



Section 17 Housing and Specialist Accommodation Support Services - Temporary and Supported Accommodation including Refuge, Floating Support and the Sanctuary Scheme

Introduction and context

A Domestic Abuse Women's Refuge is often considered as the housing and support solution to victims living with domestic abuse; however only a small proportion of victims enter a refuge. Victims can have a range of housing related issues because of the domestic abuse. Some victims may approach housing services because they want support to be rehoused, they may want to discuss issues about their tenancy or to increase the security of their property. There are a variety of solutions available here in Sheffield, these include:-

- the Sanctuary Scheme - which provides the property with a range of additional protection (e.g. panic alarms, letter boxes, stronger doors),
- social housing advisors trained in domestic abuse and onward referral into MARAC and the commissioned support services
- temporary accommodation
- supported accommodation
- refuge provision
- floating support
- Action, the commissioned service of the high and medium/standard risk services can and do deliver support to the victim in their own home, where there is a need and provide advice, refer and signpost victims to housing services.

Perpetrators (both those who are living with and those who are not living with the victim) may demand to get in the house, turn up unexpectedly, physically damage inside or outside of the house and make threats to enter. We know that one in five victims nationally report they live with the abusive partner - The Crime Survey of England and Wales reported that for the year ending March 2015, 19% of victims lived with their abusive partner¹ (but this could be higher as an additional 15% did not want to answer this) and we know that locally here in Sheffield that a similar proportion of victims, 23% in support report they live with their perpetrator at start of support. However, we also know that often the victim is at risk of abuse when they are not living with the victim. For example, threats to commit damage to the property, wanting to enter the property.

There are a range of reasons why victims may want to leave the property but also a range of reasons why they may want to stay in the property. These include:

Why people do not want to leave their home - The CSEW lists the reasons why one may not leave the situation; children in the household, love/feelings for the partner they would never consider leaving, having nowhere to go, fears of losing their tenancy or home (if mortgaged), being reliant on the partner financially, and for fear of further abuse.

Where do victims go when they decide to flee? - The CSEW observed that victims often spent their first night away from home with a relative² (65%) or with friends (18%), 5% went to a hotel and 12% stated went somewhere else, including to a refuge or stayed on the streets. There is no further

¹ Appendix table 4.24 – proportion in the last year partner abuse victims who lived with their abusive partners and left the shared accommodation as a result of the abuse in the last year, year ending March 2015

² Appendix table 4.25 – where the last year partner abuse victims spent their first night having left the shared accommodation because of the abuse, year ending March 2015



information about where the victims subsequently resided (e.g. returning to the perpetrator, returning to an empty home, staying long term with family or never returning).

This section discusses domestic abuse and housing in a number of ways: -

1. Where victims present to housing workers with housing concerns and want housing advice, they may disclose domestic abuse and require a referral into specialist support.
2. Where the victim needs to flee the home and requires an alternative housing solution (e.g. refuge).
3. Support provided to victims in their own home (including sanctuary scheme and floating support).

1. Victims present to social housing workers with housing concerns, disclose domestic abuse and require a referral into specialist domestic abuse support

A recent consultation at the domestic abuse operational group (attended by representatives of domestic abuse services) said one of the most frequently asked questions ask of them was regarding housing 'Can DA victims get rehoused by the council if they have arrears?' Questions like these are one of the reasons victims disclose their abuse to a social housing worker. This means there is a need to ensure housing workers are all trained in some domestic abuse. For some victims this will be their first disclosure of the abuse, and for some therefore the housing service will be their 'front door' into domestic abuse support services.

Therefore there is a need ensure social hosing workers know how to respond to specific domestic abuse related housing queries but also how to respond to questions by victims and where necessary sign post and or refer into support.

Referrals into high risk medium/ standard services by housing workers

Locally in Sheffield domestic abuse training (see Commissioning Section 10 for further details) is commissioned for workers in all areas, including social housing workers.

