

Whole Housing Approach Evaluation

Year 1 Report

Published November 2020



Whole Housing
Domestic Abuse



A Whole Systems Approach addressing the needs of survivors across all tenure types, running across three pilot sites; Cambridgeshire, Stockton and London

Delivered in partnership with

The logo for 'Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse' features the words 'STANDING TOGETHER' in bold purple capital letters, with 'against domestic abuse' in smaller grey lowercase letters below.	The logo for 'daha' features a stylized house icon made of three interlocking puzzle pieces in blue, green, and orange. Below the icon is the text 'daha' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font, and 'Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance' in a smaller, all-caps sans-serif font below that.	The logo for 'Surviving Economic Abuse' features the words 'SURVIVING ECONOMIC ABUSE' in white capital letters, stacked vertically within a green rectangular background.
Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse	Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance	Surviving Economic Abuse
The logo for 'advance' features the word 'advance' in a lowercase sans-serif font, with a stylized orange flame-like graphic to the right. Below the word is the tagline 'SAVING LIVES CHANGING LIVES' in a smaller, all-caps sans-serif font.	The logo for 'saferlondon' features the word 'safer' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font, followed by 'london' in a red, lowercase sans-serif font.	The logo for 'The Bobby Scheme' features a stylized house icon with a door, with the text 'THE BOBBY' above and 'SCHEME' below.
Advance	Safer London	The Bobby Scheme
The logo for 'Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council' features a stylized blue wave graphic to the left of the text 'Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL' in a sans-serif font.	The logo for 'The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea' features a royal coat of arms crest above the text 'THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA' in a serif font.	The logo for 'Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Partnership' features a stylized blue hand icon above the text 'Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Partnership' in a sans-serif font.
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Partnership
The logo for 'h&f' features the letters 'h&f' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font, with a stylized blue wave graphic to the right. Below the letters is the text 'hammersmith & fulham' in a smaller, all-caps sans-serif font.	The logo for 'City of Westminster' features a royal coat of arms crest above the text 'City of Westminster' in a serif font.	
Hammersmith and Fulham	City of Westminster	

With Thanks to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for funding the Whole Housing Pilot Project

CONTENTS

1. What is a Whole Housing Approach?	2
2. Why a Whole Housing Approach?	3
3. Project delivery	6
4. Outputs and outcomes	
a. Big picture summary	10
b. Direct services to survivors	12
c. Second tier work	26
5. Learning So Far	42
a. What next?	50

What is a Whole Housing Approach?

The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) was first conceptualised in 2018 by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in collaboration with the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group.

This group brings together extensive knowledge and experience from national organisations across the housing and domestic abuse landscape. It offers recommendations and raises awareness of what policy and practice changes need to be made in order to enable victim/survivors experiencing domestic abuse to be supported appropriately. The group identified that a whole system approach was needed to effectively address the key issues and barriers experienced by survivors and to transform the housing sector's response to domestic abuse.

The WHA model offers a framework for the domestic abuse and housing sectors to work together to address the immediate and longer-term housing needs of survivors. The model incorporates the experiences of survivors, the expertise of system leaders and established, evidence-based practice, while also exploring new ground like in the private rented sector (PRS) and privately owned sector to identify how they can be part of an effective response.

“The ache for home lives in all of us. The safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.”

Maya Angelou

76% of domestic homicides take place inside the home.

Why a Whole Housing Approach?

The WHA endeavours to raise awareness of domestic abuse within all housing sectors and improve the housing options and outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse so that they can achieve stable housing, live safely and overcome the abuse and its harmful impacts.

Safe and stable housing is a core need for people living with domestic abuse. Yet for many it is often the most dangerous place with 76% of domestic homicides taking place inside the home. At the same time, the onus for relocating to achieve safety is almost always on the survivor and comes with an increased risk of homelessness and losing security of tenure.

Refuge services are vital, lifesaving services that need to operate in every locality however not every survivor will need or be able to access a refuge space. Victim/survivors need access to a multitude of pathways to secure stable and safe housing. They also need options for remaining in their existing home and relocating to new accommodation. Consideration also needs to be given to the perpetrator's housing circumstances and how this impacts on the safety of victim/survivors. Options and initiatives are needed for engaging with and holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.

The Whole Housing mission is to:



Improve access to stable housing across all housing tenure types (social, private rented and private ownership). This also considers the need for move on options from refuges, supported accommodation and any other type of temporary accommodation



Ensure access to a range of tailored housing options and initiatives to give people experiencing domestic abuse the **choice** to either relocate or remain in their existing accommodation. The full suite of housing options enables agencies and organisations to work together more collaboratively. Effective coordination efforts consider the long-term safety of the victim/survivor, as well as managing crisis situations.

Key Aims

1

Earlier identification and intervention for domestic abuse through mobilising social and private landlords and key institutions involved in private ownership;

2

A reduction in the number of people who are made homeless as a result of domestic abuse; and

3

Increased tenancy sustainment options so that people experiencing domestic abuse can remain safely in their home when it is their choice to do so, or do not lose their tenancy status if they relocate.

This includes social housing landlords taking action to remove perpetrators from properties through enforcement where appropriate and safe to do so.

The WHA approach includes 12 components



The green circles represent types of accommodation including the three main tenure types (social, private rented and private ownership) and temporary accommodation settings (refuges, supported accommodation).

The white circles are the housing options and initiatives designed specifically for domestic abuse to offer support and protection for victim/survivors and choice for remaining and relocating to new accommodation. Some of these options, like the Sanctuary Scheme are established options that local authorities and housing providers have been providing for several years. Others, like Flexible Funding and Housing First are new initiatives being introduced in the UK.

*WHA Coordination, Mobile Advocacy, Co-located Housing Advocacy

Project Delivery

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funded the first WHA pilot project over 18 months from October 2018 to March 2020, which was delivered in the following three sites:

- **Stockton-on-Tees**
- **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough**
- **Three West London Boroughs – Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Westminster**

A multi-agency project delivery team worked together to develop funded components of the WHA from concept to delivery across a range of accommodation settings and tenure types (social, private rented and privately owned).

The project delivery team included six specialist domestic abuse organisations, one civil society organisation and ten local authority areas.

The project was coordinated by three WHA project leads, one for each pilot site and responsible for the following activities:

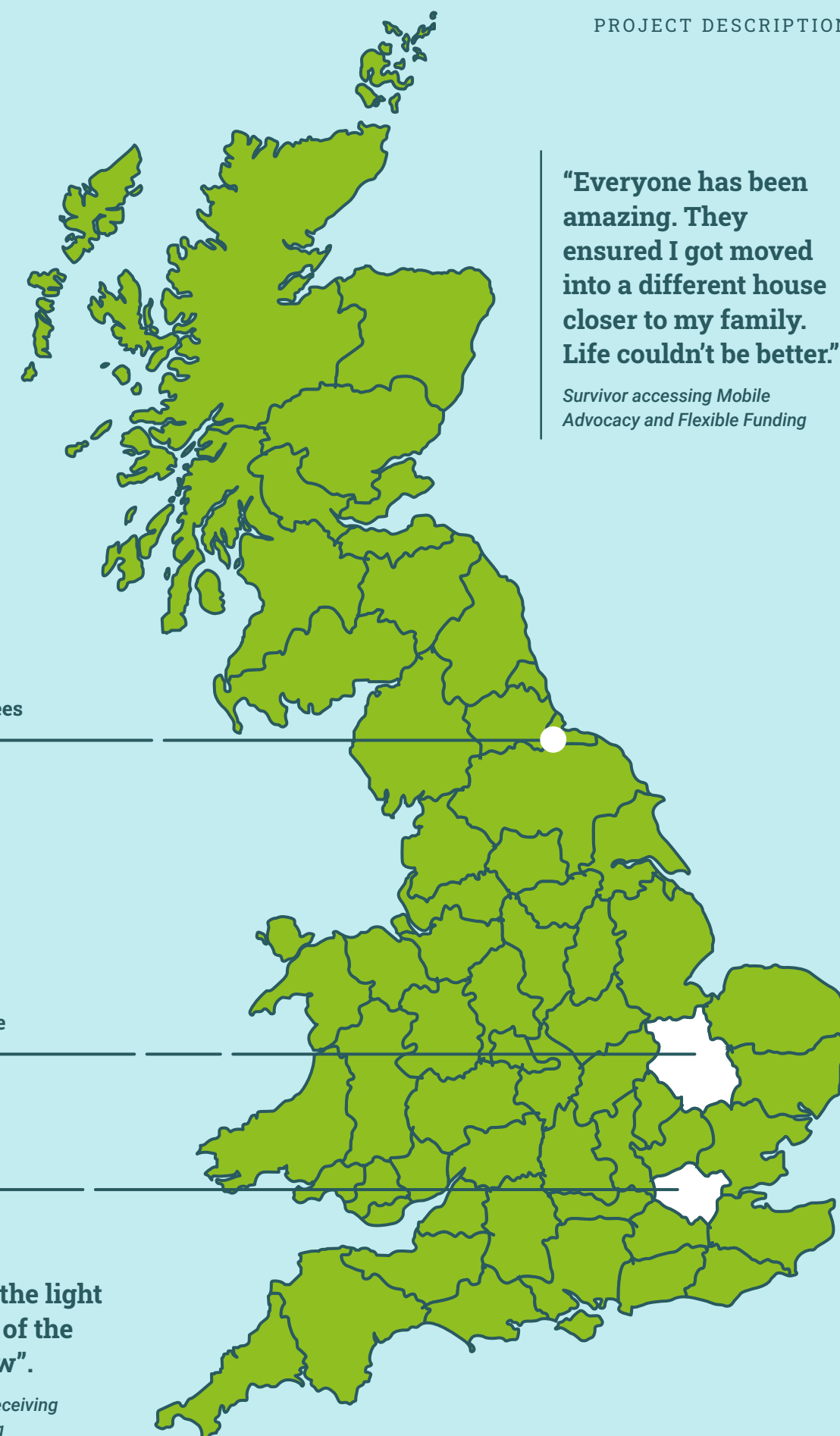
- Leading on the coordination of the Whole Housing Approach project delivery with housing professionals, organisations and professional bodies.
- Building relationships with organisations, establishing networks and developing infrastructures to improve joined up working between organisations.
- Working with individual organisations to improve their operational processes for how they identify and respond to domestic abuse.
- Collecting data and monitoring progress of housing's response to domestic abuse and evidencing the need for further actions and investment.

