



DAHA Homelessness & Supported Accommodation Accreditation

For local areas/local authority commissioners



Executive Summary

Overview

DAHA's Homelessness & Supported Accommodation Accreditation exists to improve the domestic abuse response across frontline homelessness and supported accommodation organisations; particularly focusing on meeting the needs of survivors who are experiencing multiple disadvantage. We do this by:



Our membership offer promotes the sharing of best practice across our member organisations through our workshops and encouraging our partners to work together - achieving more aligned working across the sector.



Supporting Organisations through our accreditation framework with bespoke support from an accreditation lead and a comprehensive suit of resources relevant to homelessness & domestic abuse.



Promoting the sector's position as part of the coordinated community response¹ (CCR) to domestic abuse.



Delivering bespoke and role-specific training² to frontline organisations on key areas of domestic abuse; including early identification, risk assessment and perpetrator accountability.

Key Facts



Domestic abuse can affect anyone, but it is important to recognise it **doesn't impact on everyone equally**, and some groups are more likely to experience it.



Research tells us that **women are statistically more likely to experience domestic abuse**, and these numbers increase significantly when we look at data around high risk/high harm domestic abuse. We know that **two women are killed every week by someone they knew intimately**, and that for the year ending March 2024, 77% of domestic homicide victims were women.³



Therefore, it is **crucial to take a gendered-approach** when considering how to tackle domestic abuse in your area.



Domestic abuse and homelessness are closely linked issues, particularly for women. Domestic abuse is a key cause of homelessness for women, and **women who are homeless are at increased risk of domestic abuse** and wider experiences of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Therefore, **domestic abuse is a key support need** for individuals who are **accessing support from homelessness and supported accommodation services**.

Why this matters for local authorities



Local authorities provide support services to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their area – either directly, or by commissioning specialist providers to deliver these services. Organisations who are commissioned to deliver these services on behalf of the local authority are often charitable organisations, who provide hostel accommodation, outreach provision, supported accommodation for varying support levels and types of support need (i.e. mental health supported housing, drug and alcohol supported housing), or any other service that aims to support some of the most vulnerable individuals in our communities.



Research tells us that **domestic abuse is a key issue for many individuals who are experiencing homelessness** and/or accessing supported accommodation services – whether they are experiencing domestic abuse, or perpetrating it.



Often, **providers will have the desire to improve their services** and ways of working, to ensure they are providing the best possible support to their services users, **however they will have very small (if any) amounts of surplus resources**, whether it's money or time, to undertake additional pieces of work, such as DAHA accreditation that would help them to achieve this.



Local authority commissioners are in a position to be able to support their contracted providers to improve their practice and service offer around domestic abuse, by **providing additional resource to support them to achieve DAHA accreditation**; and we encourage you to commit to this through your homelessness and/or domestic abuse/VAWG strategies. New and upcoming policy such as the Mayor of London's Rough Sleeping Plan of Action, and the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 outline why considerations need to be made to improve the sector's response to women.

We encourage all local authorities to consider how they can best support their homelessness and supported accommodation providers to ensure they are delivering a safe and effective domestic abuse response.

Why do you need a safe and effective response to domestic abuse in homelessness and supported accommodation services?

Domestic abuse and homelessness

Research tells us that domestic abuse is a 'near-universal' experience for homeless women⁴. Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness for women in the UK, and risk of domestic abuse also increases when a woman becomes homeless.

Therefore, there is a good chance that nearly all of the women being supported by the services in your area will have support needs around domestic abuse.