Action (the commissioned domestic abuse training service) trained 50 housing workers in 2015/16 and 70 housing workers in 2016/17 (first 3 quarters) on one of three courses - Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment: DASH and MARAC for Domestic Abuse Leads and Champions, Safeguarding Children and Young People affected by Domestic Abuse and Domestic Abuse & Substance Misuse.

The housing workers were from SCC: Sheffield Housing Service, SYHA and Action Housing, which are just three of a number of housing organisations in Sheffield. **Therefore there is a need for all social housing organisations to be offered and receive domestic abuse training. The outcomes expected would be that all social housing workers are aware of domestic abuse, can respond to disclosures, are aware of the pathway and refer to MARAC on high risk cases. The measurable would be that all front line housing workers are trained and housing as a referral route to support including MARAC would increase.**

Action - There is a need to ensure that Action provide the same offer of training to all social housing organisations in Sheffield, with a view of working towards all housing organisations and ultimately workers trained in domestic abuse.

Housing referrals to high risk and the medium risk support services

Between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (Quarter 3) housing services made less than seven referrals to outreach, 113 referrals to the high risk service, and 143 phone calls to the helpline. High risk referral activity in 2016/17 appears lower than in 2015/16 with 78 referrals made in 2015/16 and 35 made in the first three quarter of 2016/17.

VAWG Strategy and training of housing workers in domestic abuse



The VAWG strategy has two actions specific to housing. Action 69 is for housing workers and Action 33 is for refuge funding. Action 69 is shown below and recognises that housing workers will be in contact with victims of domestic abuse, and victims may be presenting with housing issues because of the domestic abuse (e.g. being in arrears due to financial abuse, separation from a partner, problems with the neighbours).

MAKING VAWG EVERYONE'S BUSINESS			
69	Fund a training project for Housing Officers, to be delivered by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS), and the women's sector, Safe Lives (SL) and Women's Aid (WA). The project will train 336 frontline LA staff from a range of LAs in how to identify and respond to domestic violence and abuse.	DCLG	Summer 2016

The VAWG action is to provide training to a selection of housing workers in local authorities to identify and respond to disclosures of domestic abuse.

2. The victim may require an alternative housing solution.

The Sheffield City Council Website provides an overview of the process and the processes involved <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/housing/housing-advice-options-line>. The helpline can and does refer those fleeing domestic abuse situations into this system.

The local Housing Support Pathway explains that the council may have a statutory duty of care³ to provide accommodation to some individuals.

One of the priority needs included in the eligibility process includes victims of domestic abuse. Each case is assessed on an individual basis and the domestic abuse need and risk are considered as part of this process. Whilst the process is ongoing interim temporary accommodation is made available and for those where a duty of care is determined then temporary and supported accommodation (for those with specific needs⁴, e.g. mental health but see foot note for the full list) are provided for some victims.

These forms of accommodation are generic; meaning that domestic abuse is one of a number of priority needs that make those eligible for the accommodation.

There are several different providers of temporary and supported accommodation in Sheffield. The Housing Independence Service acts as a gateway to both temporary and supported accommodation which includes those at risk of domestic abuse. Victims are allocated places based on their household dynamics and needs. For example some may be of a certain age (young person) or also have complex needs (e.g. a drug and alcohol issue). These forms of accommodation are available to both males and female victims.

The table⁵ below shows the number of victims entering temporary accommodation and supported accommodation in 2016/17 with either a primary or secondary need of domestic abuse.

³ Duty of care - In some circumstances we have a duty to provide you and your household with accommodation. We will assess your circumstances to establish if we owe you a duty. We consider whether you are: eligible for housing assistance, homeless, in priority need, intentionally homeless, have a local connection. These tests are defined by law. Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act determines the tests which we have to apply. <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/housing/housing-advice-options-line>.

⁴ The client group includes: people with mental health issues people with current or historical substance misuse people with a learning disability who also have other complex needs, people with convictions that have restrictions on where they can live, 16/17 year olds who are homeless and other vulnerable individuals <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/housing/housing-advice-options-line>.