Funded Components

Different components of the model were delivered across the three sites. This included direct services to survivors and second-tier services to organisations and professionals:

Direct services with people experiencing domestic abuse. This work is delivered by specialist domestic abuse services. Components are highlighted in purple throughout this report to reflect this level of work.

Second tier services focused on tenure types to capacity build front line organisations to deliver effective domestic abuse responses. This work is delivered by domestic abuse coordinators. Components are highlighted in orange throughout this report to reflect this level of work.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION
DIRECT SERVICES TO SURVIVORS

The funding focused on delivering activities for the following 8 components:

Component	Delivery Partner	Description	Project Sites
Mobile Advocacy	Cambridgeshire Women's Aid	Direct service to victims/survivors, at location of their choosing including the woman's home and in a range of community settings where the service can expand their access. Support is offered to victim/survivors to secure stable housing, which includes exploring and pursuing options for remaining in an existing property and relocating if needed for safety reasons. They ideally also offer Flexible Funding (see below) to help with securing housing.	Cambridgeshire
	Refuge Cambridgeshire		London
	Advance		
Co-located Housing Advocacy	Advance	Direct service to victims/survivors who attend a housing service. In this case, a local authority housing department (homelessness service, housing solutions). They are co-located in the housing department and will support victims/survivors, offering advice on housing options and safety planning and risk management. They also offer case management support and deliver awareness raising training to staff based in these departments. They ideally also offer Flexible Funding (see below) to help with securing housing.	London (Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea)
Flexible Funding	Standing Together (London)	Direct service to victims/survivors. This is a pot of funding specifically to help with securing more stable accommodation. These funds are administered and dispensed by a domestic abuse service, ideally by the above two services. The pot is meant to be flexible and support victims/survivors to become financially independent. The most common requests relate to monies needed to sustain existing housing or to relocate and start over.	Cambridgeshire
	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Council		London
Sanctuary Scheme	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Direct service to victims/survivors offering a multi-agency, survivor centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures (Sanctuary) and support.	Stockton
	Shrievally Trust		Cambridgeshire
	Stockton-on-Tees Council		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
SECOND TIER SERVICES TO SURVIVORS

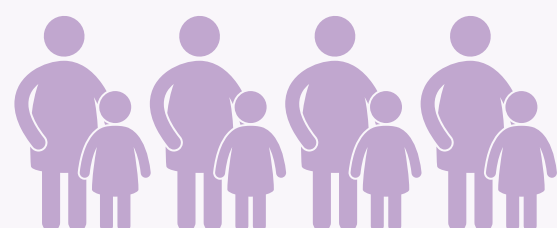
Component	Delivery Partner	Description	Project Sites
Managed Reciprocal	Safer London	A combination of direct services and second tier. This intervention starts with second tier work to improve options for victims/survivors living in social housing including local authority council housing and housing associations. Safer London established the Pan-London Reciprocal Scheme (PLRS), which helps to relocate households from DA and other forms of VAWG to move to another property and to maintain their security of tenure.	All three
Privately Owned	Surviving Economic Abuse	Second tier service focused on agencies involved in • home ownership, purchase and sale • mortgage products • family law	Nationally All three
Private Rented Sector	DAHA hosted by Standing Together	Second tier service working with national and regional membership bodies and local authority PRS teams, letting agents.	Nationally All three
DAHA for social housing	DAHA hosted by Standing Together	Second tier service working with housing associations, local authorities and supported accommodation services	Nationally All three
		The perpetrator management work focuses on positive engagement and enforcement activities that housing providers in social housing can take.	

In addition to this funding, the MHCLG also awarded funding to Standing Together and Westminster City Council to develop a **Housing First project** for women with experiences of homelessness, violence against women and girls (VAWG), and multiple disadvantage. Standing Together coordinated the project, working with housing associations that provided units of accommodation and with Solace Women's Aid who delivered specialist support to the women housed. The project is one of few women's Housing First services in England, and one of the first where support is delivered by a specialist women's service provider. As Housing First is part of the WHA model, they have been included in this report.

The delivery team produced a Whole Housing Approach Toolkit for each of the model's 12 components. This offers practical guidance and resources for local areas to implement the model locally.

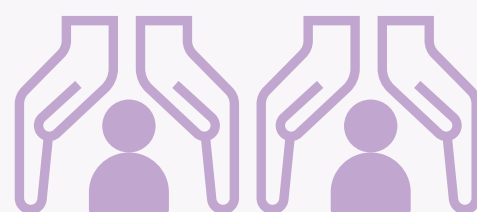
The Big Picture: Direct Services

From April 2019 to March 2020, we delivered the following activities:



**1,085 survivors and
1,056 dependent children**

were supported by **9 mobile advocates**
and **2 co-located housing advocates**.



349 Sanctuary Schemes

were installed in Cambridgeshire
and Stockton-on-Tees.



**17 referrals
received
4 successful
moves**

**A Reciprocal Scheme
was introduced in
Cambridgeshire for the first
time in May 2019.**

This enabled victim/survivors to move
across the country while retaining their
secure tenancy



**£66,935 was
awarded to
141 survivors and
185 dependent
children**

**Flexible Funding was
introduced for the first time to
help sustain and secure more
stable housing.**

Most funds helping to clear rent arrears and
debts accumulated due to financial abuse, pay
for deposits and other move on costs and for
household items after relocation.

The Big Picture: Second Tier Services to Survivors

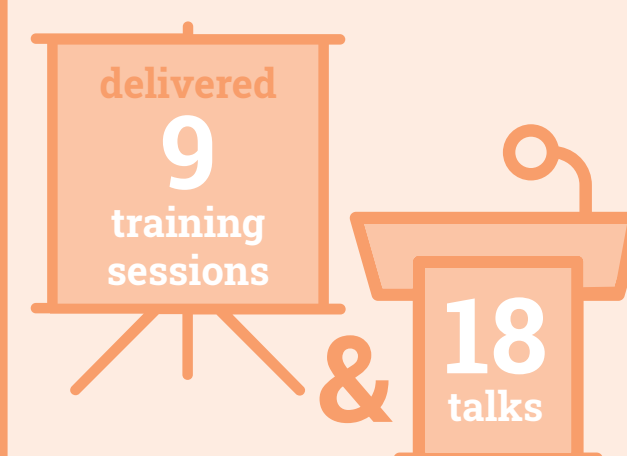
From April 2019 to March 2020, we delivered the following activities:

**The Privately Owned Housing Officer
employed by Surviving Economic Abuse**



**facilitated
72 meetings
with
stakeholders.**

**The Private Rented Sector DAHA
Development Manager**



Awareness was also raised through media
activities such as newsletter articles, a podcast
and guidance produced for landlords on how they
can offer a helpful response.

Across the three sites, DAHA delivered:

15 workshops



Support to
9 housing providers
working towards accreditation

Assessments with
2 housing providers
who were awarded DAHA
accreditation



DIRECT SERVICES TO SURVIVORS



Mobile Advocacy

The mobile advocates offer direct support to victim/survivors at a location of their choosing including their home. They also deliver services at a range of community settings to offer a more accessible service, particularly for rural areas.

The support offered is broad and based on what the victim/survivors wants help with. This often includes helping victim/survivors who are facing homelessness and to secure more stable housing, which includes exploring and pursuing options for remaining in an existing property and relocating if needed for safety reasons.

1,085 survivors and 1,056 dependent children

were supported by 10 mobile advocates and 2 co-located housing advocates from April 2019 to March 2020

“Everyone has been amazing. They ensured I got moved into a different house closer to my family. Life couldn’t be better.”

Survivor supported by a mobile advocate, flexible finding and a local sanctuary scheme as part of Whole Housing

Cambridgeshire Women's Aid	Refuge Cambridgeshire	Advance in London
3 mobile advocates	4 mobile advocates	1 mobile advocate and 1 housing support worker
431 survivors and 384 children supported	502 survivors and 555 dependent children supported	46 survivors and 117 dependent children supported

A Mobile Advocate's experience of supporting Ellie*

Ellie is a 46-year-old woman who first accessed our Mobile Advocacy team in 2018. At the time, she lived in a private rented property with her husband and their two children. The tenancy was in her husband's sole name. Ellie's husband was emotionally abusive towards her on a daily basis.

Ellie wanted to apply for social housing but was unsure of how to begin. She needed financial support to start over. I offered emotional support, listened to Ellie's story, asked her what support she needed and completed periodic risk assessments to monitor the level of danger her husband posed. We used this information to co-create a safety and support plan. And talked through the harmful impacts domestic abuse had on her.

I explained Ellie's housing options to her. Ellie's child had additional needs due to a disability, and subsequently felt refuge accommodation was not appropriate. She wanted to keep her children's routine as stable as possible to prevent further distress and disruption to their lives. She wanted to remain in her local area so her children could continue attending the same schools.

I worked with Ellie to open her own bank account, set up her own email address and submit a homeless application to the local authority. Technology safety was regularly discussed and reviewed. The Housing Service told Ellie that they would only support her with a move out of the area. I explained Ellie's wish to remain in the area due to her child's additional support needs and impact of being removed from his school's support system.

