter and support.

Women's refuge services¹ are an established, essential element in delivering support to the most vulnerable victims of domestic abuse who are no longer safe at home. For that reason, they are at the core of the Whole Housing Approach to domestic abuse. A refuge service provides holistic, specialist support to meet the needs of women and children in a supportive, safe and secure environment. There is no 'typical victim' supported in a refuge - women and children will have a range of support needs, including those related to safety, criminal and family justice, disability, physical and mental health, immigration status, children's welfare and education, financial needs including debt, and social needs.¹

Definition

“A refuge service offers accommodation and support only for women experiencing domestic abuse which is tied to that accommodation. The address will not be publicly available. It will have a set number of places. Accommodation can be in a range of shared housing, self-contained units and dispersed housing in order to meet the diverse needs of survivors and their children. Residents will receive a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff and access peer support from other residents.”

¹ This chapter focuses on refuge services designed and delivered for women and children. Refuge services to meet the needs of male victims should be accessible and properly resourced. However, evidence does show there is less demand for refuge provision from male victims as they tend to have other safe accommodation options and are statistically at less risk of domestic homicide.

This definition is contained within Routes to Support,² the UK wide database of violence against women and girls (VAWG) services. The database contains information about domestic abuse and other VAWG services available for women and children throughout the UK along with up to date information on refuge vacancies. The 'planned programme' of therapeutic and practical support delivered is also clearly defined (see 'components of the service', below) and sets out why refuges are a service, not only a form of accommodation, which are unique in the support they deliver to women - and, critically, their children - and are far more than 'a bed for the night'.

Routes to Support contains detailed, up to date information on the nature and scope on the range of VAWG services throughout the UK, including services addressing domestic abuse, sexual violence and exploitation, trafficking, FGM, forced marriage, honour-based violence and harassment/stalking. It also contains current information about bed spaces available in refuge services.

Why we need refuge provision

The function of a refuge goes beyond providing a safe place to stay and aims to address both practical and emotional needs. They provide women and their children with one to one and peer support which enables them to cope with the trauma they've experienced, leave abusive relationships, regain their self-esteem and support them to begin rebuilding their life in safety and independence. Designed to meet the specific needs of women escaping abuse, refuge services operate in women-only buildings and generally only employ women staff.³ Temporary accommodation, or general shelters such as those for the homeless, are not sufficient and do not provide the necessary specialist support or empowerment for victims.ⁱⁱ Mixed-sex provision, in particular, is unsuitable and unsafe. The model of support delivered in refuges has proved effective in empowering women to establish lives free from abuse for themselves and their children.ⁱⁱⁱ

Refuge services are one element of a range of specialist crisis and recovery focused support provision that adult and child survivors need. A range of immediate, short and long-term specialist support services to victim /survivors and their children in the community are also required.^{iv}

² Routes to Support was formerly called UK Refuges Online. It is run in partnership by Women's Aid Federation of England, Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland, Scottish Women's Aid and Welsh Women's Aid and part funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

³ Paragraph 27 of Schedule 3 of the Equality Act 2010 enables the provision of separate services for men and women, or to provide services to only men or only women in certain circumstances.

These are defined on Routes to Support and include, but are not limited to: advocacy; outreach; support for children and young people; drop-in services; counselling and therapeutic services; group work and peer support; prevention, education and awareness-raising activities; and local helplines. Further information is available via: www.womensaid.org.uk/routes-to-support.⁴

Refuges and other local domestic abuse services also provide a vital function in multi-agency co-operation and safeguarding, prevention, training and awareness-raising to tackle domestic abuse within communities.

The refuge service model

The following principles and components should be included within service specifications when commissioning and funding refuge services.

Specialist

Commissioners and others responsible for the provision of refuge services must have regard to the importance of specialist service delivery. Specialist services are distinguished from generic services that may provide support or interventions for victims of domestic abuse in the public, or other parts of the voluntary sector.

The Istanbul Convention requires states to provide specialist services to meet the specific needs of victims and children, including specialist refuge provision. Article 22 of the Convention makes clear that specialist support is best ensured by women's organisations and by support services that have specialised and experienced staff with in-depth knowledge of gender-based violence.^v

There is currently no UK government definition of a 'specialist service' in the context of domestic abuse and VAWG services. Within the VAWG sector there is a shared understanding of 'specialism', developed from established knowledge and practice approaches identified by Imkaan and its network of members.^{vi} Some of these principles have now been adapted into a definition of 'specialist' developed by Welsh Women's Aid, recently adopted by the Welsh Government in statutory commissioning guidance.^{vii} This definition provides a clear way to define a 'specialist service':

1. Organisations/services that are delivered independently from the state (i.e. third sector), whose core business it is to support victim/survivors and/or perpetrators and/or children and young people impacted by domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG - including sexual violence, forced marriage, so called 'honour based' violence, FGM, sexual exploitation, trafficking and modern day slavery.

⁴ Access to the directory is available to refuge and domestic violence/abuse service providers who meet the access criteria only.

2. Organisations/services which recognise that these forms of violence are entirely preventable, that they happen to women and girls disproportionately because they are women and girls - maintaining and reproducing unequal power relations and presenting an obstacle to achieving equality and human rights; that they exist as part of a continuum of violence against women, and ensure that interventions and prevention work connects domestic abuse and VAWG to wider patterns of sex and other intersectional inequalities, including ethnicity, class, gender identity, age, disability, sexuality, religion and belief.
3. Organisations/services whose delivery is needs-led and gender-responsive, who deliver services on the basis of a survivors' individual need for safety and support, recognise that the rebuilding of stability, resilience and autonomy for women survivors is facilitated in women-only spaces and safe environments of mutual respect, and work to uphold the security, rights and dignity of survivors.
4. Organisations/services whose understanding and delivery is informed by analysis of VAWG being gendered and a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men, which intersects with other inequalities including race, age, class, sexuality, disability and immigration status to impact on experiences of abuse and access to safety, support and justice. Specialist services work to remove the barriers which prevent or limit access to services for women facing multiple forms of oppression - including in relation to their race, immigration status, sexuality and disability - and recognise that services led by and for women facing these inequalities are the most effective means of reducing or removing these barriers.
5. These organisations/services differ from 'general support' services in that the organisations/services have a gender and culturally responsive and holistic service delivery model, in accordance with established UK quality standards frameworks, and are run by and for the communities they serve. In doing so they offer a uniquely empowering experience and are accountable to women and children and to BME communities, as the client group is reflected in staffing, management and governance structures of these organisations.

Commissioners and other agencies responsible should work to the above definition in determining whether a service is 'specialist' (they may also be termed a 'dedicated provider') or 'generic'.

