
BRISTOL DOMESTIC ABUSE SAFE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY 2021-2024

DRAFT

This strategy describes the programme of work addressing the accommodation elements of the forthcoming Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy

DRAFT

Contents

Section 1: Introduction	5
Context	5
The Scope of the Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy	5
What is Domestic Abuse?	5
Housing, Homelessness and Domestic Abuse	6
Section 2: The Domestic Abuse Act 2021	7
Overview of the Local Authority Statutory Duties	8
The Safe Accommodation Duty	9
Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation	10
Safe Accommodation Duty Funding	11
Local Needs Assessment	11
Supporting Documents	11
Section 3: Statutory Guidance for the Provision of Support to Victims of Domestic Abuse, Including Children in Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Services	12
Section 4: Approach to the Strategy	13
Gender-informed	14
Specialist Services	14
Survivor-led	14
Section 5: The Multi-agency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group	14
Section 6: Domestic Abuse Prevalence in Bristol	15
Section 7: Needs Assessment and Unmet Need in Bristol	15
Needs Assessment Methodology	15
Refuges (Safe Houses)	15
Challenges, Limitations, Gaps in data	15
Referrals into Refuge (Safe House)	16
Safe Accommodation Service Users	17
Any Significant Barriers to Accessing Refuge Identified Through the Needs Assessment including Survivor and Specialist Provider Voice	20
Homelessness Pathway	21
Statutory Homelessness Service	21
Section 8: Safe Accommodation Provision in Bristol	25
Support in Safe Accommodation in Bristol	25
What is Bristol Already Doing?	25

What opportunities has Bristol taken and will take to improve services further?	26
Further Funding Plans for 2021/2022.....	27
Section 9: Strategic Priorities and Actions	28
How Will the Safe Accommodation Strategy be Delivered?.....	28
How will we know we are making a difference?	28
Notes on language.....	29

DRAFT

Section 1: Introduction

Context

The Scope of the Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

The Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024 outlines how Bristol will implement the statutory duties that relate to safe accommodation, included within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

This document will form part of our wider strategy for tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Bristol which will be published in 2022. The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy will address the broader partnership response to domestic abuse and sexual violence, including further detail of elements such as early intervention, the whole family approach and working with perpetrators.

The Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy seeks to describe how safe accommodation and support for domestic abuse victims will be provided. This strategy covers a three year period but will be reviewed annually to ensure we are responding to the emerging needs of victims and survivors of domestic abuse who access support in Bristol.

It will focus on both the immediate and longer-term actions that need to be taken to enrich Bristol's safe accommodation offer.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse causes significant harm to individuals, children, families, and communities.

This strategy adopts the Government definition of domestic abuse which is outlined in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act¹.

In 2019/20, the rate of domestic abuse related crimes and incidents was 28.0 per 1000 for England². Based on local police data, in 2019/20 the Bristol rate of domestic abuse related incidents and crimes per 1,000 population (aged 16 and over) was 28.8 per 1000, an increase from 26.8 per 1000 in 2018/19. For Bristol in 2019/20, 39.2% of all recorded domestic abuse related crimes were a repeat incident.

In Bristol, females over the age of 16 are 3.2 times more likely to be a victim of a domestic abuse related crime in Bristol than males. Women in the 30-39 year old age bracket are most likely to experience a domestic abuse related crime (at a rate of 44.7 per 1000) (Source: Police Data).

Domestic abuse is widely recognised a gendered crime. Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence.

Violence is an outcome of interactions of a range of risk factors at the individual, relationship, community and the societal level. A robust strategic response to Violence Against Women and Girls is required to address the risk factors at each level with equal importance incorporating work to address cultural and societal norms.

These potential barriers span the inequalities of gender, culture, race, and class. These factors have an effect on the actual experience of domestic and sexual abuse survivors face and their access to the services they need. Some survivors are affected by one or more of these factors, and some by all. There is evidence that women who experience the most extensive abuse and violence (both as children and adults) are more likely to face other adverse circumstances in their lives such as poor mental and physical health, disability, substance misuse, poverty, debt, poor housing and homelessness.

Housing, Homelessness and Domestic Abuse

Homelessness and domestic abuse often coexist, and each can perpetuate the other creating a chronic cycle of abuse and homelessness. Without receiving this support at the right time, survivors of domestic abuse can easily become homeless. Many homeless people will not be rough sleeping; but even in less dangerous situations housing problems can lead to a survivor of abuse feeling they have little choice but to return to the perpetrator.

Homeless women — including the 'hidden homeless' — are particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of victimization including forced, coerced, or manipulated sexual activity. Levels of victimization that women endure before, during, and after episodes of homelessness remain enormously high, often occurring in multiple settings at the hands of multiple perpetrators³.

There is a shortage of affordable housing in the city of Bristol and rising homelessness. Between 2016 and 2036 the emerging target for Bristol is around 33,000 homes and the need for affordable homes in Bristol is projected to be an additional 18,800 between 2016 and 2036⁴.

The private rental sector is becoming particularly unaffordable to those on benefits or on low incomes. Social housing lets have reduced in the city to 1,800 per year, down from 3,000 per year 10 years ago.

Bristol City Council found in 2018-19, 40% of people coming onto the streets were 'returners' and the top 3 reasons for people rough sleeping were eviction, relationship breakdown and leaving prison/remand.

Mental health, drugs, alcohol, physical health and offending are the top five areas that people identified as needing support around in 2018-19 in the Reducing Rough Sleeping Needs Analysis. The majority of people (over 70%) who were sleeping on

the streets and had contact with the Rough Sleeper Service were between the ages of 26-50.

Women represent 18% of people rough sleeping in the city in 2018-19; compared to the average for the last three years - there has been a slight shift in the gender of people accessing the service with the number of female clients increasing.