Ellie had spent years putting in place the school's support for her children. She was worried about having to start over and the potential negative impact on her child's learning development. The housing service agreed to rehouse Ellie in her local area. I successfully advocated for her to be given the highest priority (Band A), making reference to the MHCLG's statutory guidance on [Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges or Other Types of Temporary Accommodation](#).

Ellie quickly bid on, and was offered a property. We created a safety plan for a safe move, including packing and moving into the new property whilst her husband was at work. I also supported Ellie to access Flexible Funding to help with moving costs and the purchase of household items so she could set up her new home. Without this, Ellie said she would not have been able to afford to make the move and would have to stay with her husband.

Once Ellie was settled, I referred her to the local Bobby Scheme (Sanctuary Scheme). Extra locks were fitted to her doors, as well as window alarms and an external letter box that was fitted. A door chime was also installed to her front door, alerting her when someone enters her property. Ellie said these extra security measures made her feel safe at home. I accompanied the security installer to Ellie's property and while they fitted the security devices, I met with Ellie and we came up with a plan for how drops offs at the children's school could be done as safely as possible for her.

Ellie and I then met every fortnight to talk about her husband's continued abuse towards her. He was now seeking contact with the children through family court proceedings. Ellie has grown in confidence and expresses gratitude for the support she received from all agencies involved. She has been able to successfully move into her own property in her local area whilst remaining safe and living free of fear and rebuilding her confidence and life with her children.

*Names have been changed to protect the identity of survivors

Co-located Housing Advocacy

Advance has operated a co-located housing advocacy service in Hammersmith and Fulham Council's Housing Solutions service since 2007. This project introduced two co-located Housing Advocates in Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Council's Housing Solutions Service for the first time.

Co-located Housing Advocates offer direct support to survivors who present to the housing service as homeless due to domestic abuse. This includes gathering information to support their housing application, co-creating safety plans, and offering education and information about domestic abuse. They also offer advice and guidance to staff based in these departments to support their own case work and deliver training to increase awareness and upskill the department's response to domestic abuse.

From April 2019 to March 2020

106 survivors

were offered specialist domestic abuse support from the two co-located Housing Advocates.

57 survivors

were supported in Westminster

49 survivors

were supported in Kensington and Chelsea

Housing staff received consultancy and case management support for

115 cases and 157 staff

received training on domestic abuse awareness across the three London project sites.

“The Housing Advocate is supportive and flexible in her approach. She is the expert and we're glad we have her here to guide us in improving the way we respond to domestic abuse”

Housing Officer

“Having a Housing Advocate present is a helpful resource as people experiencing domestic abuse are able to receive specialist expert advice and support, whilst allowing Housing Officers to focus on the client's housing needs”

Housing Officer

A Co-Located Housing Advocate's experience of supporting Shelly*

Shelly self-referred to Advance, seeking support due to experiencing emotional and financial abuse from her now ex-partner of 6 years. Shelly was living in a rented property that she shared with her ex-partner. They had a joint tenancy however her ex-partner had managed the tenancy. Shelly didn't know how to make contact with her landlord and because her ex-partner controlled all of the finances, including their joint bank account, she had no control over rent payments.

Shelley moved in with a friend on a temporary basis. She also found a job in a nursery and worked ad-hoc in her chosen profession as a photographer. Shelly was earning and had access to her own money for the first time since leaving her ex-partner.

I supported Shelly to open a bank account in her own name that the perpetrator did not know about and could not access. I also helped her apply for Universal Credit so that she could maximise her income.

Shelly wanted to live independently with her daughter. She was a European national, so I supported her with making an application for permanent residency. I also went through her housing options and gathered information and helped prepare her homeless application for temporary accommodation and social housing.

Shelly was awarded her right to remain in the UK and now has permanent residency. The Housing Advice Service assessed that Shelly was owed a duty and was placed in temporary accommodation. Shelley is now bidding for social housing.

With Shelly's awareness and agreement, I referred her to Children's Services as she had a young daughter who had witnessed the abuse. Her daughter has autism and Shelly was her primary and only carer and wanted to find out what other support she could put in place for her daughter.

I also supported Shelly to apply for a Non-Molestation Order.

Since accessing our service, Shelley reports having more awareness and insight into what's happened to her and has a better understanding of her rights. Shelly shared that she was made to feel at ease after meeting with me as I understood her circumstances and was able to help her with what she needed, which was finding a safe home for her and her daughter.



*Names have been changed to protect the identity of survivors

Flexible Funding

This component of Whole Housing is inspired by the work of Professor Cris Sullivan and her colleagues at the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The group developed the Domestic Violence Housing First approach and toolkit, which focuses on getting survivors into stable housing as quickly as possible and providing support to help rebuild their lives. This includes offering Flexible Funding financial support via their Mobile Advocacy services.

Flexible Funding is a designated funding pot that specialist domestic abuse services, like Mobile Advocacy and Co-Located Housing Advocacy, can access quickly and easily to help survivors retain or establish housing stability and safety. Flexible Funding gives domestic abuse advocates a tool to help survivors alongside the advocacy services they offer including safety planning, emotional support, offering advice and information on options and practical advocacy with other services.

The impacts of economic abuse and the costs associated with leaving a perpetrator and starting over can limit a survivor's choices, potentially leaving them with no choice but to remain with the perpetrator. Maintaining existing or accessing new housing is even more challenging where a perpetrator has interfered with rental, mortgage or utility payments or has caused damaged to the property.

Flexible Funding aims to provide a more equitable and accessible solution to financial crises that may otherwise spiral into homelessness or leave a survivor trapped with their perpetrator. It is low-barrier and does not require survivors to provide evidence of abuse. Because economic abuse takes many forms, there is no set list of what will be funded. Survivors in the pilot were encouraged to ask for whatever will make the most difference to their housing situation and their safety in the short and long term.

Funds can be used in a variety of ways, including helping someone pay back rent or mortgage arrears, paying for new clothing required for employment searches or purchasing household items that were damaged or needed for a new home.

“I have changed area, and consequently all the benefits stopped as well, so this money came just in time, it will help us a lot”

Victim/survivor

“It's something she's doing for herself... it's something that's going to make her feel more like her again.” Flexible funding enabled the survivor to buy a laptop to complete studies through the Open University.”

Mobile Advocate who helped a survivor to access Flexible Funding

Flexible Funding was offered in Cambridgeshire and London by the local domestic abuse services to survivors who were either at risk of losing their current housing or were homeless

From April 2019 to March 2020, we delivered:



Cambridgeshire

Total funds available: **£40k**



Flexible Funding was awarded to **93 survivors** and **146 dependent children**

The **average sized grant was £450** (range from £60 to £1,669)

Of the **93 grants**,
4% were for educational costs,
29% was for rental assistance and deposits,
17% for home essentials,
46% for other needs such as legal costs



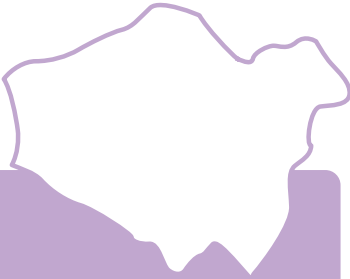


Of the **survivors supported**,
100% were female
30% were from a black and minority ethnic group (where data provided).

“It has made an invaluable difference to our lives”
Victim/survivor

“Once she knew that she would have carpets installed in her new home, it improved her mental health”
Mobile Advocate who helped a survivor to access Flexible Funding

“My ex-partner trashed the house, urinated everywhere, I had to get rid of everything, With Flexible Funding I was able to buy furniture. They were really nice, lovely, fantastic, I thought they would be all looking down on me. They delivered it and put in the right rooms. I could start again. I wasn't allowed to decorate before. I got everything I liked that I knew he wouldn't. I got power back. Makes it feel like my own.”
Victim/Survivor



London

Total funds available: **£30k**



Flexible Funding was awarded to **48 survivors** and **39 dependent children**

The **average sized grant was £565** (range from £12 to £2,123)

Of the **48 grants**,
4% were for educational costs,
17% was for rental assistance and deposits,
46% for home essentials,
33% for basic needs





Of the **survivors supported**,
100% were female.
56% were from a black and minority ethnic group.
25% had No Recourse to Public Funds.

“Now I can see light at the end of the tunnel”
Victim/survivor

“The survivor felt like she was not dependent on the perpetrator anymore, even though he told her she could not get by without him. As she said, ‘I proved him wrong.’”
Mobile Advocate who helped a survivor to access Flexible Funding

“Flexible Funding has kept me motivated. If you know you have this to fall back on, you can better handle hard decisions better. IDVAs burn out when you get knocked back and feel like you've been told no too many times. Being able to offer this to women has been really motivating.”
Mobile Advocate who helped a survivor to access Flexible Funding

“For clients, I think knowing that someone is there to help stop them hitting the big red switch of “I'm just going to screw everything up in my life because no one cares”.”
Mobile Advocate who helped a survivor to access Flexible Funding

Raina's* story

Raina was recovering from a stomach operation and living in a night shelter when she applied for Flexible Funding. She was unable to work as she was in the UK on a visitor visa, which had recently expired. Her ex-partner had consistently told her that she would not survive without him. Flexible Funding enabled her to secure temporary accommodation where she was able to recover in a safe, secure environment and seek legal advice.

With the support of her domestic abuse worker, Raina went on to secure her immigration status, gain employment and secure stable housing. She also made improvements in her health following her operation. As Raina said, she has 'proved her ex-partner wrong.'