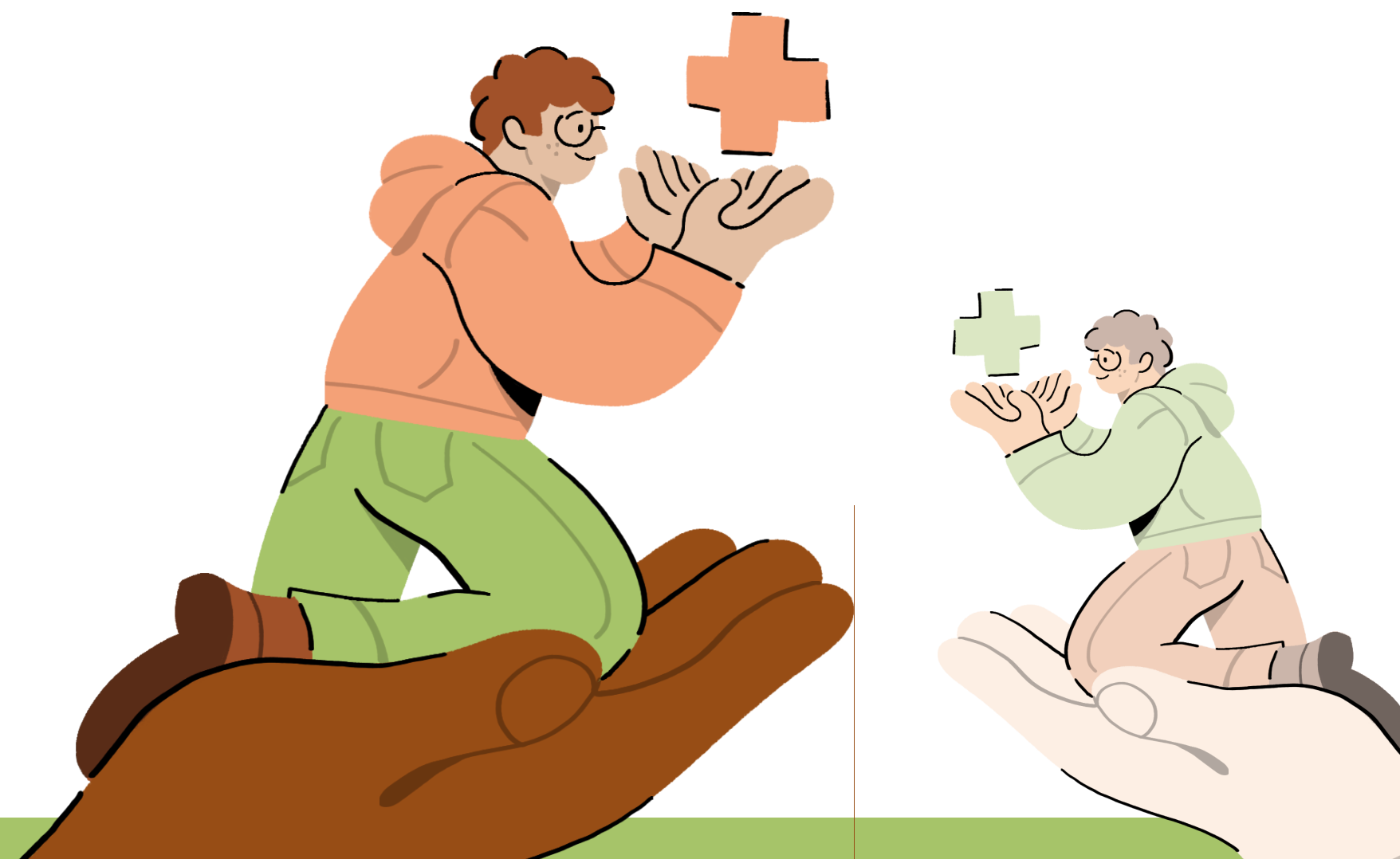


Domestic abuse and multiple disadvantage

Many who are supported across the homelessness sector experience multiple disadvantage – these are individuals who have cooccurring experiences of homelessness, substance misuse, interpersonal violence and abuse and poor mental health⁵. These experiences are due to structural and systemic issues, which make services difficult to navigate for those who need the support most.

Domestic abuse is a key issue for individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage, especially for women – therefore it is crucial that support for domestic abuse is appropriately considered across the sector, just as support around substance use or physical health needs would be.

By considering how domestic abuse intersects with other experiences of multiple disadvantage, you will be ensuring your services are easier for survivors to navigate and access.



What current data tells us about domestic abuse and homelessness

Women's Census Data

The Women's Rough Sleeping Census, led by SHP and Solace, aims to collect more comprehensive data on women experiencing rough sleeping. It also seeks to improve support and provision for women who are rough sleeping and experiencing other forms of hidden homelessness, by working directly with service and outreach teams on gender-informed practice⁶.