The number of people sleeping rough in snapshot counts in Bristol has increased by 811% between 2010 and 2018 (from 9 to 82) and has risen by 165% nationally (from 1768 to 4677). The number of people sleeping on the streets has risen significantly in Bristol since 2013 in a similar way to all parts of the country.

Section 2: The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a number of tools and powers that will positively impact on victims and survivors, their children and perpetrators.⁵

The draft Domestic Abuse Bill achieved Royal Assent in April 2021 and is now enshrined in law as the Domestic Abuse Act. The Act is intended to improve the response to domestic abuse as follows:

Protect and support victims – to enhance the safety of victims and the support they receive;

Transform the justice process – to provide support to victims throughout the justice process and an effective response to perpetrators to end the cycle of abuse;

Improve performance – to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse; and

Promote awareness – put domestic abuse at the top of everybody's agenda.

The new Domestic Abuse Act (2021) has created, for the first time, a cross-government statutory definition of domestic abuse, to ensure that domestic abuse is properly understood, considered unacceptable and actively challenged across statutory agencies and in public attitudes. The definition of domestic abuse is in two parts. The first part deals with the relationship between the abuser and the abused. The second part defines what constitutes abusive behaviour.

The Domestic Abuse Act also introduces a new 'Safe Accommodation' duty for Tier 1 local authorities, this Safe Accommodation Strategy outlines Bristol City Council and its partner's response to this new duty.

Overview of the Local Authority Statutory Duties

The new Act includes a number of measures for Local Authorities including placing a statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation. It has created a four-part statutory framework for the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation and provide clarity over governance and accountability:

- Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in their area, including those who require cross-border support;
- Develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the needs assessment;
- Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions);
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

Local Authorities will be required to appoint a 'Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board' which it will consult as it performs certain specified functions. Within the Act there is a definition to support commissioners in understanding what safe accommodation and support means.

The Safe Accommodation Duty

Definition

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Safe Accommodation as “...solely dedicated to providing a safe place to stay for victims of domestic abuse, including expert support...”⁶.

Safe Accommodation Types

Refuge accommodation

A refuge offers accommodation and intensive support which is tied to that accommodation. Victims, including their children, must be refuge residents to access expert emotional and practical support.

Specialist safe accommodation

Specialist refuges for Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Questioning and other (LGBTQ+) communities, and disabled victims and their children. These may provide single gender accommodation with dedicated specialist support to victims who share a protected characteristic(s). This includes services that are led by those that also share the protected characteristic and/or have complex needs.

Dispersed accommodation

- i. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of DA), self-contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces due to complex support needs or for families with teenage sons for example.
- ii. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained ‘semi-independent’ accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge, and are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator(s).

Move-on and / or second stage accommodation

These are interchangeable terms for projects temporarily accommodating victims, including families who no longer need the intensive level of support provided in a refuge, but would still benefit from a lower level of domestic abuse specific support for a period before they move to fully independent and permanent accommodation. There is no expectation that every victim will require this. Many victims are ready to move straight to a permanent new home from refuge. However, move-on and / or second stage accommodation may be helpful in some cases.

Sanctuary Schemes

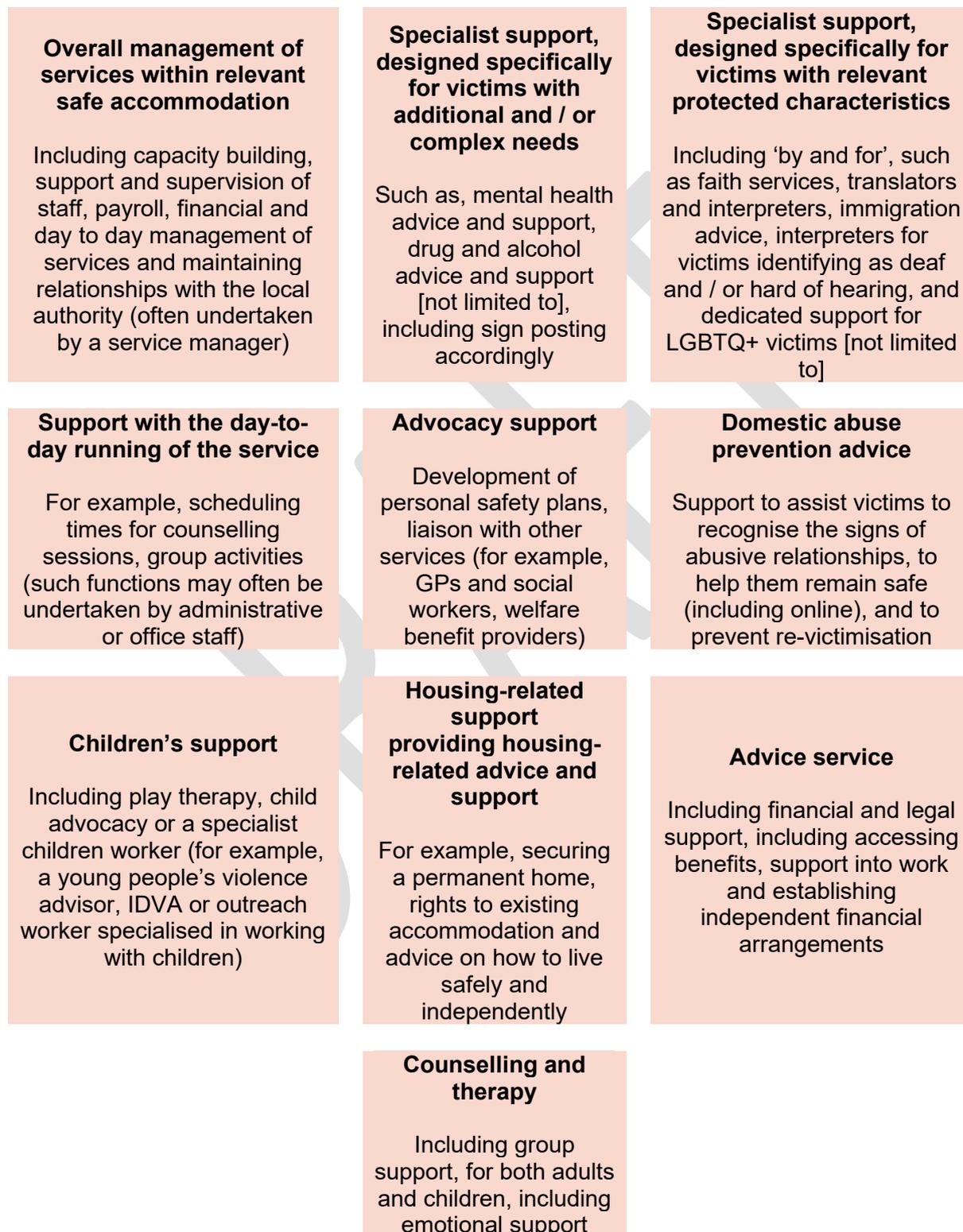
Properties with local authority installed Sanctuary Schemes or other similar schemes, which provide enhanced physical security measures within a home. A Sanctuary Scheme is a survivor centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation.