*Names have been changed to protect the identity of survivors

Sanctuary Scheme

A **Sanctuary Scheme** 'enables households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures (Sanctuary) and support'.¹

A **Sanctuary** is 'a property where security measures have been installed in order that households at risk of domestic violence are able to remain safely in their own accommodation if they choose to do so'.²

While there is no typical installation, a Sanctuary Scheme should include a range of security measures (not simply a lock change) that reinforces the perimeter (including all easily accessible doors and windows as a standard) and interior of the property (**Sanctuary Safe Room**.)

“Extremely happy with the work, the guys who came were professional and I now feel so much safer it has eased my anxiety levels”

Victim/survivor

A Sanctuary Safe Room is defined as 'replacing a door to a main room, often the bedroom, with a solid core door. The Sanctuary Safe Room door is reversed to open outwards; the frame is reinforced, additional locks and bolts, substantial hinges and a door viewer are fitted. This provides a safe room where household members can call and wait safely for the police'.³

A Local Sanctuary Scheme should be delivered in partnership with a specialist domestic abuse service. This enables Sanctuary measures to form part of a wider safety and support planning package. The scheme aims to increase the physical and perceived sense of safety of survivors and prevents homelessness, giving survivors choice to remain in their home when they want to and it continues to be safe to do so.

A Sanctuary Scheme service was funded in Cambridgeshire and Stockton.

Stockton-on-Tees 'Safe at Home' scheme

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has delivered a Sanctuary Scheme entitled 'Safe at Home' since 2010. In Stockton-on-Tees, all agencies and individuals can make a referral to the Safe at Home Scheme; referrals are initially made through the local specialist domestic abuse services, police officers and the social services department are then directed to the scheme via Cleveland Police Crime Prevention Unit.

PROJECT IMPACT
DIRECT SERVICES TO SURVIVORS

All referrals then receive an assessment visit from a Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) from the Police Crime Preventions unit, who books in a home visit to inspect the property and makes a recommendation of security works. The Safe at Home team within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council then arranges an appointment with the survivor to install the security measures.

The Safe at Home Scheme aims to be an early intervention response to domestic abuse. It also gives victim/survivors the option to remain in their own homes when it is their choice to do so. It can also reduce and prevent further abuse, which in the long run reduces demand on other agencies such as emergency services and domestic abuse services.

In 2019/20



We installed **38 Safe at Home Sanctuary Schemes** including



44 school children living in the households



It took an average of **2 working days** from referral to installation



At an average cost of **£125 per Sanctuary**

“I feel so much safer and it has made a difference”

Survivor

“Life changing”

Survivor

“I feel safer knowing I’m in my home”

Survivor

“I am extremely happy with the work, the installers were professional and now I feel so much safer, It has eased my anxiety levels.”

Survivor

“The locks were changed so quickly, I now feel so much safer. My anxiety has reduced. I’m the only one with the keys.”

Survivor

PROJECT IMPACT
DIRECT SERVICES TO SURVIVORS

Cambridgeshire Bobby Scheme

The Bobby Scheme was established in 2001 by the Cambridgeshire Police Shrievally Trust, which is a registered charity formed in 1999 to improve community safety in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Bobby Scheme’s initial aim was to reduce crime and fear of crime in older, vulnerable and disabled people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. In October 2011, the Bobby Scheme extended to include securing the homes of domestic abuse survivors, helping them to feel safe and allowing them and their children to remain in their own homes rather than go into a refuge service.

The Bobby Scheme receives referrals from housing providers, domestic abuse and sexual violence services, local authority departments and other charities, as well as from the police across the entire region. They employ a dedicated coordinator, who is trained in domestic abuse awareness and has responsibility for processing all referrals into the service. The Trust also employs two surveyors who are former police officers and whose role it is to assess the property and install the Sanctuary works.

In 2019/20



We installed **311 Safe at Home Sanctuary Schemes** including



449 school children living in the households



It took an average of **3 working days** from referral to installation



At an average cost of **£200 per Sanctuary**

The following quote is from a Mobile Advocate in Cambridgeshire

“Our local Bobby had finished for the day and at the last minute the phone rang, the call was from a Mobile Advocate who explained to the Bobby that she had a client who required an urgent visit. Both the victim/survivor and mobile advocate had been notified that the offender/perpetrator was being released from prison the next day, leaving the victim/survivor in a state of distress and extremely vulnerable. The Bobby lived close to the area therefore he could be at the victim/survivor’s property within half an hour. The Bobby met the mobile advocate within two hours of the appointment being made. The property was assessed and security measures installed, securing the home on the same day. This included securing the perimeter of the property, changing all of the locks and fitting window and door alarms. While the property was being assessed and security measures installed, the mobile advocate remained with the victim/survivor to offer safety planning and emotional support.

The victim/survivor reported feeling considerably safer to remain at home. The next day the perpetrator was released from prison and went straight to the address but was unable to gain entry due to additional security measures being installed on the front door”

Lily’s* story

‘I experienced bad domestic violence in a property before this one. I was nearly left for dead. I had to leave there and move to this one. He saw the new property, but I didn’t want to move again. The police told me what I could have, the domestic violence police. They told me about a panic alarm. I wanted [sanctuary scheme] so I would be able to sleep at night. I was worried about the front door, the main door to the building, it would have been easy to kick off, so I went to the council. They said that it is a communal door so nothing can be done. So, I went to the police instead (Bobby Scheme). The main door is better than it was now. My flat door has more locks and a spy hole. I didn’t have to move out as they came the next day to do the work. The person who came, they gave me a panic alarm. The person who did the work was really helpful. He put locks on the back window.

I had to call the police to tell them I thought he found out where I was. I had to call twice this time, once then and once when he attacked me before. I had to call the police a few times several years ago for the same man. I haven’t had to call the police at all since.’



*Names have been changed to protect the identity of survivors

SECOND TIER SERVICES TO SURVIVORS



Managed Reciprocals Moves

The Pan London Reciprocal is a voluntary collaboration between local authorities and registered housing providers to move people from one social housing tenancy to another. Its purpose is to prevent homelessness for victim/survivors fleeing all forms of violence against women including domestic abuse.

Safer London established the reciprocal scheme in London in 2016 and as part of this project, continued its success by replicating the Managed Reciprocal moves model by establishing a reciprocal scheme in the Cambridgeshire Whole Housing Pilot. This comprised of 16 housing providers, including 10 housing associations and the 6 district counties that make up Cambridgeshire and Peterborough forming the Cambridge Managed Reciprocal. Safer London provided coordination support one day a week, bringing together local housing providers to sign up to a Memorandum of Understanding. They helped to establish pathways and local protocols, and embed local procedures in order to facilitate moves and monitor the project.

The Cambridgeshire Managed Reciprocal introduced an innovative component by opening the option of relocating perpetrators if it is deemed safe and in the best interest of the survivor to do so. This allows survivors to remain in their home and is a quicker process as it is often easier to identify a property for a single person than a family.

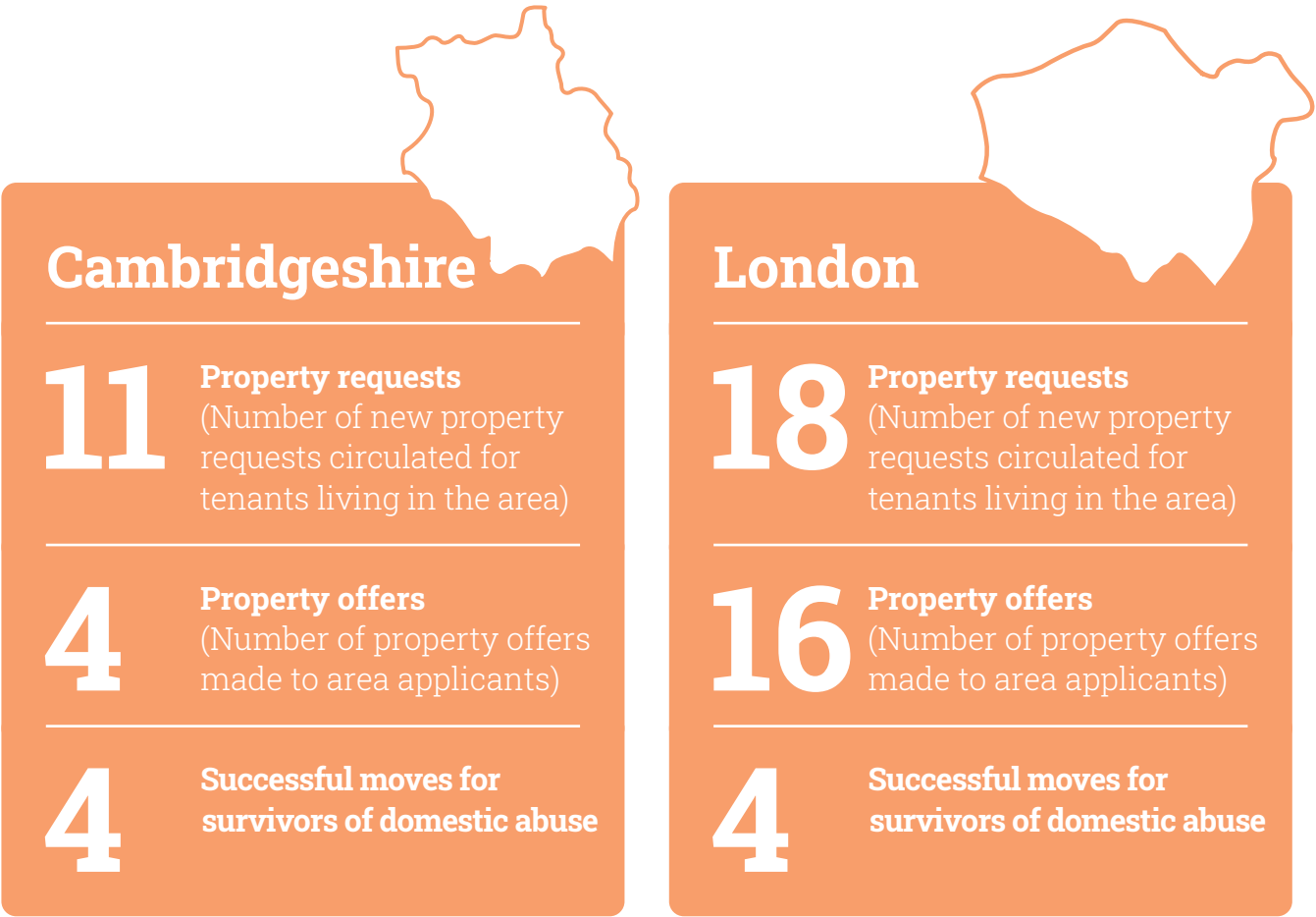
Focused work also took place in Stockton which resulted in recommendations being made to enhance an existing and performing Choice-Based Lettings scheme to better meet the specific needs of survivors. This included flagging moves relating to domestic abuse and embedding procedures for offering survivors the option of a referral to their local domestic abuse service and checking if they needed a Sanctuary Scheme in their new home.