As a refuge provider describing the key difference between generic and specialist services states:

“I think the impact is that they’re more likely to come forward to access support, more likely to engage over a longer period of time.... just yesterday, I’d seen someone who initially accessed a service that - they do provide domestic violence support but they provide lots of different services as well - and she said that she just couldn’t connect with the service, with the support worker. But when she came to us she said “Oh, this is what I needed”. So it just shows that, you know, there needs to be organisations that that’s their work,

their sole focus and their service delivery is just for domestic violence victims.⁵

Types of accommodation

The definition of a refuge service includes a range of accommodation types - which can encompass shared houses, self-contained units and dispersed accommodation. Whilst most accommodation offered by refuge services is in shared accommodation where families live 'communally', the national network of refuges also includes self-contained units with communal areas, or dispersed accommodation within the community. This combination of accommodation types enables refuge services to provide support to those women with additional support needs such as drug/alcohol use, or a larger family size, which can mean communal living is unsuitable. Whatever form the accommodation takes, the secret address and confidential location of the refuge is critical to the protection delivered to women and children living there, who remain at risk of ongoing harm from the perpetrator.

Components of the service

Refuge services consist of two core elements - the accommodation, and the support delivered within it. The two are inextricably linked but are funded separately (see 'current funding' section).

Women and children within a refuge service will receive a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff and access peer support from other residents. Services work from a 'strengths-based' approach to help women rebuild their space for action, across a range of areas, after she has physically left the perpetrator.^{viii} This will include:

- Access to information and advocacy,
- Emotional support,
- Access to specialist support workers (e.g. drugs/alcohol misuse, mental health, sexual abuse),
- Access to recovery work,
- Access to support for children and young people (where needed),
- Practical help, including help with moving into stable, safe housing,
- Key work and support planning (work around support needs including, for example, parenting, finances and wellbeing),

⁵ Women's Aid interviewed service providers as part of our work to monitor changes to service provision through Routes to Support during 2018-19.

- Safety planning,
- Counselling,
- Peer support and group work.

Refuge services need three main components of funding in order to deliver this package of therapeutic and practical support: support staff; activity costs (such as costs to meet accessibility needs or travel); and core costs (such as finance, management and premises).^{ix}

Staff and expertise

The components of the support delivered in refuge require different skills and expertise. The following describe the core staff within a refuge service, however it is important to note that many of these roles may differ between services. Research by Women's Aid has found that many refuge support staff, for example, carry out the resettlement support function rather than having separate staff to provide this. Many services unfortunately do not receive funding for dedicated therapeutic support or support for children and young people, which are essential to the support refuge services deliver. Some refuges will employ community outreach workers who are engaged in carrying out training, education and prevention work in the community.

Refuge support workers provide essential, day to day emotional support and practical support. This includes support with finding school places, registering bank accounts, accessing doctors, dentists etc. They are skilled at managing dynamics between residents and creating safe, trauma-informed environments. They create opportunities for residents to engage in 'typical' life experiences outside of the refuge and form peer support networks. They handle administrative work around referrals, claiming benefits and ensure that women and children have the breathing space required to start to recover.

Resettlement support workers provide support to women around moving on from refuge and settling into the next stage of their lives. This includes support in locating accommodation in social housing and the private rented sector, emotional and practical support around settling into new housing and liaising with new support workers.

Dedicated children's workers create a separate space for children in refuge where they can begin to understand life in refuge and the experiences that led them to it. Skilled children's workers create age appropriate group opportunities for children and young people in the refuge. Using art and play materials children are given the language and skills to understand the difference between healthy relationships and experiences of abuse. These essential interventions increase women's space for action and contribute to primary prevention.

Therapeutic support staff provide vital support to women using refuge in both 1:1 and group work settings. This includes supporting women to better understand the trauma they have experienced and to learn strategies to help them manage intrusive thoughts and memories that often only start to surface when the woman is physically safe enough to recall them. Therapeutic support staff help women to form coherent narratives of their account and to manage their grief

about the loss of their relationship. Counsellors help women to think through and connect to feelings in a supported, manageable, women-centred way and offer significant cost-benefit, often preventing suicide and self-harm intentions and actions.

Support for victim/survivors with protected characteristics

To meet duties under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, public authorities must provide specialist support to meet the specific needs of victims from marginalised groups - including black and minority ethnic (BME) women, disabled and deaf victims and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans (LGBT) survivors. Survivors from these marginalised groups need the option of accessing 'by and for' expert services which have been designed to meet their needs by staff who understand the daily reality of their lived experiences and provide specialist support tailored to their specific needs and experiences. This toolkit uses the definition of the 'by and for' expert sector as set out by Imkaan in the Alternative Bill: From the Margins to the Centre^x:

"By and For Expert Sector

We define women-only VAWG specialist organisations as the by and for expert sector (sometimes written as by and for expert services or organisations). This term refers to specialist services that are designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve. This can include, for example, services led by and for Black and minoritised women, disabled women, LGBT women, etc. In the context of VAWG we refer to women-only VAWG services as manifesting specific expertise designed and developed to address VAWG."

The vital network of support services led 'by and for' BME women carries with it long history and expertise along with specialist ways of working with the women it supports.^{xi} For example, these services have specialist expertise on the specific forms of violence which have a disproportionate impact on BME women and girls, provide specialist support workers that meet needs around language and immigration status, and have a critical understanding of discrimination, racism, and gender dynamics within family and community structures that shape BME women's experiences of domestic abuse.^{xii}

More than a decade ago the decision in *R (Kaur & Shah) v London Borough of Ealing* found that the (then) race equality duty "may only be met by specialist services from a specialist source."^{xiii} Services run 'by and for' marginalised groups are tailored to provide this specialist support, based on the needs and lived experiences of groups that face discrimination and inequality. These services have developed out of the need to address the structural inequalities faced by

victim/survivors from marginalised groups and are centres of excellence in meeting their specific support needs.

Quality Standards

Quality Standards provide benchmarks for service providers, funders and commissioners about the services that should be accessible, who should provide them, and the principles and practice base from which they should operate.^{xiv} They help to drive forward best practice and quality improvements in service provision.

National quality standards and outcomes monitoring systems are well established for domestic abuse and VAWG services. A set of National Shared Core Standards were developed by members of a VAWG Sustainability Working Group in 2016, establishing the minimum standards of each organisation involved - Imkaan, Rape Crisis England and Wales, Respect, SafeLives and Women's Aid Federation of England.

The individual standards specifically relevant to refuge accommodation are Women's Aid's National Quality Standards and Imkaan's Accredited Quality Standards (IAQS) and Safe Minimum Practice Standards. They both deliver quality assurance framework through which dedicated specialist providers delivering refuge services can evidence their quality:

- The National Quality Standards are based on the principles of participation, transparent governance and needs-led service delivery, and set out the nature and standard of service provision necessary to enable victim/survivors cope with and recover from their experiences. The standards cover services' approach to: safety, security and dignity; rights and access; physical and emotional health; stability, resilience and autonomy; the rights of children and young people; leadership and prevention; and governance and accountability. There is a formal accreditation process that organisations are required to complete to evidence they meet the standards. Further information is available via www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/national-quality-standards/
- Imkaan's Accredited Quality Standards are designed to capture the 'by and for' sector's expertise, support ongoing development and quality assurance. They assess services governance, knowledge, needs assessment, approach to partnership, monitoring and evaluation, as well as how appropriate and accessible services are to the diversity of BME women and girls and whether provision is based on an understanding of the impact of racism and discrimination in the lives of women and girls within the context of VAWG. There is also a specific focus on the forms of violence that disproportionately affect BME women; namely; forced marriage, female genital mutilation and 'honour-based' violence. Further information is available via: <https://www.imkaan.org.uk/>

Commissioners should be aware of all of the relevant national standards, implement them within commissioning strategies, and use these accreditation frameworks to assess local service quality.