Other accommodation designated by the local housing authority, registered social landlord or registered charity as domestic abuse emergency accommodation

I.e. a safe place with support. To give victims an opportunity to spend a temporary period of time to make decisions in an environment which is self-contained and safe. This would include access to wrap around support and specialist support for victims with complex needs (including mental health needs and substance misuse).

Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation

The Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance⁷ describes Domestic Abuse Support within Safe/ relevant Accommodation as:



NB: This list of support is not an exhaustive list and other relevant support services can be put in place (based on victims' needs).

Safe Accommodation Duty Funding

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has committed to providing a three-year settlement for the delivery of the Safe Accommodation duty. Bristol City Council's (BCC) allocation for 2021/2022 is **£1,079,426**. BCC also received a Capacity Building Fund of **£50,000** to enable preparation for the new duty. Funding is restricted to spend on accommodation-based support and the administrative burdens associated with implementing the requirements of the Act. This funding cannot be used for community support, prevention work or perpetrator interventions; however, there is other funding the council has allocated for these areas and this will be addressed in the wider Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and Commissioning Strategy.

It is not clear whether the financial allocation awarded in 2021/22 will be reflected at the subsequent years of this strategy. Both years 2 and 3 are tied to a Central Government spending review.

In the unlikely event of significant financial changes or reductions to the funding as a consequence of the yearly national spending review, BCC has several mitigations in place.

These include working closely with services, providers and departments across the council, including housing, to ensure there is flexibility in our design, and we are building in a number of optional approaches. This will be embedded within our commissioning plans.

Local Needs Assessment

Bristol City Council has commissioned a needs assessment as outlined in the Local Authority statutory duties to help inform and develop this Safe Accommodation Strategy. This information will also be used to inform the wider city strategy for domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The requirement for the needs assessment was that it followed a standardised approach as set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to create consistency across the country and better ensure authorities are considering the needs of all victims in their area. More details of the needs assessment can be found in section 7.

Supporting Documents

The Safe Accommodation Strategy has also been informed by, and will support the delivery of:

[Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse 2020](#)

Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (2020-23)

One City Plan

The Belonging Strategy (DATE)

[BNSSG Principles for Trauma Informed Practice \(March 2021\)](#)

Bristol City Council Corporate Plan

National VAWG Strategy 2021-2024

Bristol City Council Corporate Strategy

Section 3: Statutory Guidance for the Provision of Support to Victims of Domestic Abuse, Including Children in Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Services

This section makes reference to the Statutory Guidance for the Provision of support to Victims of Domestic abuse, including Children, in Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Services which can be found [here](#).

The Statutory Guidance was developed in close partnership with the specialist domestic abuse sector, and what has been included has therefore been shaped by them, reflecting their expertise in providing safe accommodation and support to survivors, and the views of those with lived experience.

The statutory guidance acknowledges that this duty is 'separate to local authority housing duties under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 and does not place a requirement on authorities to provide domestic abuse victims with accommodation'. The guidance however does state that it is possible for support under this (Part 4) duty to be provided in accommodation associated with another duty such as a Housing Act 1996 Part 7 duty.

Safe Accommodation support should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse. This includes considering any specialist domestic abuse services that exist to support people with relevant protected characteristics or with additional and or complex needs.

All support provided under the duties must be provided to victims of domestic abuse, including children, who reside in relevant safe accommodation as set out above and such support should meet the DLUHC Quality Standards⁸, [Women's Aid National Quality Standards](#), [Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards](#), [Male Domestic Abuse Network Service Standards](#) and / or [DAHA Accreditation Framework for Housing Providers](#).

Support under this duty should not be provided in any shared, mixed gender accommodation (such as a mixed gender homeless hostel) as this would not be in

line with the descriptions of domestic abuse relevant safe accommodation set out above and we recognise these are threatening and re-traumatising environments for women who have experienced male violence.

The guidance recognises the importance of multi-agency working in responding to the needs of victims of domestic abuse within safe accommodation. Stakeholder feedback highlighted the value of close relationships between local authorities and a variety of agencies, most notably Police and Crime Commissioners and specialist domestic abuse services. The latter deliver expert support to survivors and represent the experiences and needs of survivors and their involvement in Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery group is considered vital for carrying out its responsibilities.

The Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group (termed 'Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board' in the Guidance) includes relevant representation from services and / or organisations that support the needs of children, ensuring the unique needs of children as victim/survivors of domestic abuse in their own right are adequately considered and addressed, as specified in the Domestic Abuse Act.

The local needs assessment will take steps to better understand the diverse needs of those accessing support within safe accommodation, including those who share relevant protected characteristics. The assessment will also consider the number and level of need of victims who must flee the local authority area to access safe accommodation, including how Bristol is working with neighbouring local authorities to take account of the needs of victims from outside of the local area.