Since its inception in 2022, the Census has collected data from over 2,000 women across England who shared their experiences of recent rough sleeping. The most recent Census that took place in September 2024 found the following⁷:



365 women reported they had been in homelessness accommodation prior to sleeping rough.

43%

of women were not accessing support from a homelessness service, and a staggering

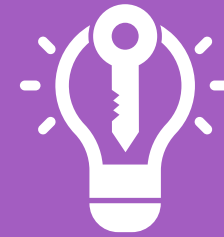
77%

of women were not accessing support from a housing officer or council housing department at all.



Homelessness accommodation, as it currently operates, is unsafe and unsuitable for women. Many women reported falling out of homelessness accommodation into rough sleeping due to feeling unsafe, a lack of support and other unsuitability factors.

The data clearly shows that homelessness and supported accommodation services do not meet needs of women who are experiencing homelessness, and the Women's Census report recommends that homelessness support services need to be safe for women, and should be backed by the funding (from local and central government) to make this possible.



We recommend that local authorities consider supporting their homelessness and supported accommodation services to achieve DAHA accreditation, in order to meet the recommendations highlighted by the Women's Census. One of our core principles through DAHA accreditation is that organisations need to be gender-informed in order to meet the needs of women. By embedding the DAHA standards, you can be assured the services in your area are able to safely meet the needs of women.

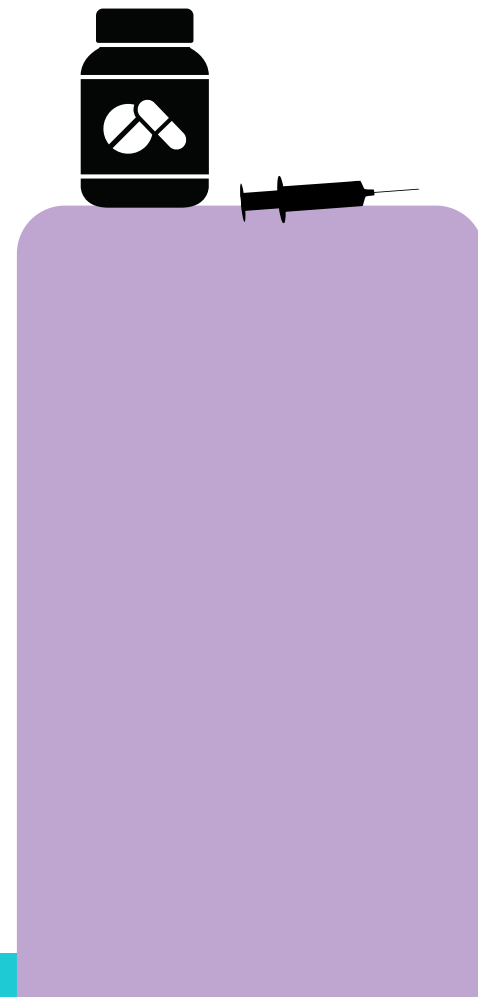
If you are currently unsure how effectively your services meet the needs of women who are rough sleeping, we agree with the Women's Rough Sleeping Census recommendation for local authorities to conduct a gender-informed equalities impact assessment on their homelessness services – this will allow you to identify any service gaps or areas to be improved through DAHA accreditation.



Accommodation availability for survivors experiencing domestic abuse and multiple disadvantage

Data tells us that existing domestic abuse accommodation provision across the country (such as refuge) does not meet the needs of survivors who are experiencing domestic abuse, alongside other forms of multiple disadvantage⁸.

- For survivors who have **support needs around alcohol misuse**, only **40% of referrals were accepted**; similarly only **39% of survivors with other substance use support needs had their referrals accepted**.
- Additionally, for those with a **history of offending**, only **31% of referrals were accepted for accommodation based support**, and 32% of referrals for those with high mental health support needs.



Analysis by Women's Aid of data from its members found that only three services (21 out of 4,289 refuge bed spaces) were exclusively for women with substance abuse or mental health support needs, and for women facing homelessness as a result of domestic abuse, there are difficulties accessing appropriate accommodation⁹.