Focused work in the three London boroughs saw an increase in the number of properties offered by each borough and an increase in the number of moves compared to the previous year. In London, the coordination of managed reciprocals was also supported with funding from MOPAC.

“I do feel safer because I can now walk out and take my dog for a walk and not worry who is around. I’m not getting death threats anymore and feel more relaxed in the new home and area.”

Cambridgeshire Applicant

From April 2019 to March 2020, we delivered:



“Before the house move I was getting daily calls from my client in distress and to report incidents and off load worries and stresses, however now we are able to plan interventions, signpost to other support networks and client has become much more independent.”

Mobile Advocate in Cambridgeshire

“The housing reciprocal allowed my client to continue with her daily routines in a safe space with the potential of [the perpetrator] turning up at her property or running into her in the local area much reduced. This gave her a reinforced sense of safety and reduced her anxieties around unexpected encounters.”

Mobile Advocate in Cambridgeshire

London:

‘The project gave us the opportunity to pro-actively engage with housing providers and local authorities in these boroughs via meetings and a workshop in Q4 for housing leads and local VAWG services. This was really beneficial to support the overall functioning of the scheme, both for social tenants from these boroughs and for external tenants who would be safe to relocate in any of these three boroughs. Pro-active engagement with landlords and local authorities is something that the PLHR team does not have capacity to do in all London boroughs.

Support from the Three-boroughs VAWG Coordinator and Local Authority WHA representatives was instrumental in identifying new contacts in the housing departments to improve engagement.

Working with the local VAWG provider Advance and providing training to their staff was also useful to initiate referrals for clients they support in these boroughs.’

Domestic Abuse and Housing Policy Manager

Privately Owned Homes

Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) is the only UK charity dedicated to raising awareness of economic abuse and transforming responses to it. Building upon existing work with banks and building societies, SEA delivered the programme of work with the privately owned sector through a dedicated Privately Owned Housing (POH) Advocate who developed and delivered the first project of this kind.

The focus of this project included scoping the homeowner landscape. Desktop research and consultations with survivors during the planning stages was undertaken to better understand the issues faced. This led to identifying the three key systems through which abuse takes place:

- 1. Home purchase and sale
- 2. Mortgage lending
- 3. Family law response

Awareness raising and capacity building work was undertaken, on both a national level and in the three pilot sites. Mapping and relationship building with stakeholders commenced, focusing on the above priority areas.

“As a MARAC chair I’m thinking about economic abuse, coercive control and the findings from DHRs. I think all MARAC chairs need to know about this and practitioners need to know to inform referrals made on their professional judgement”

Feedback from professional attending the training

“As a frontline domestic abuse support worker in Middlesbrough I found this training highly informative and relevant to my role. It has built upon my current knowledge of economic abuse particularly relating to coercive control. The trainer was very knowledgeable and helped me to reflect on this form of abuse in different ways. I will circulate to my colleagues to raise awareness of this training and the organisations we can access for support around economic abuse. Many thanks”

Feedback from professional attending the training

“There is so much that housing can do to help survivors, particularly with regard to arrears. I will go back to my housing team and share the information to the teams”

Feedback from professional attending the training

From April 2019 to March 2020, the following activities were delivered:



The Specialist POH worker engaged multiple platforms to promote the work of WHA and improve responses to domestic abuse and housing. This included:

- Weekly reviews of survivor emails with the SEA advocacy team to inform direction of the project and keep abreast of the issues survivors' experienced, offering support and signposting where possible.
- Ongoing contact with SEA's Expert by Experience Group members within the mortgages subgroup to inform the project.
- Private housing working group meetings held with DAHA Private Rented Sector Development Manager to join up work where priorities overlapped.

Example of POH Advocacy work with a survivor

A domestic abuse advocate working in one of the pilot sites contacted SEA, as they were supporting a survivor who was facing criminal charges in relation to economic abuse. The survivor had been advised by her solicitor to plead guilty, it was highly likely that she would have gone to prison, lost her home and her child. SEA's POH Advocate shared guidance and provided a supporting letter to the survivor's specialist domestic abuse worker. As a result, the Crown Prosecution Service decided to drop the charges following advocacy.

- Several national media pieces focusing on economic abuse and mortgages: Sunday Times, Refinery29, Reform, The Guardian and The Independent.
- Worked with local domestic abuse services in the pilot to raise awareness of economic abuse and homeowner rights. The domestic abuse advocates reached within this project began proactively advocating with the financial and debt sectors, contacting SEA for guidance where needed. This showed an increased confidence to engage with these vital stakeholders, knowing that this is within their 'remit' and capabilities, and bridged a gap of support for survivors.

Private Rented Sector

Building on the work of a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Private Rented Sector (PRS) project launched in 2017, a PRS DAHA Development Manager, continued to deliver pioneering work with the main landlord professional bodies in the UK including the RLA (who have now merged with the NLA to become the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA)) and the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA). Collaborative efforts to raise awareness with private landlords, letting agents and the property management sector occurred through a variety of media including social media, training and presentations delivered to professional bodies. Resources were developed to cater to different stakeholder audiences.

The focus of this project enabled further mapping of the PRS in England and engagement with the national membership bodies. It introduced for the first time work at a local level with the three local authorities which are operating the WHA pilot sites: Stockton-on-Tees, Cambridgeshire and three London Boroughs (Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham).

As a result of the training

91% trained

have better understanding of domestic abuse

97% trained

feel equipped to take safe action to respond to domestic abuse

The following quotes are from participants attending the training:

“Very Informative Course, Materials and content were presented excellently”

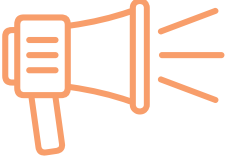
“Great input I learnt a lot”

“Excellent course. Very well presented”

“Very useful training & opportunity to work jointly to raise awareness of this important topic in the private rented sector”

“The training was really informative and part of it really hit home. More needs to be done to tackle DA.”

From April 2019 to March 2020, the following activities were delivered:



Media work:

- 3 newsletters**
reaching ~1,000 landlords in Cambridgeshire
- 1 article**
for Eastern Landlords Magazine reaching ~1,000 landlords
- 1 Podcast**
for the National Landlords Association (now the National Residential Landlords Association), the second most played podcast on the NLA's SoundCloud



Resource production:

- Domestic Abuse Guidance for Landlords in the Private Sector**
circulated in the pilot sites to ~1,500 private landlords
- PRS factsheet for domestic abuse services**
draft circulated to DA services in Cambridgeshire to support their advocacy efforts
- An e-book for letting agents**
was co-created with Fixflo, a repairs and maintenance management service provider who created property software designed to enable tenants to report repairs to a letting agent

“The training helped us as repair operatives have a greater understanding of domestic abuse and be vigilant in looking for signs. Now, if we think someone is suffering abuse, we report it to our line manager so that this can be sent to the right team in the council”

Operative from the Building and Heating, Ventilation and Electrical Services at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation support (DAHA)

The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance’s (DAHA) is a partnership between three agencies who are leaders in innovation to address domestic abuse within housing: Standing Together, Peabody and Gentoo.

Founded in 2014 in recognition of the important role that housing providers play in the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to domestic abuse. DAHA’s mission is to improve the housing sector’s response to domestic abuse and one of the ways it does this is through an accreditation scheme, which offers housing providers a framework and benchmark for how they can respond effectively to domestic abuse. The standards consist of eight priority areas (policies and procedures, case management, risk management, inclusivity and accessibility, perpetrator management, partnership working, staff training, and publicity and awareness) and when embedded, reflect that housing services and providers are on their way to delivering an effective and safe response to domestic abuse.

A home in which someone feels safe is vital and the housing sector is ideally placed to identify, recognise and prevent domestic abuse in their properties.

A DAHA Development Manager was employed for Cambridgeshire to work with local authority housing services and housing associations.

From April 2019 to March 2020

- 5 housing providers initiated the process of implementing DAHA accreditation standards
- 2 providers achieved accreditation, including CHS and Cambridge City Council
- 12 workshops were delivered and attended by over 200 housing providers. These workshops offer guidance on how to implement the 8 priority areas
- 3 local domestic abuse and housing operational group meetings were held to promote a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) and connect providers to work together to implement DAHA’s standards.

Benefits of DAHA in the words of an accredited local authority housing service:

‘...all of the accreditation work has created a stronger platform to enable our officers to believe survivors and I think this is the critical point; the measures we have put in place take us ‘beyond belief’. I do not think the desire to believe was ever in question. Advisors pointed to the importance of extending appointments to 1 hour and 45 minutes so that they can invest time in assessing customers who have experienced domestic abuse and that the assessment is not just concerning homelessness but is a safety and safeguarding assessment too. As a result, the number of homeless applications taken has risen significantly since advisors have been completing domestic abuse risk assessments (DASHs); from 44 in 2018 to 76 in 2019.’