In commissioning support services under this duty, Bristol is required to ensure that services are provided in accommodation that comes within the definition of relevant accommodation as described [see Section 2: Safe Accommodation Types] and should ensure that the delivery of support within these settings meet the agreed and recognised quality standards. This includes MHCLG's Quality Standards, the Women's Aid National Quality Standards, and Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards.

Section 4: Approach to the Strategy

The purpose of the strategy is to provide safe accommodation and support for women, men and children who are at risk of, or have experienced domestic abuse. This duty is required under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Gender-informed

The strategy recognises the gendered nature of domestic abuse as “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately” (CEDAW, 1992).⁹

Organisations and services commissioned to deliver support services will be specialist with an understanding of domestic abuse as gendered and a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men which intersects with other inequalities.

Gender-informed provision of safe accommodation and support considers the needs of women and men survivors. Separate, single-sex provision of accommodation and support for victim/survivors of domestic abuse is essential for safety.

Specialist Services

This strategy recognises the importance of including the voices of victims/survivors so that their lived experience can become a catalyst for change. It is recognised that many practitioners in the specialist sector are survivors themselves and build expert knowledge overtime.

Survivor-led

Bristol has a commitment to consult with survivors, including those who face intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination, and to co-produce future versions of the strategy. A Bristol Survivor’s Group has recently been established, and this group will be critical to helping to shape future iterations of the strategy.

Section 5: The Multi-agency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group

The Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (named Multi-agency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (MADASV) Delivery Group hereafter) is a partnership group responsible for supporting Bristol City Council in meeting its duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act.

The MADASV Delivery Group will work together to support, advise and work in partnership with Bristol City Council to ensure victims of domestic abuse have access to adequate and appropriate support within safe accommodation services, in order to:

- Improve outcomes for victims of domestic abuse, including their children, through a strategic approach to identifying and addressing gaps in support within safe accommodation services
- Improve outcomes for victim-survivors of sexual violence, through a strategic approach that considers the victim-survivors support needs from crisis to recovery and ensures there is a focus on those with multiple risks and vulnerabilities

The MADASV Delivery Group in relation to the safe accommodation duty seeks to:

- Assess the need and demand for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross-border support. This will be conducted via an annual safe accommodation assessment of need
- Develop and publish strategies for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims
- Give effect to strategies by making commissioning decisions
- Meet the support needs of victim – survivors and their children
- Monitor and evaluate local delivery, reporting back to central Government

Section 6: Domestic Abuse Prevalence in Bristol

PLACEHOLDER:
THIS SECTION IS WAITING FOR FURTHER DATA FROM THE FINAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND OTHER SOURCES

A comprehensive picture of the extent of domestic abuse and violence (DVA) remains a challenge, both nationally and locally. Estimates often depend on a 'snapshot' of data from a range of agencies and individual studies. Most cases of DVA are not reported. Many victims will not tell anyone about what has happened to them. For this reason, the estimated number of victims is much higher than the number of incidents and crimes recorded.

Section 7: Needs Assessment and Unmet Need in Bristol

Needs Assessment Methodology

Bristol City Council, in partnership with Bath & North East Somerset Council, Somerset Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council, commissioned an Avon and Somerset Domestic Violence Needs Assessment. Coming together in procuring the Needs Assessment, brought efficiencies whilst also providing comparable data that would assist all area better understand the needs of service users who may require cross-border support. Each area had its own report produced, focusing on the needs of their own local area.

Refuges (Safe Houses)