Evaluation

Outcomes monitoring

Outcomes are the results delivered by the refuge service for victim/survivors and their children. Monitoring these outcomes is essential to evaluate the impact of service provision - and ensure services are effectively delivering benefits, changes and improvement in victim/survivors' lives.

Outcomes monitored should be specifically tailored to refuge services and developed by sector experts in partnership with survivors and front-line service providers. This is essential to ensure that commissioners and funders are measuring the outcomes that matter to women and children experiencing domestic abuse, delivering accountability and value for money for the public. It is also important to avoid 're-inventing the wheel'. There are specific challenges when collecting outcomes data within refuges as there are issues around confidentiality, safety and crisis considerations. It is also important to recognise that recovery from domestic abuse is a long-term process and is not always linear. Positive outcomes as a result of the support received may take time to show, and the process may mean outcomes 'look worse' before they get better as women and children process and come to terms with what they've experienced before recovery. Using established outcomes frameworks and data collection tools, which are trusted within the sector is therefore vital.

The Women's Aid and Imkaan national outcomes framework was developed by Women's Aid and Imkaan in partnership alongside survivors, front-line service providers, academics and commissioners. It covers five domains through which outcomes for women and children survivors are measured: The domains and example outcomes within this framework include:

Safety: victim/survivors are safer now and better resourced to remain safe; victim/survivors have increased access to justice; victim/survivors believe they can live free from violence.

Health: victim/survivors have improved mental and emotional health and resources to maintain good mental and emotional health.

Stability: resilience, and autonomy: survivors are working towards regularising their immigration status; victim/survivors have increased financial stability and independence.

Children: child victim/survivors are safer and better resourced to remain safe; adult victim/survivors are better resourced around parenting.

Prevention: children and young people are better educated around healthy relationships and ethics in sexual relationships.

Tools and resources have been developed to enable services to use these outcomes to monitor and evaluate their own work, and to support caseworkers to better meet a victim/survivor's individual needs. The tools are embedded in Imkaan and Women's Aid's respective case management systems, [Synthesis](#) and [On Track](#), which allow frontline staff to collect data and monitor outcomes as part of their day to day work.

Reporting should be proportionate, focused on victim/survivor outcomes, and tied to established national outcomes monitoring frameworks to avoid duplication and unnecessary burdens on services, who are often required to meet multiple reporting requirements from different funders and commissioners. The outcomes framework and associated monitoring systems provide the basis for standardised reporting on outcomes, which the government sets to introduce alongside new duties on funding support in refuge and accommodation-based services to improve accountability.^{xv}

Value for money

As well as monitoring outcomes, evaluation should consider value for money delivered by the service. The emphasis should be on evidence-based and cost-effective provision that delivers a quality service to victim/survivors over the long-term time frame they need to cope and recover, with recognition that specialist refuge services deliver significant added value to both the national and local response to domestic abuse.

There is clear evidence demonstrating the value of refuge services and the wide range of benefits they deliver to the public sector - including reduced demand for the criminal justice system, health services, housing and children's social care. An evaluation conducted by NEF Consulting for the charity Refuge found that for every £1 invested in refuge services, the woman, her family and society received a social return on investment equivalent to £4.07.^{xvi}

Examples of the diverse range of benefits that commissioners should consider during evaluation may include: children living within refuge being removed from local authority child protection plans and resulting reduction in costs; women being and feeling safe; increased financial security and reduced dependency on welfare benefits; children re-entering schools and maintaining education and the long-term benefits associated; improved health, ability to manage health conditions and reduced emergency A&E admissions; and a reduction in police call-outs and homicide levels. It is critical that these services deliver significant levels of 'added value' to women, children and the wider community that is challenging to account for within traditional cost-benefit analysis but need to be captured within an evaluation.

National network of services

Current demand and provision

The Council of Europe recommends that, at a minimum, one family place in a refuge should be provided per 10,000 head of population.^{xvii} While this is only an estimate, and may no longer be sufficient to fully meet women's and children's needs, it is a recognised benchmark for measuring adequate levels of supply. As most women and children cross local boundaries to access refuge services for safety, this is a national network of services which cannot be planned at local level alone. This is discussed further under 'local commissioning'.

Data from Routes to Support shows that, according to the Council of Europe recommendation, as of May 2019 there were 3,914 refuge spaces for women in England. This was a shortfall of 30% according to the Council of Europe recommendation. Demand for refuge services continues to exceed this supply. In 2018-19, 64% of referrals to refuges responding to Women’s Aid’s Annual Survey were declined, with lack of space or capacity to support the survivor as the main reason.^{xviii}

Data on bed spaces and demand in isolation masks the significant barriers preventing certain groups of survivors from accessing safety. Many refuge vacancies are also not accessible for women with specific support needs, for example, around mental health, drug and alcohol use, who have children with them, and have no recourse to public funds (no access to state benefits) because of their immigration status or lack of clarity about their status. Fewer than one in five refuge vacancies in 2018–19 could accommodate a woman with two children, and less than 1% of vacancies were in rooms fully accessible for wheelchairs.

There are currently just 55 refuges in England which are run specifically for a particular group of women, such as BME women, women with learning disabilities or women with substance use needs. Not all of these services are ‘by and for’ expert services run by women from the group they support. Availability of these dedicated services is very low: spaces in specialist services make up just 13.3% of all refuge spaces in England and half of these services are located in London.^{xix}

Women from marginalised groups, or who have additional support needs, therefore face additional barriers in finding a suitable space. Since 2016 the No Woman Turned Away project⁶ has demonstrated how capacity constraints bar the most marginalised groups of women from accessing support. In 2017-18, nearly half (49.8%) of the 264 women struggling to access a refuge space who were supported by the project were from BME communities, over a third (37.5%) had mental health support needs and 30% had one or more disability.

13% of refuge services⁷ can now accommodate men. As at May 2019, there were 186 refuge spaces available to men, 25 for men only and 161 for either men or women⁸. The number of refuge spaces for men has increased every year since 2016.

⁶ The No Woman Turned Away Project has been led by Women’s Aid and funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government since January 2016. Specialist domestic abuse practitioners provide dedicated support to women who face barriers in accessing a refuge space, alongside detailed monitoring and analysis of survivors’ experiences.

⁷ These are refuge spaces listed on Routes to Support, which is primarily a directory of services available for women and children. It is therefore not an exhaustive account of refuge services available for men experiencing domestic abuse.

⁸ These 161 spaces are also included in the 3,194 spaces for women mentioned earlier in this section.

Current funding

There are two primary funding streams for refuge services - to cover the costs of housing, and the costs of support.

Housing costs are largely met by residents claiming Local Housing Allowance (LHA), which the government has committed to retain for refuge services and within other forms of supported housing.^{xx} This provides a secure funding stream which responds to demand and currently accounts for an estimated £6,300 per annum per space.^{xxi} Some costs related to the maintenance and upkeep of buildings, however, are currently ineligible within the LHA regime. Further capital investment is also required to improve the accessibility of accommodation to meet the needs of all survivors.