‘We have made huge strides in working with our partners at the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors (IDVA) service and Cambridge Women’s Aid in particular. I am under no illusions that we will continue to disagree on occasions but our partnerships in this sphere seem much more collaborative now and we are receiving customer feedback assistance from both partners.’

‘All our housing advisors and officers now aim to complete a risk assessment for every applicant (we have completed 46 in the last 12 months) or tenant we believe to be experiencing domestic abuse. On occasions, this has enabled officers to assure our customer that what they are experiencing is abuse, when previously they had not considered it as such. A positive by-product of completing a risk assessment is that asking applicants to evidence abuse via crime reference numbers, for example, no longer seems so important.’

Housing First

Housing First is a housing and support approach which:

- Provides a stable home for people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs so they can rebuild their lives,
- Provides intensive, person-centred, holistic support that is open-ended,
- Places no conditions on individuals; however, they should desire to have a tenancy.

The Housing First approach was first developed in New York and has now been widely adopted in the USA, Canada, Denmark, Finland and France. Since 2010, a growing number of local areas in England have established Housing First services to try and meet the needs of their homeless population. It is an evidence-based intervention that is proven to successfully support people with repeat histories of homelessness who experience multiple disadvantages, helping them into independent and stable accommodation. In the UK the majority of Housing First projects use scattered accommodation, meaning that clients live independently in private rented sector (PRS) or social housing in the community rather than in congregate, self-contained accommodation. The scaling up of Housing First has been widely recommended as part of a housing-led system that can help to end homelessness and the government has funded three demonstration pilots across England to expand and test the approach.⁴

The majority of Housing First services across England are mixed gender, which is reflective of homelessness provision more widely. Homelessness data shows higher numbers of homeless men than women nationally, which has resulted in provision largely designed around men's needs. However, recent research has highlighted the methodological limitations in how data on homelessness is gathered, and that women are likely to be among the uncaptured 'hidden' homeless population.⁵ This is problematic as it means that most homelessness provision does not recognise women's gender specific needs, and results in them going largely unsupported.

Crucially, research has highlighted how the Housing First model lends itself well to being adapted for certain groups, e.g. women by adopting gender-informed practices.⁶ Including specialist domestic abuse services in these partnerships is crucial to this process.

The Westminster VAWG Housing First Project

In 2017 Standing Together and Westminster City Council were awarded MHCLG funding for a Housing First and Homelessness Coordinator role. The Coordinator spent a year laying the groundwork for establishing a Housing First project for women who have experienced homelessness, any form of VAWG, and multiple disadvantage.

Further funding was secured for a partnership project between Westminster City Council, Solace Women's Aid and housing associations including Women's Pioneer Housing, L&Q, Peabody and Southern Housing. The partnership, known as the Westminster VAWG Housing First project, started taking referrals in Spring 2019 and was one of the first Housing First services in England to be delivered by a specialist domestic abuse support provider in the women's sector ([Solace Women's Aid](#)).

Support is delivered by two Housing First workers from Solace Women's Aid who support up to ten women at any one time. They work to engage and build relationships with the women, support them to access a permanent, independent tenancy, and then provide intensive support to help them maintain that tenancy, and address other aspects such as their physical, and mental wellbeing. As research has shown that violence and abuse is a universal experience for women accessing Housing First projects, this project particularly benefits from the involvement of specialist women's sector provider Solace Women's Aid, who have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide specialist support around domestic abuse and VAWG.

Housing was initially provided by Peabody, London and Quadrant and Southern Housing Group who partner with the project on a service level agreement basis. Subsequently Women's Pioneer Housing Association also signed up to provide housing for the project.

Standing Together provide project support as well as coordinating and growing partnerships with registered social landlords (RSLs).

Key outcomes achieved from August 2019 to March 2020

In total 10 women were supported by the project. All the women supported by the project had been rough sleeping for a considerable length of time, and the majority had had children removed from their care. This type of negative past experience often results in women's trust in services and support to be quite low.

- **On engagement** – 90% are engaging with the project. 70% of women were supported to make reports to the police over historical and current domestic abuse, with one perpetrator being recalled to prison.
- **On tenancy sustainment** – 9 women nominated, of those 60% were offered housing and 50% have moved into an independent tenancy with a 100% sustainment rate.
- **On health and wellbeing** - 90% of the women were supported to register with a GP. 50% of the women had shown improvements in terms of mental health, reasons given include being inside after a long period of street homelessness, and engagement with a psychologist. 60% of the women were supported to access drug and alcohol services, with 3 women starting a methadone prescription and maintaining it, some for the first time in many months.

Key project stakeholders are the four registered social landlords who provide the units which house the women. These are Peabody, London and Quadrant, Southern Housing and Women's Pioneer Housing respectively.

Feedback from registered social landlords picked up on three clear themes:

1. RSLs have a good understanding of the Housing First model and their role in the partnership

“I receive nominations to identify suitable properties within Peabody stock to offer as potential units and manage the lettings team who conduct the viewing and sign ups of the properties. Also liaising with internal departments to agree extra works in units.”

2. Good communication is valued

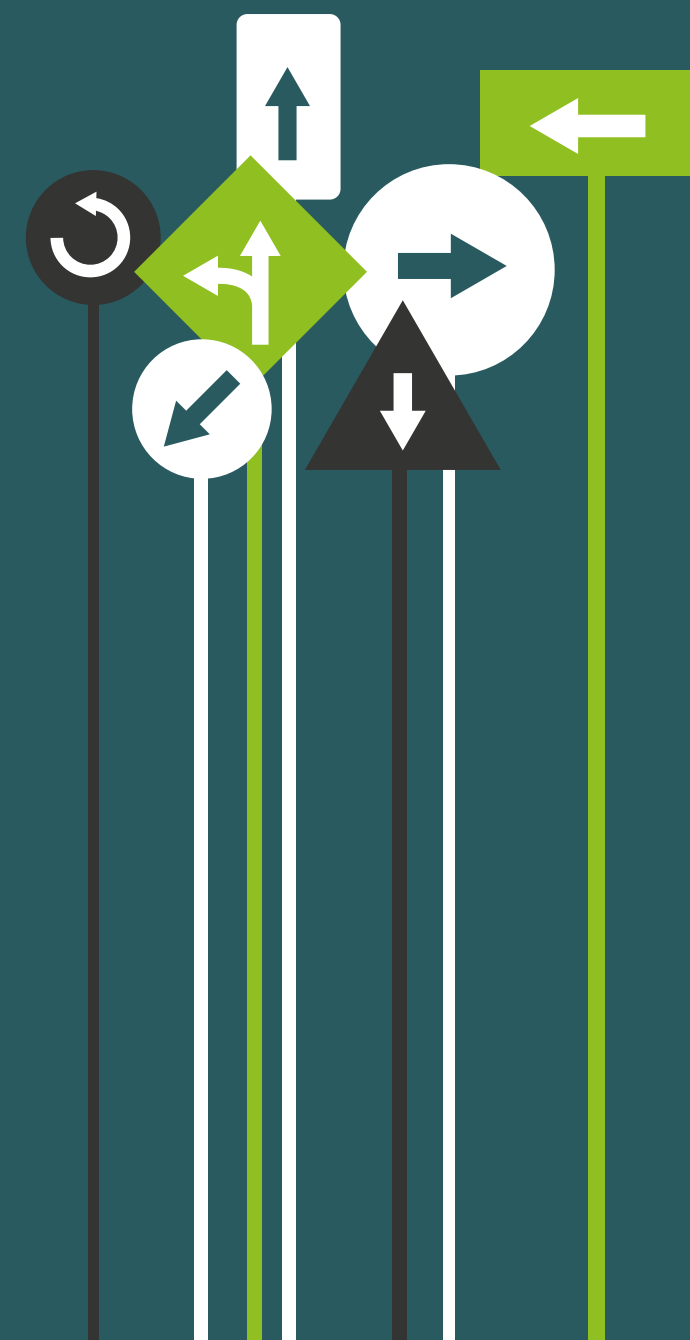
“Partnership working and having regular meetings and briefings on the project. It is good to see everyone is on board and recognises the value in what is trying to be achieved.”

3. Identifying suitable properties/property availability is a challenge

“Having to deal with other competing demands (for units)”

“Our biggest challenge is being able to identify suitable homes – with lockdown, what has come up in the suitable boroughs has been limited.”

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS



Learning So Far

Each component of the WHA can be implemented as a standalone initiative that creates impactful results for survivors. Often survivors will need multiple components to achieve safety and independence. Positive outcomes were achieved when a combination of WHA components were delivered as part of the one intervention.

The following three case studies best exemplify this. All three case studies are based on survivors supported through the pilot, which included the provision of domestic abuse advocacy support and flexible funding.

A **cost-benefit analysis** has been applied to each case study, the results of which are persuasive in showing that harmful outcomes were likely prevented for each case with a potential total savings of **£68,545.8** to the public purse. A certainty level of 70% was added to account for risk and uncertainty, which is in line with a certainty level applied by local authorities in the WHA pilot sites for other projects. This is an allowance for outcomes of “what would have happened anyway” without the WHA intervention. This meant applying a 30% reduction from the total savings identified.