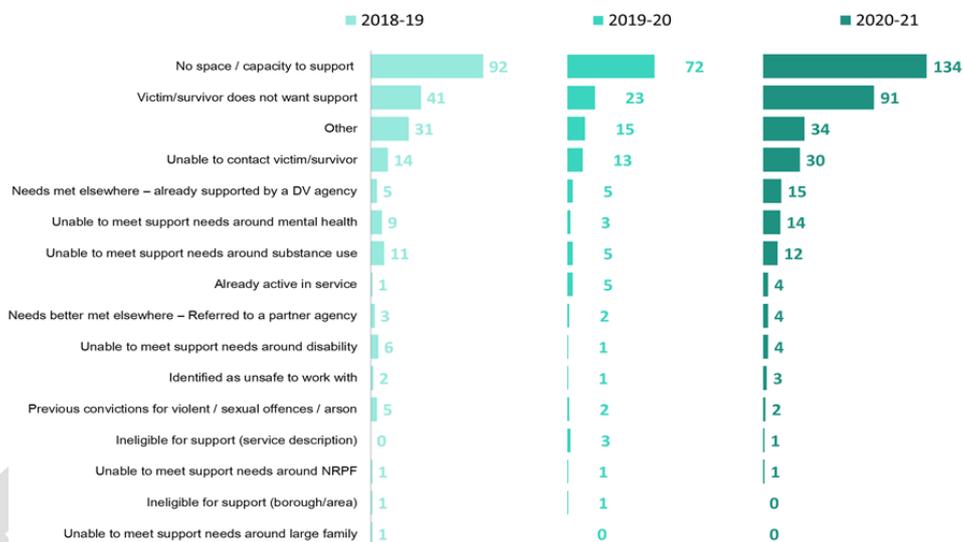
Challenges, Limitations, Gaps in data

PLACEHOLDER: DATA FROM NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO BE FINALISED AND INCLUDED

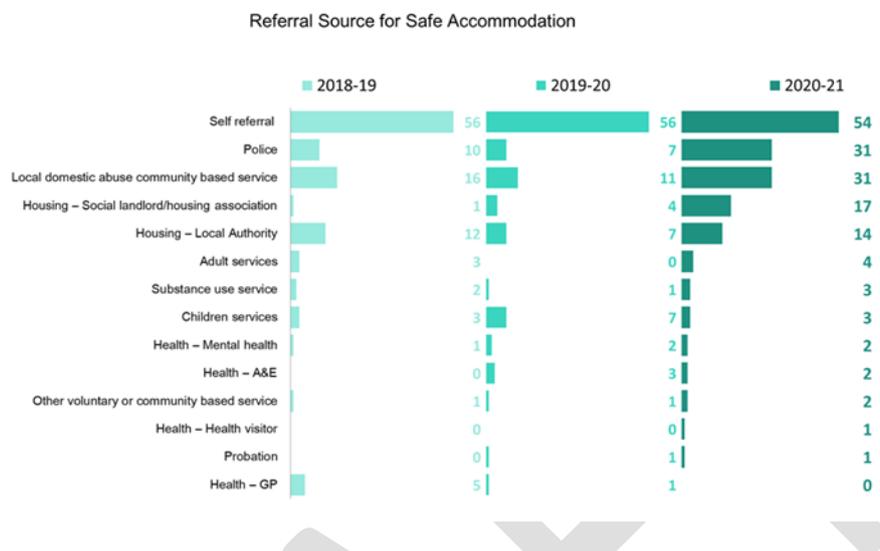
Referrals into Refuge (Safe House)

In Bristol, the term 'safe house' is used more frequently than 'Refuge', but the terms can be used interchangeably. Next Link provide the refuge accommodation in Bristol. In 2018/19 there were 319 referrals for Safe Houses in Bristol. This decreased to 236 in 2019/20 but in 2020/21 increased significantly to 453 referrals. Despite the rise in referrals the proportion of those accepted has reduced from 30% in 2018/19 to 22% in 2020/21. The most common reason for a declined referral across all 3 years is due to no space or capacity to support, followed closely by the victim/survivor not wanting support. There has been an increase in the number who are being supported elsewhere e.g. through DA services agency. The number of people declined due to being unable to contact has also doubled in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 and 2018/19.

Reasons Why Referrals Were Declined



Over the past 3 years the most common way victim/survivors are referred into the service is via a self-referral, followed by a referral from the Local Domestic Abuse Community Based Service and Police. In 2020/21 there was an increase in referrals from Social Landlord/ Housing Associations and a small reduction has been noted in referrals from GPs over the past 3 years.



Safe Accommodation Service Users

The number of referrals from outside the local authority area has increased over the past 3 years, with COVID-19 potentially impacting on referral numbers overall both inside and outside the local authority area during 2019/20.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Outside of Local Authority area	118	95	192

The number of clients out of area doubled in 2020/21, compared to the two previous years.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Bristol	201	141	213
Out of Area	66	61	127
North Somerset	9	2	58
South Gloucestershire	33	30	53
BANES	10	2	2

Upon exit from the service, victims/ survivors most commonly moved into social rented or supported housing. In 2019/20 there was a significant reduction in the number who went into social rented or supported housing compared to the surrounding years, which may correlate with the impact of COVID. Those in 2020/21 who did not go into social rented or supported housing were likely to find

accommodation in the Temporary accommodation, the private rented sector and a small proportion stayed with friends or family.

During 2018/19 and 2019/20 the majority of victims/survivors stayed for less than 4 months in the safe house. In 2020/21, however, the majority actually stayed between 4 and 6 months. There is a significant reduction in clients who stay for more than one year.

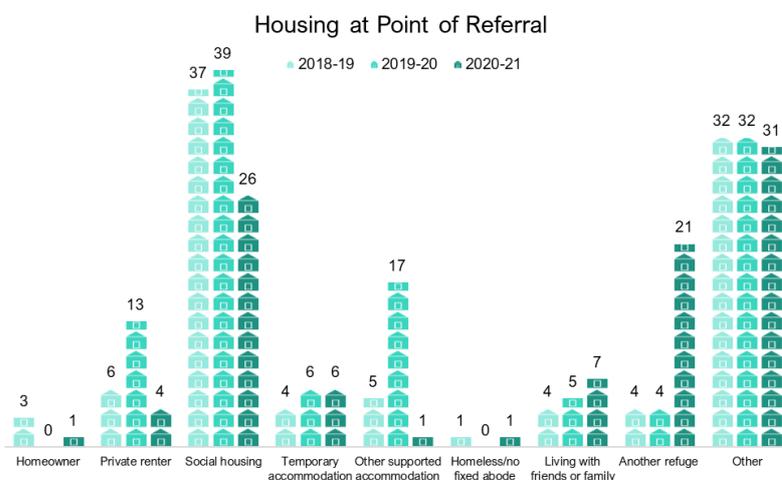
On average, clients stay in safe houses for an average of 207 days, this did not vary significantly by year.

The most highly reported type of abuse on point of entry was emotional and psychological abuse, followed closely by jealous/controlling behaviour and physical violence. These 3 areas of abuse have all seen reduction in 2020/21, however, financial or economic abuse has seen small increases year on year over the past 3 years.

Over the past 3 years the majority of victims/survivors of domestic abuse accessing safe accommodation services are aged 25-44 years old. There have also been small increases in the number aged 25 to 34 years old.

The safe houses in Bristol do not accept anyone into refuge space who is under 18 due to licence agreements. They report having seen a small increase in women over 65 who needed safe house and supported them around their needs and accepted them for rehousing by local authorities. All spaces are also only for women, currently there are no spaces for men in Bristol.

The majority of victims/ survivors are heterosexual and a small proportion are bisexual. The remaining are unknown. There is no specific LGBT refuge in the south west.



The most common form of accommodation for a victim/survivor at point of referral was Social Housing, however, in 2020/21 this has reduced and there have been

increases in clients moving to another Refuge. 27% of all accepted victims/survivors in 2020/21 were living in Social Housing at point of referral and 24% in another Refuge. The majority of clients are either single persons or have 1 child. The majority of children in Refuge are under 5 years old. 42% of children in Refuge in 2020/21 were under 5.