Women ineligible for LHA, for example because they have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) due to their immigration status, face severe barriers in accessing refuge services within the current system. In some services, funding is designated to cover housing costs for women with NRPF, which can provide a lifeline to accessing refuge for this marginalised group of women.

Support costs within refuge services are paid for in numerous insecure and fragmented ways. Support funding comes from a variety of sources. From 2003 to 2011, support was largely paid for by the 'Supporting People' programme, a ring-fenced central grant to local authorities which funded a range of different accommodation-based support services. The ring-fence on 'Supporting People' funding was removed in 2009, and in 2011 this funding was rolled into the general Revenue Support Grant from government to local authorities.^{xxii} This led to a diverse range of responses by local authorities in funding these support services, including refuges.

The amount of support funding that refuge services receive from local authorities now varies significantly. Over one in ten (13%) of respondents to our 2019 Annual Survey stated that they received no local authority funding at all for their refuge service(s).^{xxiii} Services may receive elements of their support funding through other statutory agencies - such as health bodies or Police and Crime Commissioners. Many are now only able to deliver support through funding from trusts and foundations, donations and community fundraising, despite continuing to receive referrals from statutory agencies.

Commissioning trends

At the same time as significant changes in the budgets for support in refuges, there have been significant changes in how these budgets are administered. At the end of the last decade, as domestic abuse began to become a priority for statutory agencies, competitive tendering for service provision began to be used. This has been a toxic combination for specialist refuge services. Research shows that current procurement processes tend to favour larger organisations and contracts, and have a number of adverse impacts on smaller charities and specialist providers^{xxiv}, because:

- Charitable organisations have limited capacity and resources to take part in time-consuming and costly tendering processes, a challenge which is particularly acute for smaller organisations.
- There can be unrealistically short timescales in which to complete tenders which hinders charitable and specialist organisations' capacity to bid.
- Larger organisations have access to personnel who are trained in writing bids, whereas smaller organisations do not tend to have personnel with this skillset - putting them at significant disadvantage when bids are reviewed.
- Onerous contract terms, in particular about the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employees) Regulations 2006 ("TUPE"), can bar smaller-scale organisations from taking part in the bidding process.

In the domestic abuse and VAWG sector, these barriers have led to generic providers winning contracts through competitive tendering processes at the expense of well-established specialist services that are barred from participating equally in the procurement process. This impacts on the adequacy of support for victims. During the past decade there has been a shift towards fewer, larger contracts covering wide geographic areas; for example, one provider for the whole of a county. This can incentivise large scale, generic refuge provision and make it more difficult for specialist services to compete in commissioning processes. In total, 30% of refuge services in England are not currently run by specialist providers but by housing associations, other charities or local authorities.

In some local areas, competitive tendering processes have driven down costs to the point where a safe, specialist refuge service with a planned programme of support is simply not deliverable. Refuge services are increasingly unable to meet the essential support needs of many different survivors; the proportion of refuge spaces able to accommodate women with children, meet accessibility needs or consider women with NRPF continues to decline.

Recommended level of investment

The national network of refuge services is currently not adequately resourced to meet demand. In 2019, following the government's proposal to introduce a new legal duty on local authorities to fund support in refuges and other forms of safe accommodation, Women's Aid published a forecast of the investment required to deliver this duty.

Women's Aid's '[Funding Specialist Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors](#)' report assessed the cost of funding support in the specialist domestic abuse sector - both refuge and community based services - in England. This required defining what services deliver, calculating the costs of the support they provide, using data from a representative sample of services who have achieved the Women's Aid's national quality standards, and adjusting to reflect 'true costs' rather than the level of funding currently received. A 'total unit cost' was developed to cover support staff, activity costs and central costs (such as management, administration and finance) within refuge

services. The average annual unit cost⁹ is currently estimated to be £31,059, which was used to calculate the funding needed for adequate refuge provision across England - 5,598 refuge spaces (units of provision) in total.¹⁰ The forecast estimate for a safe and sustainable national network of refuges is £173.8 million annually.^{xxv}

This investment alone, however, will not ensure all survivors can access the refuge space they need. There are a number of critical prerequisites for a sustainable national network of refuges – including sufficient housing supply to ensure that women can safely ‘move-on’ from refuge, effective support within statutory services, availability of community-based services, national coordination and oversight, reforms to ensure that survivors with no recourse to public funds can access refuge spaces in reality, and specialist provision to meet the needs of survivors facing multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. There are also clear limitations in calculating ‘average costs’; no victim/survivor and children are the same and the nature and length of support that is needed within a refuge service can therefore differ significantly.

Finally, there are significant challenges in measuring demand for services which are not currently adequately resourced or available. It is therefore to be expected that national and local government efforts to improve funding, and work to encourage survivors to report and access help, will increase demand in the future.

Ring-fenced national funding for ‘by and for’ expert services

‘By and for’ expert refuge services are tailored to provide highly specialist support, based on the additional needs and lived experiences of groups who face discrimination, marginalisation and compounding inequalities. These services receive high numbers of self-referrals^{xxvi}, hold specialist advocacy and other skills, and are trusted by the communities they support due to their long-established reputations and their recognition and understanding of intersectionality and the multiple forms of discrimination and additional barriers faced by survivors from marginalised groups.

However the “led by and for” sector has a long history of underfunding and political marginalisation, which has impacted on the sustainability of their life-saving work.^{xxvii} Whilst generally operating in one local authority area, these centres of excellence are often effectively a regional or national service - providing the only support of that kind for a large area, or even the country. ‘By and for’ expert services have therefore been disproportionately impacted by the shift to localism and the changes to Supporting People funding - as they are often not seen as ‘local priorities’ and are unable to compete within competitive tendering processes for ‘generic’ refuge

⁹ This is either a one room in a shared house, or one unit of self-contained or dispersed accommodation for a woman or a woman and her children. The size and accessibility of these units varies throughout services and throughout the country, and this is an estimated average unit cost across these types.

¹⁰ Based on current Office for National Statistics population estimates and the Council of Europe estimate of one space per 10,000 population.

provision. In 2018 Imkaan, the UK's only national second-tier women's organisation dedicated to addressing violence against black and minoritised women and girls, reported that just 11% of the income of 'by and for' BME services they surveyed was from local authorities, compared with 40% from trusts and foundations. In London, where the majority are based, local authorities have been estimated to cut funding for refuge services led 'by and for' BME women by 50% in the last seven years.^{xxviii}

The 'by and for' expert sector is a unique national resource and should be assessed and funded as such. Imkaan recommends a transformative approach to funding 'by and for' expert services. This includes clear recognition of the value of the 'by and for' expert sector within funding structures, ring-fenced grant funding for 'by and for' expert services, full delivery of equalities requirements, and an end to the use of competitive tendering for these services which are of significant social value but cannot compete on an 'equal footing within an open market'.^{xxix}

No recourse to public funds

Migrant women face severe barriers to reporting domestic abuse and seeking help. Perpetrators use immigration status as a form of coercive control - threatening to inform the authorities, exploiting survivors' fears of deportation and destitution, and withholding information or documentation on their status.^{xxx}