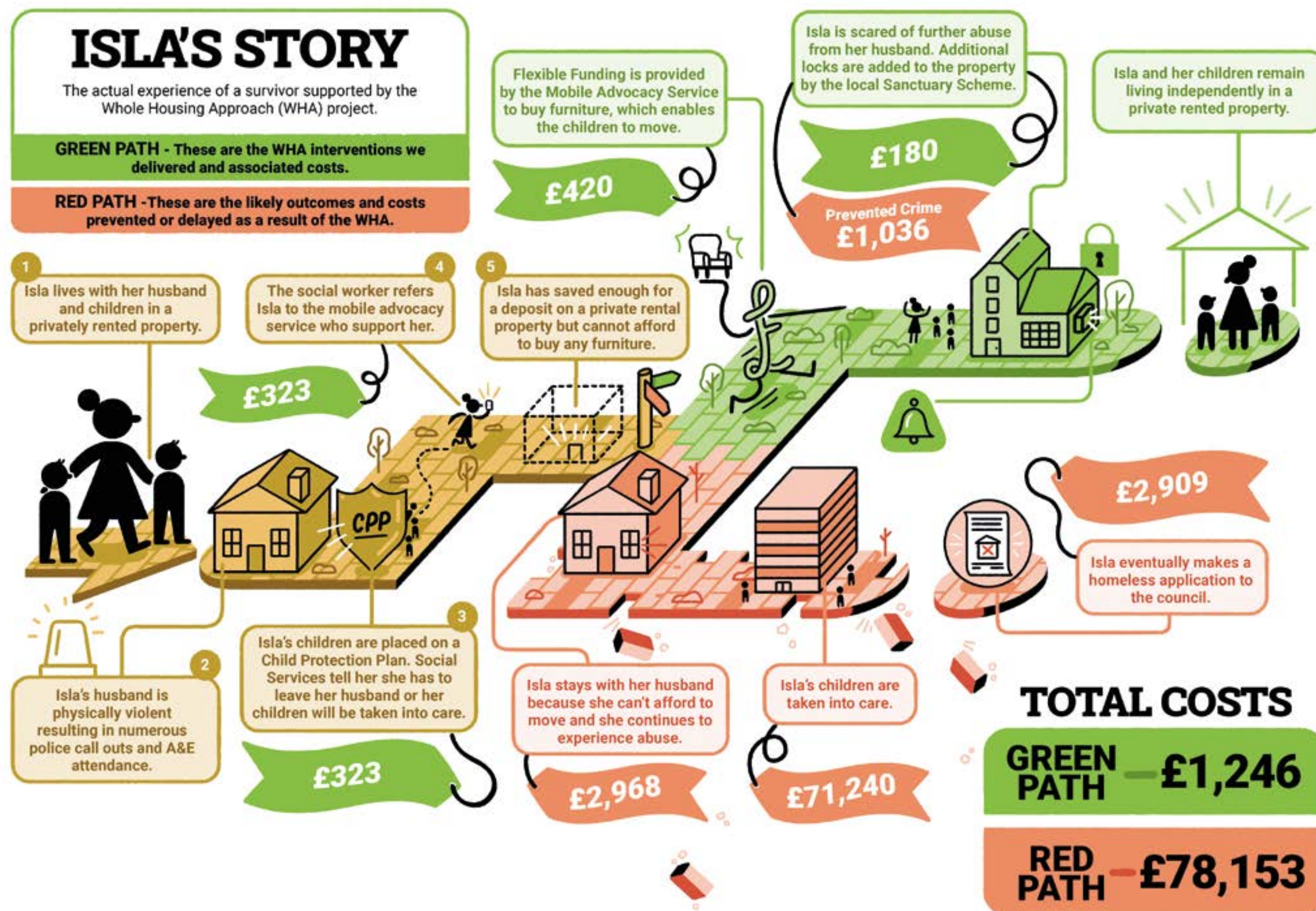
When survivors’ needs are identified and then they are connected to the right resources and support, they feel safer and are in a better position to rebuild their lives. In this instance, a small financial investment made a significant difference in being able to access safety and independence from the perpetrator.

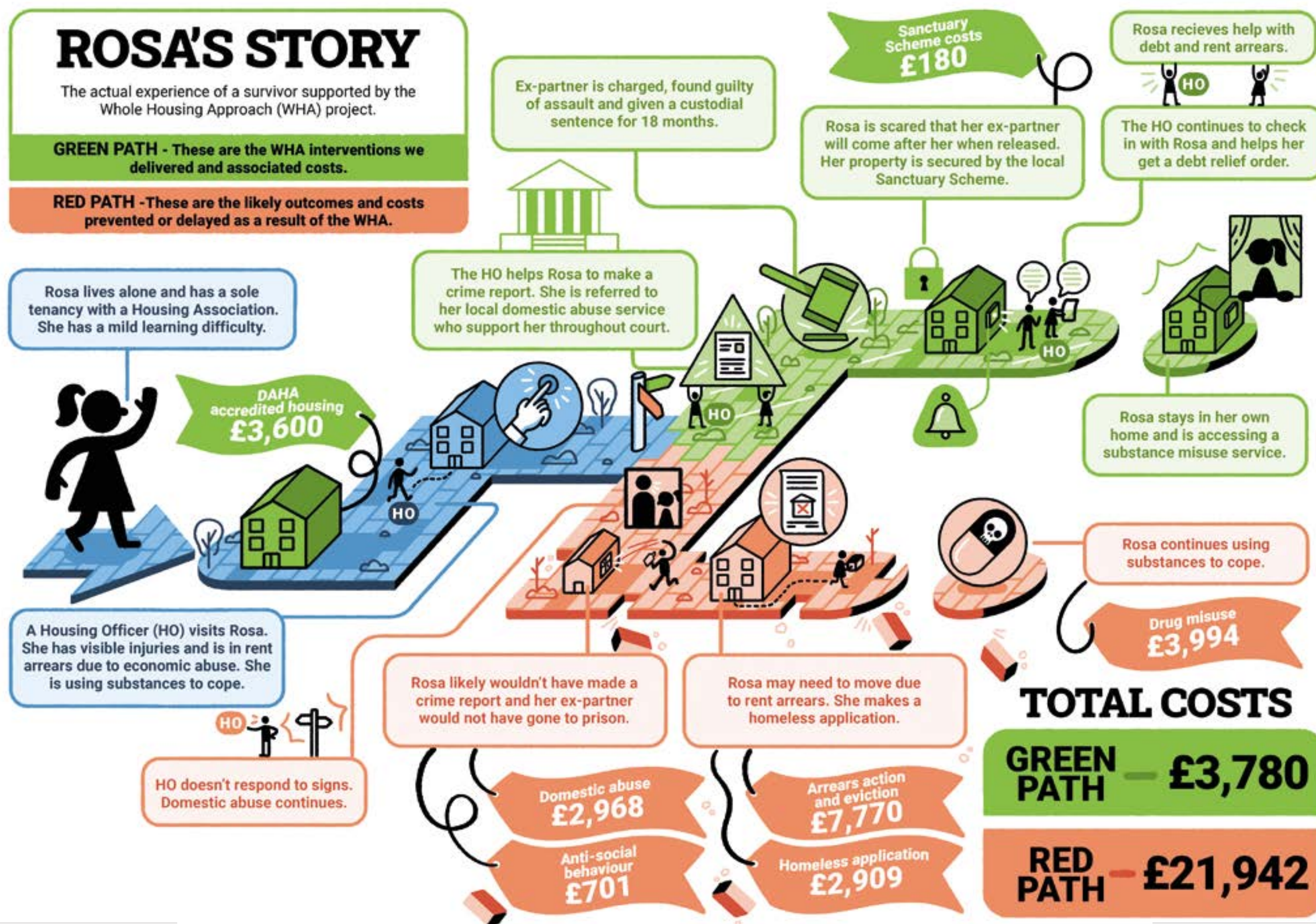


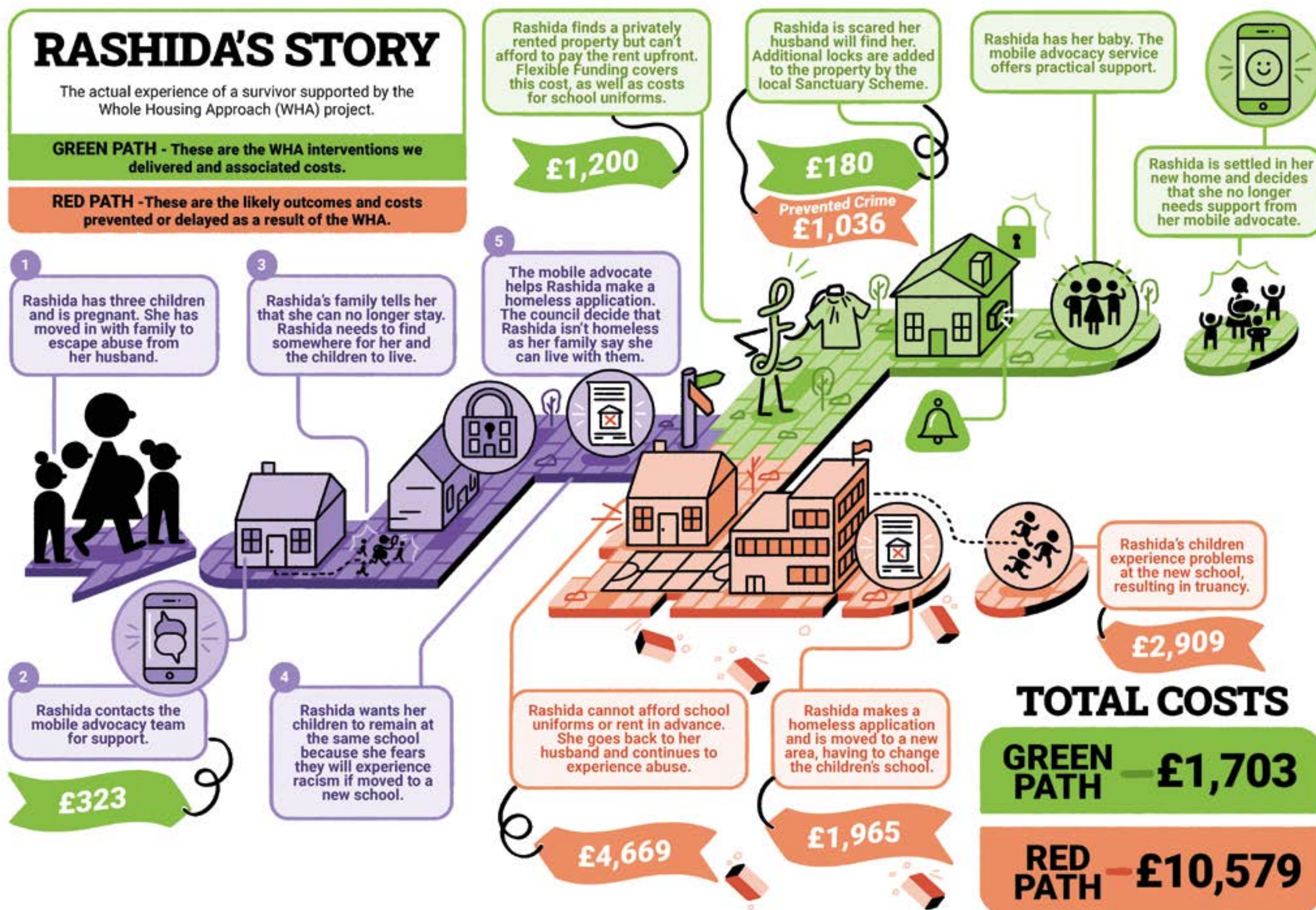
For every £1 invested...