Household Structure	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
0 child household	35	64	35
Pregnant	2	3	6
1 child household	27	30	32
2 children household	20	11	17
3+ children household	12	8	8

Of all children in refuge, in 2020/21 38 accessed internal support in the refuge. This type of support was most commonly accessed. Over half of all children accessed support.

Children in Refuge accessing support	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Internal support in the refuge (e.g. play therapy, children worker)	35	19	38
External support outside of the refuge via a referral (e.g. CAMHS, counselling)	5	6	8
External support – Child In Need (CIN)	4	2	2
External support – Child Protection (CP) Plan	3	1	1
No support	0	0	0

The majority of service users were White/ White British. The referrals numbers from those who are Black or Black British have reduced slightly but not significantly, Asian or Asian British client referrals have remained consistent with the exception of a small spike in 2019/20.

There is a specific BAME safe house in Bristol.

Next Link have supported women to apply for destitution domestic violence (DDV) concession as soon as they are accepted into the refuge. They support them to obtain leave to remain. Through Covid-19 this was difficult with less places open, less support and delays. Next Link also work with the asylum team to offer support to families. They set up their own NRPF to support these women.

Those with visas most commonly had spousal visas. 9 women in 2020/21 in Refuge required an interpreter/ translator.

In 2018/19 51% of victims/survivors were unemployed. This rose to 58% in 2019/20 but has since dropped to 47% in 2020/21, however, the proportion of unknowns have increased.

A large number of those who report having a disability or health condition report Mental Health issues. Other health issues identified more commonly were physical disabilities or mobility impairments and learning difficulties.

Of those with additional support needs, financial support and homelessness was one of the most common needs for victims/survivors referred to Refuge, followed by legal support and substance misuse support. In Bristol there are 2 safe houses for women with complex needs and are considered ‘vital’ for support around drugs / alcohol and mental health.

Additional Support Needs	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Care Leaver:	0	0	0
Service Personnel/Armed Forces	0	0	0
Offending History	5	7	7
Homeless	28	29	30
Rough Sleeper	0	0	0
Alcohol Misuse	15	12	7
Drug Misuse	16	17	13
Legal Support	17	17	23
Financial Support:	62	52	56
Other/unknown	0	0	0

Any Significant Barriers to Accessing Refuge Identified Through the Needs Assessment including Survivor and Specialist Provider Voice

National and local data have consistently highlighted that most service users are white/white British. We are aware that in Bristol there are some communities where domestic abuse is more hidden and victims from these communities may find it harder to access services.

From a previous needs assessment in 2019¹⁰ we found barriers to women seeking support included communities and families encouraging them to stay in the relationship and not understanding the impact of DVA. This was particularly the case for some women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups who had experienced isolation from parts of their community because they had contacted the police, sought support or left their relationship.

Survivors from the LGBT+ community are also under-represented in numbers accessing refuge.

Other barriers highlighted by service users included fear about breaking up the family unit and concerns of being placed in accommodation away from support networks and children’s schools.

Both service users and staff have previously highlighted the need for 24 hour/7 day per week support, with ‘after hours’ or the weekend being a time that survivors needed support and may be more likely to leave the safe house and return to perpetrators.

Bristol City only have limited refuges for larger families and this can be an issue.

Paying rent for a space in a refuge on a low income can be difficult for some women if they don’t receive housing benefit.

**Data from 2021 needs assessment will be included when available.*

Homelessness Pathway

Statutory Homelessness Service

In 2020-21, there were 5,508 homeless applications in total; 8% of which were households with domestic abuse. 243 applicants were single people presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse and a further 175 of those presenting with domestic abuse had children. Numbers of applicants experiencing domestic abuse has increased over the past 3 years as has the overall number of applicants. This means the proportion of applicants who present due to domestic abuse has remained at approximately between 7 and 8%.

		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Homelessness applications	Number of all single/single adult households presenting as homeless	2837	3838	4165
	Number of single/single adult households presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse	147	170	243
	Number all of households with children presenting as homeless	1354	1629	1343
	Number all of households with children presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse	154	163	175

In 2020/21 6% of all single/single adult household applicants were experiencing domestic abuse compared to 13% of applicants in households with children were experiencing domestic abuse. 243 single adults were homeless with domestic abuse as a factor in 2020/21, an increase from 170 in 2019/20 and 147 in 2018/19.

Guidance for local authorities, which was updated on 5th July to include the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), explains local authorities' duty to help people stay in their home or find alternative accommodation. There is also a responsibility to refer for support, including support for survivors of domestic abuse. This is likely to increase demand for community-based and safe accommodation services.

Below we provide an explanation based on the Act, of the differing levels of statutory duty.

1. Prevention duty

Local authorities may deliver their prevention duty through any activities aimed at preventing a household threatened with homelessness within 56 days from becoming homeless. This would involve activities to enable an applicant to remain in their current home or find alternative accommodation in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. The duty lasts for up to 56 days but may be extended if the local authority is continuing with efforts to prevent homelessness

2. Relief duty

The relief duty is owed to households that are already homeless on approaching a local authority, and so require help to secure settled accommodation. The duty lasts 56 days and can only be extended by a local authority if the household is not owed the main homelessness duty

3. Main duty

A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as 'acceptances'

The needs assessment collected and analysed local data in Bristol within these categories.

Prevention Duty

11 homeless applicants experiencing domestic abuse were owed prevention duty in 2020/21 out of 477 total prevention duties in this time period. Therefore, 2% of all prevention duties were for domestic abuse victims/ survivors. In 2018/19 22 prevention duties were owed for domestic abuse victims/ survivors compared to the total of 588 prevention duties. This means in 2018/19 4% of prevention were for domestic abuse victims or survivors.

Therefore, in 2020/21 prevention duties for domestic abuse victims/ survivors decreased as a proportion since 2018/19.