Women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) also currently face insurmountable barriers to accessing refuge and other domestic abuse services. Without access to public funds they are not eligible for welfare benefits, which are required to cover housing costs in refuge. Very few refuge services are able to cover the costs of a woman's stay without this funding; only 5.4% of refuge vacancies in England in the year 2018-2019 would even consider a woman with NRPF.^{xxxi} Since 2016, the No Woman Turned Away project has supported nearly 1000 survivors who are struggling to access a refuge space. Each year, around 20%-25% of women refused access to a refuge space had NRPF.^{xxxii}

The Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) - secured through advocacy from the 'by and for' BME women's sector - is a critical lifeline to support, providing survivors with welfare benefits for three months. This means that they can stay in refuge while applying for indefinite leave to remain under the Domestic Violence Rule (DVR). In July 2019 the government introduced a new route through which asylum seekers experiencing domestic abuse, and eligible for support under Section 95 or Section 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, can access housing costs funding within refuges.^{xxxiii} Awareness of these schemes and concessions, however, remains low. Both statutory and specialist domestic abuse services require dedicated training and awareness on the DDVC, DVR and funding for asylum seeking women to ensure they can support those eligible to access their rights.

The DDVC and DVR are currently only available to those on spousal visas, where their spouse or partner is a British citizen or has settled status in the UK. Currently any migrant survivors - such as those on student visas, working visas and EEA nationals - are therefore barred from accessing

this protection. 67% of the women supported by the No Woman Turned Away project in 2016 who had NRPF were ineligible because they were not on spousal visas.

Southall Black Sisters and the Step Up! Migrant Women campaign, led by Latin American Women's Rights Service, are calling for urgent reforms to the protection and support of migrant women experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG - including widening the eligibility and extending the time limit for the DDVC and DVR to ensure all migrant women can access a refuge space.

Local Commissioning

Needs assessment

Robust, collaborative needs assessments are essential for the planning, commissioning and delivery of quality domestic abuse service provision. The individual and often multiple needs of victim/survivors and their children need to be understood to ensure they can access the 'right service'. The specific needs, issues and barriers that are experienced by people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are also essential to assess, and inform service provision that meets obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.^{xxxiv} Many survivors will be "hidden" in local needs assessments, due to gaps in protected characteristics, equalities data and the significant numbers of women who are experiencing homelessness - including rough sleeping and sofa surfing - whose experiences are not captured. It is therefore critical that needs assessments are co-produced and delivered in partnership with specialist domestic abuse organisations, who hold unique expertise and can provide real time insight into victim/survivors' needs.

Needs assessment for refuge services cannot be based on local data alone, as around two thirds of women resident in refuge come from a different local authority area.^{xxxv} Women experiencing domestic abuse choose to stay local if they can, and only move outside their local authority area if forced to do so by a perpetrator who continues to threaten or harm them. Women facing these risks travel "*from everywhere to all types of places to access refuges*", resulting in a network of services that is "*distinctively accessed across local authority boundaries*."^{xxxvi} Research shows that all local authorities benefit from the 'informal reciprocity' of the national network of refuges; the journeys women and children make to access refuge services cancel each other out in terms of net effect on a local or national scale.

As a joint parliamentary committee concluded in 2017, it is therefore "essential that refuges are able to operate as a national network, unrestrained by admission restrictions imposed by individual local authorities and with appropriate coverage across the country."^{xxxvii} This national network of services cannot be commissioned or funded on the basis of local need alone. The responsibility for developing and delivering a national needs assessment should sit at national level, to inform local needs assessment in a robust and consistent way.

No local connection

Women and children escaping domestic abuse rely on refuge services accepting them with no 'local connection' to the area they have moved to. This is often essential to protect the safety of the woman, her children and the other residents and staff within the refuge. Although government guidance makes clear that 'locality caps or restrictions' should not be included in refuge contracts or tenders,^{xxxviii} there continue to be examples of poor practice in this regard. 'Local connection' restrictions on refuge services clearly undermine the operation of a national network of services and must never be included within commissioning processes.

Commissioning

The Government is proposing duties for local authorities to tackle ineffective funding and commissioning processes in some areas. It is important to use appropriate commissioning approaches to deliver quality, safe and specialist refuge provision that meets the needs of women and children.

In 2016 the Government published a best practice toolkit, produced by specialist partners including Imkaan and Women's Aid and funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation, for commissioning domestic abuse and VAWG services. This toolkit is designed to support implementation of the Home Office's National Statement of Expectations for VAWG Services and should be used when commissioning refuge services. Providing detailed guidance on the commissioning cycle, strategy development, assessing need and mapping provision. It promotes effective commissioning through collaboration. Commissioning processes need to be relevant for the scale of services, make full use of grants, non-competitive approaches and longer-term funding. When 'pooling budgets', commissioners need to ensure that a contract across a large geographical area doesn't incentivise large scale, generic provision and take steps to ensure specialist services can compete on an equal footing.^{xxxix}

Specifically, when commissioning refuge services, commissioners should ensure that large tenders, contracts and commissioning practices do not favour bigger, generic providers or limit the ability of local, specialist services to bid. Commissioning may involve funding through either grant-giving or procurement, and when determining which method to use the following should be considered:

- large scale procurement exercises can significantly disadvantage specialist services providers, and it is therefore important to ensure equity of access to the process and a commissioning method which values the expertise and strengths of specialists;^{xl}
- under current UK law a procurement process is not required at all for a refuge service of a value under £560,000, as it is a service of social value;^{xli}
- grant-giving is a legitimate commissioning technique, which is more responsive, allowing greater flexibility in meeting complex outcomes - especially for local, specialist domestic abuse

services and to meet the needs of victim/survivors from marginalised groups or with additional support needs;

- grant based funding methods are often a more efficient and simple process, but are still able to be discerning and ensuring only high-quality organisations are funded;
- grant based funding is particularly appropriate when commissioning specialist organisations that are difficult to replicate and cannot simply be relocated to another provider, such as ‘by and for’ expert services;^{xlii}
- when resource implications are accounted for, the value of competitive tendering as a means of securing cost-savings in comparison with grant-funding can be undermined.^{xliii}

Partnerships and co-production

Good commissioning starts with understanding that victim/survivors are experts in their own lives and are therefore essential when planning and designing services. Equally, specialist providers have expertise, knowledge and input that is essential when commissioning services. Involving victim/survivors and specialist service providers in the whole commissioning process through co-production delivers tangible benefits; victim/survivors with lived experience can contribute in a meaningful and empowering way, commissioners can be confident that services are meeting need, and the process can improve working relationships between statutory agencies and specialist providers.

Partnerships that unite statutory agencies with victims/survivors and specialist services are critical for delivering high-quality, needs led refuge services. Whilst in some areas strong multi-agency partnership arrangements between specialist services, commissioners and other partners are well established, in others there are significant challenges. It is important to recognise that an environment for partnership working and local collaboration is very difficult to achieve with competitive tendering practices in place. The move to competitive tendering over recent years in a drive to reduce costs has, in some areas, contributed to the breakdown of relationships that need to cooperate effectively to provide the best possible service to victim/survivors.