**The cost benefit ratio
ranged from £3.39 to £59.27...**

**Meaning a potential total savings
of £68,545.80 to the public purse.**







What next?

This report shows demonstrable differences made for both victim/survivors, their children and with the professionals and housing providers and services that they interact with. There was an awareness at the commencement of the project that the WHA model would be an adaptive solution and continue to evolve and grow as we piloted the different components. The model is flexible and adaptable in meeting local need and variations in the availability of social housing stock and the number of residents living in rural areas.

The following recommendations for central and local government are based on learning from this first WHA project.

1

Central and local governments commit to embedding the WHA model.

The model offers a multitude of pathways that victim/survivors need to access or maintain stable housing and offers choice for remaining in one's home and relocating to new accommodation. Specialist domestic abuse provision is key to an effective delivery of the WHA and this includes coordination and frontline provision. The model recognises that refuge services are vital, lifesaving services that need to operate in every locality however not every survivor will need this or be able to access a refuge space. Specialist community-based provision, such as co-located and mobile advocacy are as important to producing positive outcomes for survivors' safety and their housing situation and should be included as part of a package of support when offering any housing initiative.

The WHA model also helps local areas to think about how they can deliver better perpetrator management initiatives, which in some cases may require rehousing perpetrators so that victim/survivors are free and safe to remain in an existing home. This will also help prevent an overemphasis on refuge services as the main housing option and prevent adult and children survivors from having to relocate to a new area because of a lack of alternative choices.

The Domestic Abuse Bill includes a new duty on local authorities in England to provide support for victim/survivors and their children within safe accommodation. Subject to the successful passage of the Bill, the new duty is expected to be in place by April 2021. Tier One authorities will be responsible for this new duty and will need to convene a Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. These boards will assess need for support within safe accommodation, develop and publish local strategies, decide what support services are required and commission these accordingly and report progress back to MHCLG. Tier One Boards are encouraged to consider adopting a WHA within requirements of their new duty and in local needs assessments, strategies and commissioning processes.

2

Local needs assessments, strategies and commissioning processes are linked to national Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), rough sleeper and homelessness strategies to meet the housing and support needs of victim/survivors with multiple disadvantage.

Supported housing and schemes like housing first provide an option for survivors who experience multiple disadvantage and have care and support needs in addition to their experiences of domestic abuse, and who may feel unable to live safely and independently in housing of other tenure types. Supported housing offers a safe environment, with staff on hand to meet care and support needs and mitigate risk from domestic abuse.

Women-only supported housing is a valuable but all too scarce option for women with care and support needs who have experienced domestic abuse alongside other forms of disadvantage, and who face the risk of being further victimised or re-traumatised in mixed services. Tier one boards, commissioners and service providers should therefore consider whether female survivors have access to women only services

Adopting this approach nationally will ensure consistency in service delivery and avoid a postcode lottery of the support available.

The [National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group consultation responses](#) includes further recommendations and should be read in conjunction with this report.

3

Flexible Funding is a core component of WHA and must be included in any local response to address the economic and housing needs of survivors.

The use of Flexible Funding highlighted how the economic status of survivors can determine their likelihood of accessing safety, freedom, and housing.⁷ In the last year, COVID-19 drastically changed the socio-economic conditions in our society. Lockdown has meant that some survivors were trapped at home with their perpetrator. This public health crisis is now also developing into an economic crisis, with women being identified as a group that will be hit hardest. As stated previously in this report, survivors of domestic abuse are already likely to face economic disadvantages. The impact of these intersecting issues will cause further inequalities and economic hardship, creating additional barriers for survivors to break free from perpetrators and hinder their ability to overcome both the impacts of abuse and their weakened economic status exacerbated by COVID-19.

The specialist domestic abuse services part of this project highlights additional barriers their services face when supporting women with uncertain immigration status. Many of these women do end up being entitled to public funds.

Yet, the complexities involved for working this out is time consuming and causes delays in accessing safety, like refuge services. They identify an urgent need for bridge funding to be able to offer these women a safe place to stay while they wait for the outcome, which Flexible Funding could remedy.

4

Ensure adequate affordable move-on options are available.

A key aim of the WHA is to encourage agencies and organisations to work in tandem with each other, ensuring that they look at the long-term security of the survivor as well as short term crisis management. In too many domestic abuse cases, agencies feel their only role is to move a survivor into some form of accommodation without considering the long-term picture. One survivor could be passed through multiple types of accommodation over a short period of time before being able to acquire a more secure tenure. There is little consideration of the psychological, physical and economic impact this can have on them and their families.

There is an urgent need to increase supply of genuinely affordable accommodation and consider move on options from refuge services and other types of unsafe accommodation. Move-on was a significant challenge for refuge services before COVID 19 and has become an increasing problem during the pandemic. Women's Aid England report that refuge services in England are posting fewer vacancies since the start of the pandemic, with the average number of available bed spaces falling by half in comparison to the same time last year.⁸

As a result of this a call for action was made by DAHA, Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), National Housing Federation and Women's Aid England asking housing providers to prioritise move on from refuge as we came out of lockdown. There is further work to be done here including the opportunity of asking and legislating housing providers to allocate a proportion of any new builds and their existing stock to respond to domestic abuse whether this is rehousing the family or perpetrator.

The Government's Move On Fund provides part of the solution to this with a portion of this fund ring fenced for domestic abuse. It includes capital grant funding to restore or build new homes and revenue funding for tenancy and domestic abuse support costs. The fund in London is managed and delivered by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and in the rest of England by Homes England. Both authorities are partners of the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group.

Currently only a handful of move on projects are being developed and delivered across the country. The WHA project team is seeking additional investment to support new areas of work to scope what an effective move on model looks like for survivors, specialist domestic abuse services and housing providers involved. Consideration will be given to how this intersects with other components of the WHA including mobile advocacy, sanctuary schemes, flexible funding and housing providers that hold DAHA accreditation. The intention is to include Move On as a new component of the WHA model.

5

Continued investment to grow and expand the work in the PRS and POH sectors.

The pioneering work being delivered at the second tier in the PRS and private ownership sector is in its infancy. It has already had a vast reach and there is huge potential to prevent homelessness and economic hardship within these tenure types. Having already made impactful actions as part of this project there is a need to continue and expand this work to effectively tackle systems and policy changes needed. Several key priority areas of work that require further development and have been identified through consultations with survivors include:

- A significant number of industries and agencies are involved in the PRS and POH response, making it complex to navigate, coupled with attitudes that domestic abuse is not considered to be relevant and therefore doesn't need to be addressed.
- Complex legalities and barriers to accessing legal advice meaning that survivors are frequently unaware of their rights and how to seek redress. Legislation can also be a barrier to organisations who want to take action to support a survivor but are bound by regulations, for example mortgage lenders. Hence, a focus on policy work is needed for the work to be truly impactful.
- Considering these tenure types have historically not been part of a domestic abuse response, there is a need to build an understanding of PRS and POH within the domestic abuse sector to increase a professional's capacity for advocacy.

- Developing local responses with relevant industries and agencies and embedding them within local Coordinated Community Responses to domestic abuse.
- Further work and investment in exploring the lack of housing rights and legal options for survivors and their children. In particular where this relates to joint tenancies as this is currently a huge barrier to leaving.

6

Introduce the sector's call to action for a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy, which includes a coordinated response from services - including housing - to encourage better management of perpetrators.

Housing providers play a key role in holding perpetrators to account. To date, our work has focused on social housing and the positive engagement and enforcement activities available to them. Research by Henderson showed that a high proportion of housing providers include perpetration of domestic abuse as a tenancy breach (72.6%). However, a small number (13.2%) of respondents stated their organisation did not treat domestic abuse as a tenancy breach.⁹ Despite the high percentage of housing providers including perpetration of domestic abuse as a tenancy breach, just over half (53.8%) of respondents' organisations had taken any action against perpetrators of abuse, highlighting a gap between policy and action. According to this same research, housing providers have found that they are in a better position to challenge and support perpetrators through receiving training and DAHA accreditation, which is part of the WHA.



- 1 Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) The effectiveness of schemes to enable households at risk of domestic violence to remain in their homes. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1697788/6364.pdf
- 2 Ibid.
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