This means survivors of domestic abuse who are experiencing multiple disadvantage have limited accommodation options, other than services such as hostels, or supported accommodation services with substance use support. Many of these services are mixed gender and male dominated, which can lead to these services feeling unsafe for women, particularly if they have experienced domestic abuse or other experiences of VAWG from a male perpetrator.



There are likely to be many survivors of domestic abuse within homelessness and supported accommodation services.



Strategies & Legislation: National Considerations

Homelessness Strategies

Every local authority must publish a homelessness strategy to outline how they will prevent homelessness and provide sufficient accommodation for people who are or may become homeless¹⁰. Based on the data, we know that domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness; therefore in order to effectively respond to homelessness, local authorities need to consider how to best meet the needs of all survivors of domestic abuse, including those who are experiencing multiple disadvantage. If their support needs are not met within your homelessness strategy, it is likely they will continue to experience homelessness and remain at high risk of harm – as this cohort of survivors are often ineligible or unable to access accommodation support through domestic abuse safe accommodation pathways.



We recommend local authorities consider building capacity and resourcing into their homelessness strategy to allow for organisations in their area to achieve DAHA Homelessness & Supported Accommodation accreditation. This can be done by:

- **Providing financial support for organisations towards DAHA membership costs** – especially for smaller organisations who may not be able to afford DAHA accreditation themselves.
- **Allow organisations time/capacity to complete DAHA accreditation activities**, outside of commissioned activity.

Collaborate with your domestic abuse commissioning colleagues

Within your local authority you will also have colleagues responsible for meeting your required duties to meet the needs of survivors under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. However as mentioned previously, existing provision may not meet the needs of survivors experiencing multiple disadvantage.



We recommend working together with your domestic abuse and/or violence against women and girls (VAWG) colleagues to share knowledge, and pool resources where possible, would be beneficial when considering DAHA accreditation as it may support with resource constraints, but also wider buy-in and awareness around this work across your area.

Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding

Every local area has access to grant funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant¹¹, with the goal of this grant being to tackle and prevent homelessness.



We recommend utilising a small portion of your allocated funds from this grant to support your local organisations to improve their domestic abuse response will ensure this hard-to-reach group of survivors will have the right support to safety, and end their homelessness in your area.

Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023

The Acts upcoming licensing scheme will outline new regulations to ensure consistent and safe practice across the supported housing sector. This includes standards on safeguarding and domestic abuse response, with new burdens funding from MHCLG for local areas to implement new practice.



DAHA Accreditation for Homelessness and Supported Accommodation Organisations has recently been recommended by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner as a best practice model for the sector to improve how they meet the needs of survivors in these services.



We recommend you consider supporting providers in your area to undertake DAHA accreditation, in order to meet the standards that will be set out in the upcoming licensing regime.



Strategies & Legislation: London Considerations

Mayor's Rough Sleeping Plan of Action

The Mayor of London has recently published his new Rough Sleeping Plan of Action¹² to end rough sleeping across the capital by 2030. One of the main goals of this plan is to replace the need for rough sleeping 'verification' with a needs based assessment by 2028. This is a significant practical change for the sector; one that will transform how services are accessed by those rough sleeping, as well as those who are eligible for support.

The practice of verification has disproportionately impacted women's access to homelessness services, as outlined in the data from the Women's Rough Sleeping Census. We anticipate that the removal of the need to verify rough sleepers, will cause an increase of individuals, particularly women, to meet the criteria for accommodation-based services, as they will no longer need to be seen 'bedded down' by a local outreach team.



We recommend local authority areas get ahead of this change in practice and gets started on improving their domestic abuse response now – to ensure existing survivors in your services, and those who will come through in the future will have access to the support that will meet their needs. Supporting your local organisations to achieve DAHA accreditation will ensure your area is proactively responding to this change in practice, and will **ensure staff working across your services are confident and equipped with the skills and knowledge** to respond to all service users who will come through the door in the months and years ahead.

The Mayor's Rough Sleeping Plan of Action also highlights the reality that homelessness services do not currently meet the needs of women effectively – and the plan is to ensure they do. In order to effectively meet the needs of women experiencing homelessness, domestic abuse needs to be considered a core support need.