Partnerships therefore need to be built on a shared commitment to collaborative and equal partnership to be effective. Attending and providing expert input into governance structures can be highly resource intensive and victim/survivors and specialist services are often asked to do this without any resources. ‘By and for’ expert services, in particular, can face significant capacity constraints to engaging in multi-agency partnerships. The expertise of victim/survivors and specialist services must be valued, with appropriate resourcing to enable them to participate equally.

Meaningful and effective co-production with victim/survivors needs to be built into each of the four key stages of the planning and commissioning cycle, including through:

Analysing - needs assessments include focus groups, interviews and other engagement methods to understand the views, experiences and needs of victim/survivors;

Planning - victim/survivors and specialist services are central to development of commissioning frameworks, and victim/survivors are involved in interviewing and selecting providers;

Doing - providers funded to deliver services are accountable to the women and children they support, including ensuring that service users have a say in decision-making;

Reviewing - victims/survivors play a key role in evaluating and reviewing service provision.^{xliv}

Co-production requires victim/survivors and specialist services to provide their time, resources, skills, knowledge and expertise. A commitment to mutual and reciprocal partnership must therefore underpin co-production, with victim/survivors and specialist services valued and resourced for their contribution. Power dynamics also need to be considered and recognised within the process, and tackled with openness, trust and honest communication.^{xlv}

Case Studies

There are some strong best practice examples of local commissioning and partnership working across the country:

Ascent is a project delivered by the London VAWG Consortium, which demonstrates how specialist organisations can be supported to work in partnership to deliver comprehensive, cost effective, high quality VAWG services to all communities across London. The partnership comprises 22 organisations, delivering a range of services for victim/survivors of domestic and sexual violence, under six workstreams and funded by London Councils. It has been able to improve service provision for those affected by sexual and domestic violence in London through front-line services as well as support to voluntary and statutory organisations. The Consortium includes a specialist refuge strand for victim/survivors of forced marriage, complex needs and sexual exploitation. A 'by and for' led BME expert service, Ashiana Network, leads this to help ensure that specialists are not marginalised by larger service providers in this area.

In Lancashire, Safer Together is a consortium for not-for-profit providers of services for victims of domestic abuse, supported by Lancashire County Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The consortium aims to safeguard and grow high quality service provision for victims of domestic abuse across Lancashire, through working with commissioners to co-design services, creating a single point of contracting, and by tendering competitively for public and private service contracts via a range of channels. The consortium includes nine specialist services delivering specialist domestic abuse and BME-specific provision across a whole county. It has been developed from extensive partnership building work facilitated by Imkaan and Women's Aid with local partners.

The Brighton & Hove Intelligent Commissioning Pilot, 'domestic violence needs assessment', is a best practice example of in needs assessment in this area. It included extensive needs analysis, services and investment mapping, an outcomes framework and set commissioning priorities from 2011. It looked at relevant international and national frameworks, was based on information from all agencies and relevant partners - including within the voluntary sector - and had a strong focus on the needs of victim/survivors facing multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage, and children and young people. £50,000 was invested in the needs assessment, which utilised internal expertise within the local authority as well as capacity in the specialist sector to support its production and review.

Move on from refuge and the need for stable housing

A victim/survivor's journey does not end when they arrive in refuge. Often, this can be just the start of a search for long-term safety, recovery and freedom from abuse. It is important for commissioners to be aware of the critical role refuge services play in supporting women to move on and settle in a safe new home, and the role of the local housing authority in this regard.

Homelessness and resettlement

Although it is not set out in primary legislation, case law precedent clarifies that women and children within refuges are statutorily homeless. The case of *Moran v Manchester* [2009] clarified that refuge services, as well as hostels and night shelters, should not fall within the definition of 'accommodation' for the purposes of deciding if accommodation is available when determining homelessness under section 175 of the Housing Act 1996. As Baroness Hale stated in the case,

“a refuge is not simply crisis intervention for a few nights. It is a safe haven in which to find peace and support. But it is not a place to live.” Refuge services are therefore not accommodation that is ‘reasonable to occupy’ for the medium or long term.

A housing authority should therefore work with the refuge provider to resettle the victim/survivor leaving refuge into new accommodation, potentially with floating support in place. As stated earlier in the toolkit, refuges provide a ‘resettlement support’ service - where workers will locate new accommodation for both adult and child victim/survivors and provide emotional and practical support around settling into new housing and advocating for rights and entitlements with statutory services. In Women’s Aid’s view, the housing authority should always aim for a settled option after move-on from refuge to avoid additional disruption and uncertainty for victim/survivors and their children. Due to the lack of affordable housing supply, this is often not possible.

Move-on

Leaving a refuge can often, therefore, lead to a long period of housing insecurity. Women will often have to move several times after leaving a refuge from different forms of temporary and short-term accommodation, if they are unable to access secure social housing or affordable accommodation in the private rented sector. Differing local authority responses and accommodation provision can mean that experiences of move-on varies across the country. Research by Solace Women’s Aid in 2016 found 87 per cent of women left refuges in London for continued temporary accommodation.^{xlvi}

The ‘move-on’ challenge can be acute in certain locations, and for different groups of women. For example, data from On Track on the length of stay in refuge in 2018-2019 showed an overall average of four months (19 weeks) which increased to six months (27 weeks) for refuges in London,¹¹ where a higher housing shortage means that it is harder to find suitable move on accommodation. Women from marginalised groups, who may require a longer length of stay because of their additional support needs, also face further barriers to ‘moving-on’ because of a lack of suitable properties. SignHealth Domestic Abuse Service estimate that deaf women stay in refuge for an average of 8.5 months, more than twice the national average.^{xlvii}

Delivering a secure and consistent move-on pathway from refuge is essential for the recovery for the victim/survivor and the life chances of children. Given current challenges in delivering a secure

¹¹ On Track is Women’s Aid’s case management and outcomes monitoring database. On Track was launched in March 2016 and is now being used by over 60 local service providers throughout England. Services contribute to a national dataset which provides information on women’s experiences of abuse, support offered by services, and outcomes achieved. This refers to data on cases recorded by services using On Track ending between 1/4/18 and 31/3/19 for female service users in refuge services. Excludes stays below 7 days in length.

and consistent pathway into settled, permanent housing for victim/survivors, it is therefore important that housing authorities consider provision of dedicated move-on accommodation. This enables women and children - and particularly those with higher support needs or in areas with high housing shortages - to move-on from refuge into a form of temporary accommodation with additional resettlement support. It is vital that specialist providers continue to deliver the support within move-on accommodation, as they have the expertise to support survivors to continue to recover and build independence. Move-on accommodation provision must meet victim/survivors' needs and take into account the impact of trauma, physical safety, and additional needs, including suitable accommodation for women with disabilities, and the provision of women-only spaces to ensure the survivor's safety and protection.