Relief Duty

In 2020/21 330 domestic abuse victims/ survivors were owed relief duty out of 2,311 relief duties in total. This means in 2020/21 14% of all relief duties were for domestic abuse victims/ survivors. In contrast, 2018/19 182 relief duties were for domestic

abuse victims/ survivors, equating to 12% of the total number of relief duties. Therefore relief duties for domestic abuse victims/ survivors in Bristol have increased both in volume and proportion.

In 2020/21, 53% of all domestic abuse victims owed Relief Duty had children and 47% did not have children. This finding has been consistent for the past 3 years.

In 2020/21, 35 domestic abuse victims/survivors secured accommodation following a relief duty. There was a small increase, however, in the number of domestic abuse victims/ survivors who withdrew their applications.

In 2020/21 119 domestic abuse victims/survivors progressed to Main Duty Owed following a Prevention Duty. A small increase on the previous 2 years. 23 domestic abuse victims/survivors also secured accommodation once 56 days elapsed.

In 2020/21 59 domestic abuse victims/ survivors secured accommodation following a relief duty in total.

Main Duty

In total 837 main duties were owed in 2020/21, 119 of which were for domestic abuse victims/ survivors. This means in 2020/21 14% of all main duties were for domestic abuse victims/survivors. The proportion of main duties that were domestic abuse has remained between 14 and 15% for the past 3 years.

64 of the 119 domestic abuse victims/survivors with a main duty owed had children.

Homelessness Service Users Experiencing Domestic Abuse

76% of homeless applicants experiencing domestic abuse were female

The majority of domestic abuse victims/survivors were heterosexual, 5 were Gay/Lesbian and a large proportion were unknown. 53% of victims/survivors were White or White British. Despite the volume of White or White British increasing, the proportion has actually decreased. In 2018/19 64% were White or White British. Black or Black British victims/survivors have made up approximately 11% of all victims/survivors (however this had dropped to 8% in 2020/21). Asian or Asian British make up 6% and Mixed Dual Heritage 3%.

In 2020/21 93 victims/survivors were employed (the highest in 3 years). 115 were unemployed and 95 economically inactive. 5 were retired.

Home Choice

There were 694 people on the housing register (Home Choice) in total in April 2021. In April 2021 209 applicants were single people presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse and a further 485 of those presenting with domestic abuse had children. Numbers of applicants experiencing domestic abuse has increased over

the past 3 years for both single persons and those with children who are victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

	Year	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021
Applications from households who are victims of DV	Number of <i>all</i> single/single adult households presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse	153	176	209
	Number all of households with children presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse	366	392	485
	Total	519	568	694

As at 09/08/2021 the total number of applicants on the housing register is 15,866. The number of applicants on the housing register can change on a daily basis. The following numbers are taken from 9th August 2021. Comparative figures for previous years broken down by equality groups are not available.

92% of all victims/survivors were female and the majority were aged 26 to 45 years old.

As of 9th August 2021, 43% of domestic abuse victims/survivors who were Home Choice Bristol applicants were disabled.

68% of applicants were White British, followed by 6% White and Black Caribbean and 6% White Other. 5% of applicants were Black or Black British Caribbean and 4% Black or Black British African.

As of 9th August 2021, the majority of domestic abuse victims/survivors who have Home Choice Applications were Job Seekers or Unable to work due to long term sickness or disability. In total 56% were unemployed, 30% were employed or a full time student and 2% were retired.

The following table indicates the domestic abuse allocations as compared to total allocations. In 2020/21 9% of all allocations were domestic abuse related, in the previous 2 years this was 10%.

	DA allocations	Total allocations
2018-19	182	1815
2019-20	187	1885
2020-21	150	1586

PLACE HOLDER FOR ADDITIONAL DATA FOLLOWING FINAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT: Any Significant Barriers Identified Through the Needs Assessment; Survivor and Specialist Provider Voice; Data on Move On

Section 8: Safe Accommodation Provision in Bristol

Support in Safe Accommodation in Bristol

In Bristol many of the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are being met and we have been providing support to victims of domestic abuse, including children, in domestic abuse safe accommodation. However the new funding will enable the city to extend our supported accommodation services.

What is Bristol Already Doing?

Bristol has a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for access to Domestic Abuse Support and safe house provision.

Victim-survivors of Domestic Abuse that require accommodation routinely present to housing teams at the council and are prioritised for temporary accommodation whilst a move on plan is established. Permanent housing solutions are also considered, and referrals made into the DA Accommodation and Support Services are routinely conducted.

Next Link provide refuge accommodation for Bristol City. They have 49 shared refuge spaces available, 7 of which are dispersed flatlets. The majority of refuge provision in Bristol City is suitable for women who are either single or have up to 3 children. There are 2 spaces available for those with a disability and the service will take children up to the age of 16. The service will also look at each case on an individual basis to explore options for clients, such as those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPFs).

Bristol City's Next Link service has all 49 refuge spaces fully commissioned. All spaces in Bristol City are fully commissioned, meaning there are no spaces that are

partially or not commissioned. Therefore, Bristol City do not have any costs for non-commissioned spaces.

Bristol has 7 safe houses in the city including a dedicated house for black and ethnic minority women and children, a house for single women, access for those with disability, and a block of self-contained units for families. For 2021/22 Bristol is also taking part in the Respite Rooms 12-month trial offering short term safe accommodation with intensive support to victims of domestic abuse and violence. The project will offer women short-term assistance to ensure they get the support they need, in advance of further guidance to help them towards longer-term solutions for their personal needs. This project has 10 spaces and is funded by a grant from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

What opportunities has Bristol taken and will take to improve services further?

Bristol City Council held a number of engagement events at the end of 2019 and then carried out the Mayoral Commission which gave a number of recommendations, including ones that the new funding could be used to address.

Staff and service users fed back that more staff support was needed at the complex needs safe house. The funding has been used to increase staffing to cover the safe house 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

For children, play therapy is being funded in both the safe houses and move on accommodation.

For young people, a full time wellbeing coach for domestic abuse and sexual violence has been funded through one of our supported living provisions for young people.

A specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) has been employed to work with LGBT+ victims and survivors in the safe house and other supported accommodation.

The capacity has been increased within the council with additional staff time to work on the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence agenda.

The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership has worked closely with specialist providers in the city to set up a Survivors Forum. This group will meet on a regular basis, with participants able to attend virtually or in person. The aim of the group is to ensure the voice of the survivor is central.

Further Funding Plans for 2021/2022

There will be two housing specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) placed within the Housing Management & Estates and Housing Options divisions within the Council.

A wider training offer for Housing staff to improve awareness of Domestic Abuse and response including support to start working towards the criteria required for Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.

Currently Bristol has no formalised Sanctuary Scheme offer and this is delivered in an ad hoc way through local police. We want to formalise this process and ensure victims supported through the sanctuary scheme receive supported accommodation services.

Bristol will ensure that responsive and effective Domestic Abuse Support is delivered alongside safe accommodation.

The current support in Bristol for domestic abuse and sexual violence includes:

Next Link, Domestic Abuse Service

- Community IDVAs to BAME women and girls
- Specialist support to BAME female survivors through criminal justice system
- IRIS training and coordination within GP practices
- Group therapeutic interventions to survivors and families
- Complex needs accommodation
- Universal community-based support services and the provision of refuge spaces across the city
- IDVAS service within University Hospitals Bristol
- 3 additional domestic abuse support officers to be embedded within BCC Family in Focus early help teams
- Specialist support embedded within Families in Focus locality teams

Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS)

- Telephone line advice service onward pathways to community based therapeutic interventions to victims and survivors of historic and current sexual abuse

One25

- Support to street sex workers experiencing domestic and sexual violence

Victim Support

- Specialist independent domestic violence support and advocacy to women and girls - embedded within Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit
- Dedicated independent domestic and sexual abuse advisor role specifically for male survivors

Bristol City Council is due to recommission domestic abuse and sexual violence services in 2022.

Section 9: Strategic Priorities and Actions

How Will the Safe Accommodation Strategy be Delivered?

1. Bristol's Multiagency and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group will develop and implement a delivery plan, which will be annually refreshed and reviewed on a quarterly basis. This will identify short-term transitional arrangements and improvements as well as medium to long-term work that is required to deliver the strategy. A set of measures will be developed to monitor the impact of the strategy.
2. To address current gaps, service commissioning options for additional safe accommodation and support will be developed and delivered
3. Awareness raising, training and communications on the Domestic Abuse Act and the wider issue of Domestic Abuse will be delivered for professionals across Bristol's agencies.
4. Bristol City Council will raise awareness of Domestic Abuse and communicate safe accommodation and the broader DA offer to residents of Bristol.
5. Bristol will monitor progress to deliver the strategy and report to the Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

How will we know we are making a difference?

Indicative markers*:

- More victim-survivors are reporting incidents of domestic abuse to the Police

- and are accessing Bristol's Domestic Abuse Services
- Bristol will develop and agree measures to monitor the impact of the Safe Accommodation Strategy. The objectives of the strategy will have been delivered when:
 - Bristol will have a range of safe accommodation options where victims/survivors and their children can access a range of support options.
 - Victims/survivors of domestic abuse that require safe accommodation and support are not housed in generic temporary accommodation in Bristol.
 - That the numbers of victim-survivors experiencing domestic abuse related repeat victimisation is reduced.
 - The workforce in Bristol is familiar with the Safe Accommodation offer and utilise this appropriately.

**Section 9 will be finalised in future iterations of the strategy.*

Notes on language

Victim/survivor: These terms are used interchangeably throughout this report to refer to people who have or are currently experiencing domestic abuse.

Perpetrator: This term is used throughout to refer to the person using abuse.

Lived experience: This term refers to individuals who share their expertise and knowledge based on their first-hand experiencing of domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological or emotional and/or physical and sexual abuse.

Specialist domestic abuse service: This term refers to organisations/services independent from the state (i.e. third sector), whose core business is to support victim/survivors and/or perpetrators and/or children and young people impacted by domestic abuse and other forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) - including sexual violence, forced marriage, so called 'honour based' violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation, trafficking and modern-day slavery. 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. 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](#)

Refuge / Safe House: Refuge services are support services that provide safe accommodation for women and children escaping domestic abuse. As such, the specialist staff play a vital role in supporting survivors of domestic abuse and moving

them on to independent living and the next stage of their recovery. Whilst in refuge, residents receive a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff and access peer support from other residents.

Women's Aid (2021)

These terms are used interchangeably throughout this report to refer to support services that provide safe accommodation.

Tier 1 Authority: The national guidance makes reference to Tier 1 and Tier 2 authorities. Many parts of England have 2 tiers of local government:

- county councils
- district, borough or city councils

In some parts of the country, there's just 1 (unitary) tier of local government providing all the local services. The 3 main types are:

- unitary authorities in shire areas
- London boroughs
- metropolitan boroughs

Bristol City Council is a unitary (Tier 1) authority and there are no Tier 2 authorities under Bristol City Council. For more information on types of council:

<https://www.gov.uk/understand-how-your-council-works>

References

¹ Domestic Abuse Act 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

² Public Health Outcomes Framework 2021 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/domestic%20abuse>

³ Riley ED, Cohen J, Knight KR, Decker A, Marson K, Shumway M. Recent violence in a community-based sample of homeless and unstably housed women with high levels of psychiatric comorbidity. *Am J Public Health.* 2014;104(9):1657–1663. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.301958

⁴ Bristol City Council, Reducing Rough Sleeping Needs Analysis, February 2020

⁵ Domestic Abuse Act 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

⁶ Domestic Abuse Act 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation>

⁸ Annex B <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services#contents>

⁹ Number 19, point 6 <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>

¹⁰ Bristol City Council 2019 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Needs Assessment (unpublished)