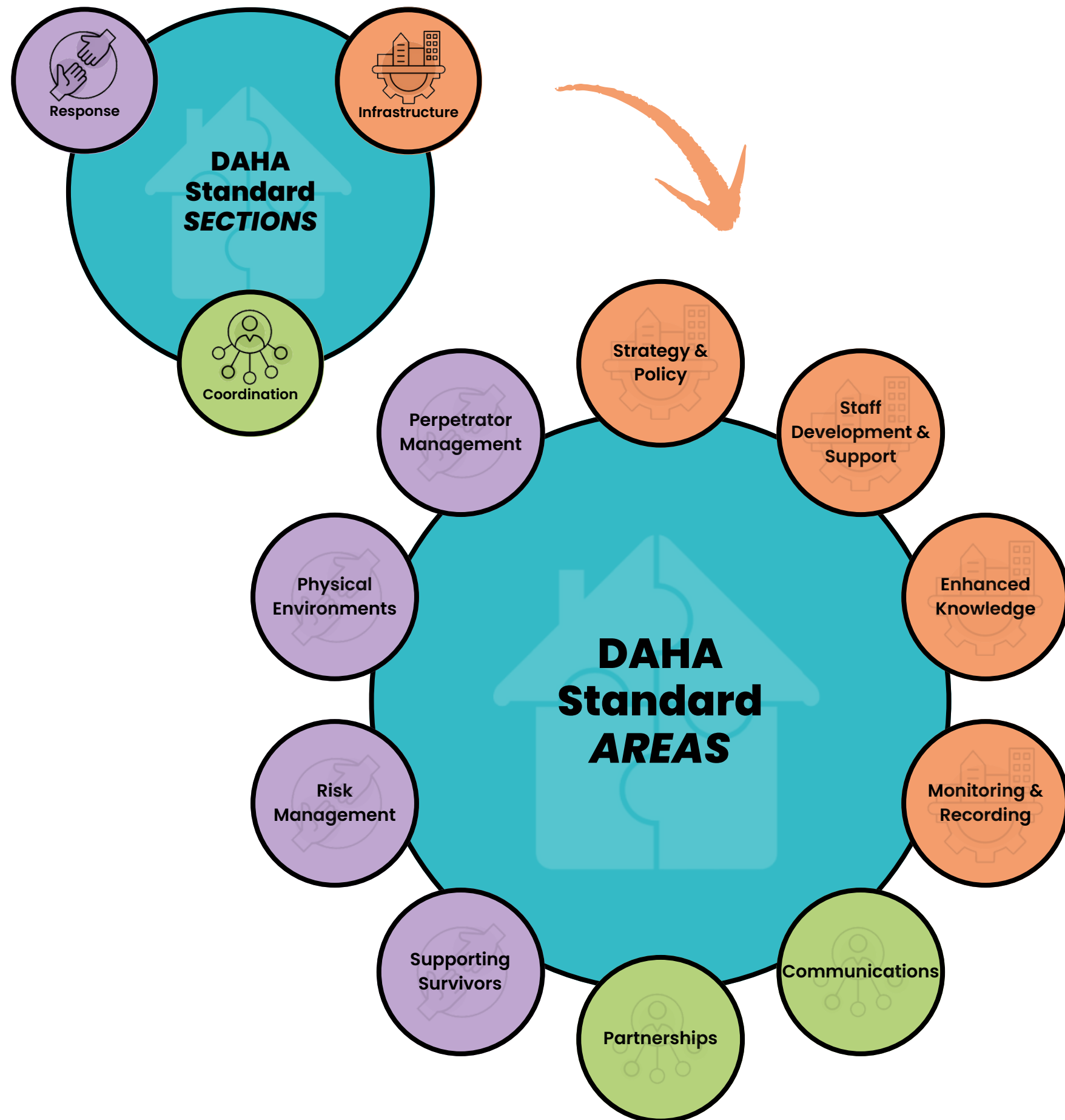


DAHA accreditation can support your homelessness and supported accommodation organisations to meet this support requirement for your services.



DAHA accreditation will support staff to feel confident in their response to DA.

The Accreditation



Get in touch

To find out more about DAHA Accreditation for Homelessness & Supported Accommodation Organisations:



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Visit our website [here](#).

*Join DAHA **today**, so a victim / survivor has a **brighter tomorrow**.*



References

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