Access to social housing

In 2018 the government published statutory guidance to improve access to social housing for victim/survivors of domestic abuse in refuges or other types of temporary accommodation.^{xlviii} The guidance aims to promote a consistent approach across local authorities to the way they consider housing applications from victim/survivors leaving refuges. It makes clear that:

- local authorities should ensure survivors leaving refuges have appropriate priority under the allocation scheme, by applying the medical and welfare reasonable preference category¹² to victim/survivors and their families who are living in a refuge or other temporary accommodation;
- survivors who have fled to a refuge in another local authority area should not be disadvantaged by any residency or local connection requirements under the local authority's allocation scheme;
- local authorities should ensure accommodation provided meets the needs and circumstances, and wherever possible the preferences, of the victim/survivor and their household - including putting in place appropriate safety measures and support following an assessment of the household's particular needs.

If victim/survivors are required to move-on from refuge into temporary accommodation, it is critical to ensure that this is safe and suitable for their needs. Any such placement must follow an assessment of their needs and take into account the impact of trauma, physical safety, and additional needs, including suitable accommodation for women with disabilities, and the provision of women-only spaces to ensure the victim/survivor's safety and protection.

¹² Section 166A(3)(d) of the Housing Act 1996 provides that local authorities must frame their allocation scheme to ensure that reasonable preference is given to people who need to move on medical and welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

The previously fairly simple and effective pathway from refuge to social housing has been severely impacted by the housing crisis and compounded by the impact of various welfare reform policies such as the ‘benefit cap’, ‘under-occupation deduction’, and the reduction in Local Housing Allowance rates. All of which have a significant impact on single families, reducing their available income to cover their accommodation costs in any rental tenure, which could include the private sector which has higher rates than social rent costs, affecting housing affordability.^{xlix}

In the current context it is important that local authorities make full use of DHP’s¹³, to provide temporary help with housing costs and support survivors to move-on from refuges where possible.¹ DHP’s are short term financial payments and can be considered to help those claiming housing benefit. Local authorities accept applications for assistance for a range of qualifying criteria such as: shortfalls in rent for customers receiving either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs, rent in advance payments, help with moving costs, a deposit to help secure rented accommodation, or rent arrears which may be preventing a move to a more suitable property. Each case is assessed on an individual basis, looking at the finances and personal circumstances of each applicant. See the Social Housing toolkit for further information on homelessness legislation and the main tests for determining who the local authority owes a duty to.

Recommendations

- Local authorities, commissioners and local partnership boards responsible for refuge provision should ensure that services fully meet the definition of a refuge and the support provided, are gender-specific, and are delivered by specialist service providers as defined in this toolkit.
- Local authorities, commissioners, local partnership boards and service providers should work to ensure that refuge services are delivered in the most suitable accommodation types for the local area and meet the needs of all victim/survivors.
- Local authorities and commissioners should ensure that refuges are resourced to deliver the essential support required within the service - including for refuge support workers, resettlement support, therapeutic support and dedicated support for children and young people, as well as funding central and activity costs.
- Local authorities, commissioners and local partnership boards fulfil requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty when undertaking needs assessments and developing local strategies to ensure provision of specialist support to meet the specific

¹³ Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), were established by the UK Government as a vehicle to provide temporary assistance to people requiring extra support with their housing costs.

needs of victims from marginalised groups - including black and minority ethnic (BME) women, disabled and deaf victims and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans (LGBT) victim/survivors.

- The government works with the domestic abuse sector and local authorities to develop a national needs assessment for refuge provision, which are a national network of services.
- Local authorities, commissioners, local partnership boards and national government deliver new statutory duties to ensure that the national network of refuge services meets identified need, ends the current shortfall in refuge spaces and are resourced to ensure equal access for marginalised groups of women and children - including through ring fenced funding for 'by and for' expert services.
- The government continues to retain housing benefit for housing costs within refuge services and delivers an adequate funding settlement for support costs, estimated at £173.8 million annually. The government works with the domestic abuse sector, local authorities and commissioners to ensure this funding underpins the proposed statutory duty and secures the future of specialist provision for women and children escaping domestic abuse.
- The government and Domestic Abuse Commissioner works in partnership with the 'by and for' expert sector - including providers working 'by and for' BME women, LGBT victim/survivors and victim/survivors who are disabled, deaf or blind - to develop the national funding settlement, and model of delivery, required for specialist provision for groups with protected characteristics.
- The government expands the eligibility criteria, and time-limit, for the DDVC and DVR to ensure all migrant survivors escaping domestic abuse can access a refuge space.
- Local authorities, commissioners and local partnership boards implement the best practice outlined in the national VAWG Commissioning Toolkit when delivering new duties - including on co-production, partnership, pooled budgets and to ensure commissioning processes are appropriate for the scale of the contract and make full use of grant-giving as a legitimate commissioning tool, and end the use of competitive-tendering where it is not required.
- Local authorities, commissioners and local partnership boards established quality standards, outcomes monitoring frameworks and data collection tools established within the domestic abuse and VAWG sector when implementing new duties to ensure services are meeting the needs of women and children victim/survivors, delivering the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's priorities, and to avoid duplication.
- Local housing authorities work with refuge services to support women and children to move-on and settle in a safe new home after leaving refuge: adhering to statutory guidance on social housing allocations to ensure victim/survivors have appropriate priority; making full use of Discretionary Housing Payments; and providing dedicated move-on accommodation in areas with high housing shortages or for victim/survivors that have additional support needs.

Links to resources

Home Office, Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning, December 2016:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf

Home Office, Violence Against Women and Girls Services: National Statement of Expectations, December 2016: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-national-statement-of-expectations>

Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse, November 2018:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards and Safe Minimum Practice Standards:

<https://www.imkaan.org.uk/resources>

VAWG Sector Shared Core Standards: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/i-commission-work-survivors/violence-women-girls-sector-shared-core-standards/>

Women's Aid's Domestic Abuse Report series, which brings together the most comprehensive set of data on domestic abuse - including refuge provision - in the country:

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/research-and-publications/the-domestic-abuse-report/>

Women's Aid, National Quality Standards: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/national-quality-standards/>

References

ⁱ Women's Aid (2020) *The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Annual Audit*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2020-The-Annual-Audit.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Council of Europe (2011) *Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/16800d383a>

ⁱⁱⁱ Women Against Violence in Europe (2015) *WAVE Report 2015: On The Role Of Specialist Women's Services In Europe*. Retrieved from <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/WAVE-Report-on-the-Role-of-Specialist-Womens-Support-Services-in-Europe-2015.pdf>

-
- ^{iv} Council of Europe (2011) *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008482e>
- ^v Council of Europe (2011) *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008482e>
- ^{vi} Imkaan (2015) *State of the Sector: Contextualising the current experiences of BME ending violence against women and girls organisations*. Larasi, M. with Jones, D. (2017) *Tallawah: A briefing paper on black and 'minority ethnic' women and girls organising to end violence against us*. <https://www.imkaan.org.uk/resources>
- ^{vii} Welsh Government (2019) *Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV): Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales*. Retrieved from <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>
- ^{viii} Kelly, L., Sharp, N. and Klein, R. (2014) *Finding the Costs of Freedom How women and children rebuild their lives after domestic violence*. Retrieved from https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Costs_of_Freedom_Report_-_SWA.pdf
- ^{ix} Women's Aid (2019) *Funding Specialist Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Funding-Specialist-Support-Full-Report.pdf>
- ^x Imkaan (2018) *From the Margin to the Centre: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls*. Retrieved from https://829ef90d-0745-49b2-b404-cbea85f15fda.filesusr.com/ugd/2f475d_91a5eb3394374f24892ca1e1ebf2e2e.pdf
- ^{xi} Larasi, M. with Jones, D. (2017) *Tallawah: A briefing paper on black and 'minority ethnic' women and girls organising to end violence against us*. <https://www.imkaan.org.uk/resources>
- ^{xii} Imkaan (2015) *State of the Sector: Contextualising the current experiences of BME ending violence against women and girls organisations*. <https://www.imkaan.org.uk/resources>
- ^{xiii} R (Kaur & Shah) v London Borough of Ealing, EWHC 2062 (2008).
- ^{xiv} Home Office (2016) *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf
- ^{xv} Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) *Domestic Abuse Services, Future Delivery of Support to Victims and their Children in Accommodation-Based Domestic Abuse Services: Consultation Response*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839171/Domestic_Abuse_Duty_Gov_Response_to_Consultation.pdf
- ^{xvi} NEF Consulting (2016) *Refuge: A Social Return on Investment Evaluation*. Retrieved from <http://www.refuge.org.uk/files/Refuge-SROI-2016.pdf>
- ^{xvii} Kelly, L. and Dubois, L. (2008) *Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services*. Retrieved from [https://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF\(2007\)Study%20rev.en.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF(2007)Study%20rev.en.pdf)
- ^{xviii} Women's Aid (2020) *The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Annual Audit*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2020-The-Annual-Audit.pdf>
- ^{xix} Women's Aid (2020) *The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Annual Audit*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2020-The-Annual-Audit.pdf>
- ^{xx} Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions (2018) *All supported housing funding to be retained in welfare system*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-supported-housing-funding-to-be-retained-in-welfare-system>
- ^{xxi} Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions (2017) *Supported Accommodation Review: The scale, scope and cost of the supported housing sector*. Retrieved from

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572026/rr927-supported-accommodation-review-summary.pdf

^{xxii} Homeless Link (2013) *Who Is Supporting People Now? Experiences of local authority commissioning after Supporting People*. Retrieved from https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Who%20is%20supporting%20people%20now%20Report%20Jan13_0.pdf

^{xxiii} Women's Aid (2020) *The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Annual Audit*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2020-The-Annual-Audit.pdf>

^{xxiv} Lloyds Bank Foundation (2016) *Commissioning in Crisis: How current contracting and procurement processes threaten the survival of small charities*. Retrieved from <https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/media/ulrkb1f/commissioning-in-crisis-full-report.pdf>

^{xxv} Women's Aid (2019) *Funding Specialist Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Funding-Specialist-Support-Full-Report.pdf>

^{xxvi} Imkaan (2012) *Vital Statistics 2: Key Findings Report on Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee Women's and Children's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence*. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_MKSoEcCvQwWHA0eG81cFZxc0U/view

^{xxvii} Imkaan (2018) *From Survival to Sustainability; critical issues for the specialist black and 'minority ethnic' ending violence against women and girls sector in the UK*. Retrieved from https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/2f475d_9cab044d7d25404d85da289b70978237.pdf

^{xxviii} Imkaan (2018) *From Survival to Sustainability; critical issues for the specialist black and 'minority ethnic' ending violence against women and girls sector in the UK*. Retrieved from https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/2f475d_9cab044d7d25404d85da289b70978237.pdf

^{xxix} Imkaan (2018) *From the Margin to the Centre: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls*. Retrieved from https://829ef90d-0745-49b2-b404-cbea85f15fda.filesusr.com/ugd/2f475d_91a5eb3394374f24892ca1e1ebfeea2e.pdf

^{xxx} Kings College London and the Latin American Women's Rights Service (2019) *The Right to be Believed: Migrant women facing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the 'hostile immigration environment' in London*. Retrieved from https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/110500935/The_right_to_be_believed_Full_report_final.pdf

^{xxxi} Women's Aid (2020) *The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Annual Audit*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2020-The-Annual-Audit.pdf>

^{xxxii} Women's Aid (2017) *Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the first year of the No Woman Turned Away project*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NWTA-2017.pdf>. Women's Aid (2018) *Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the second year of the No Woman Turned Away project*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NWTA-2018-FINAL.pdf>. Women's Aid (2019) *Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the third year of the No Woman Turned Away project*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Nowhere-to-Turn-2019-Full-Report.pdf>

^{xxxiii} Home Office (2019) *Domestic abuse: responding to reports of domestic abuse from asylum seekers*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817667/domestic-abuse-asylum-support-v1.0.pdf

^{xxxiv} Equality Act c15 (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

^{xxxv} Women's Aid (2018) *Survival and Beyond: The Domestic Abuse Report 2017*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Survival-and-Beyond.pdf>

-
- ^{xxxvi} Bowstead, J. (2015). Why women’s domestic violence refuges are not local services. *Critical Social Policy* 2015, 35(3), 327–34, 10.1177/0261018315588894
- ^{xxxvii} Work and Pensions Committee (2017) *First Joint Report of the Communities and Local Government and Work and Pensions Committees of Session 2016–17, Future of Supported Housing*. Retrieved from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/867/86702.htm>
- ^{xxxviii} Home Office (2016) *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf
- ^{xxxix} Home Office (2016) *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf
- ^{xi} Welsh Government (2019) *Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV): Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales*. Retrieved from <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>
- ^{xii} Crown Commercial Service (2016) *The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 & The Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016, Guidance On The New Light Touch Regime For Health, Social, Education And Certain Other Service Contracts*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/560272/Guidance_on_Light_Touch_Regime_-_Oct_16.pdf
- ^{xiii} Home Office (2016) *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf
- ^{xiii} COSLA and Scottish Women’s Aid (2016) *Good Practice in Commissioning Specialist Domestic Abuse Services*. Retrieved from https://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/good_practice_in_commissioning_specialist_domestic_abuse_services.pdf
- ^{xiv} Welsh Government (2019) *Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV): Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales*. Retrieved from <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>
- ^{xiv} COSLA and Scottish Women’s Aid (2016) *Good Practice in Commissioning Specialist Domestic Abuse Services*. Retrieved from https://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/good_practice_in_commissioning_specialist_domestic_abuse_services.pdf
- ^{xvi} Solace Women’s Aid (2016) *The Price of Safety*. Retrieved from https://www.solacewomensaid.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/Solace%20Women%27s%20Aid%20housing%20report_The%20price%20of%20safety_Mar16.pdf
- ^{xvii} Women’s Aid (2019) *Funding Specialist Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors*. Retrieved from <https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Funding-Specialist-Support-Full-Report.pdf>
- ^{xviii} Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) *Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges or Other Types of Temporary Accommodation*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/753667/Improving_access_to_social_housing_for_victims_of_domestic_abuse.pdf
- ^{xix} Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. Retrieved from https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/240419/the_homelessness_monitor_england_2019.pdf
- ^l Department for Work and Pensions (2019) *Discretionary Housing Payments Guidance Manual, Including Local Authority Good Practice Guide*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/827510/discretionary-housing-payments-guide.pdf