⁵ HIS 2016/17 data, Jackie Ainsworth, June 2017



Number of clients entering accommodation based services in 2016-17			
Accommodation type	Male	Female	Total
Temporary Accommodation	13	128	141
Primary need	7	81	88
Secondary need	6	47	53
Supported Accommodation schemes	12	140	152
Primary need	8	117*	125
Secondary need	4	23	27
Other accommodation services (e.g. Transitional Landlord Services)	1	6	7
Primary need	0	0	0
Secondary need	1	6	7
TOTAL	26	274	300
* of the 117, 104 went to the SARAS refuge			

The table shows

- A total of **300** victims entered temporary (141), supported accommodation (152) or another accommodation scheme (7) in 2016/17.
- 8.6% of all victims allocated to temporary or supported accommodation were male. This percentage is in line with the DACT SCC contracts for community based specialist DA support. Where the medium and standard risk service is commissioned to have 10% of their caseload as males victims and the high risk to support 7% of males.
- The majority 215 (or 71%) had a primary need of being at risk of domestic abuse and 85 had a secondary need however the separation of needs is a complex issue. Often victims have multiple and or complex needs, including drug, alcohol, mental health and criminal justice issues and domestic abuse. It is perhaps more realistic to state that all 300 were at risk of being a victim of domestic abuse and this was a significant factor in being allocated accommodation.

Supported accommodation

- Of the 300 victims allocated to temporary or supported accommodation, the majority or **152** entered supported accommodation and of these **104** went to a refuge (see next page for full refuge discussion) and **48** went into a supported accommodation scheme that was not a women's refuge.
- The majority 125 (82%) had a primary need of being at risk of domestic abuse and 27 (18%) had a secondary need. This shows that those entering supported accommodation were more likely to be primary risk of domestic abuse than those entering temporary accommodation. This is not too surprising given that 104 victims entered the refuge.
- 12 were male and 140 female. This means that 7.8% of all individuals allocated by HIS to supported accommodation and had a priority need of domestic abuse were male.

Temporary accommodation

- Of the 300 victims allocated to temporary or supported accommodation, 141 entered temporary accommodation.
- The majority of those entering temporary accommodation (88 or 62%) had a primary need of domestic abuse and 53 (38%) had a secondary need.
- Of those entering temporary accommodation, 13 were male and 128 female. This means that 9.2% of all individuals allocated by HIS to temporary accommodation with a priority need of domestic abuse were male.

Other accommodation services



The number of individuals at risk of domestic abuse who entered another form of accommodation services was 13, this is relatively low, but it does show a further housing option available for victims. One such form is transitional landlord services⁶.

One further supported accommodation option available to the council is to provide a domestic abuse refuge.

The Women's Refuge

Compared to the overall prevalence estimates both nationally and locally, the number of people entering and supported in a refuge is a relatively small. For example the latest Women's Aid Annual survey⁷ report found that 124 refuge services⁸ had received 19,854⁹ referrals and 7,552 were accepted in 2015/16. This compares to a national prevalence estimates of 1.8 million (of which 1.2 million were females) victims in the last 12 month period¹⁰ and 98,500¹¹ MARAC cases discussed nationally in 2016/17.

Sheffield City Council has one contract for women's refuge provision in Sheffield. Since 2014/15 SCC has commissioned one service to provide women's refuge support in Sheffield. The contract was tendered in 2016 and the new contract started on the 2nd October 2016.

The three year contract provides 36 units of accommodation but the contract has the provision, if required, to extend up to two years. The units of accommodation required are calculated using an average length of stay of three months and therefore 34 units could provide refuge for up to 140 households per year. This is less than the recommended 72 units the Supported Housing Needs Assessment tool advises is appropriate for a city the size of Sheffield but the 72 does not take into account the additional temporary accommodation available for victims to access here in Sheffield.

The refuge receives referrals from victims fleeing from a number of local authority areas, and therefore is not an exclusive provision for Sheffield residents. Similarly Sheffield residents can and are referred to refuges in other Local Authority areas, if required.

The contract remains solely for women. There is an ongoing need to review the provision for male victims in Sheffield and their access to refuge accommodation. Whilst the numbers are likely to be relatively small, for some male victims a refuge may be required as an option. Nationally between April 2012 and March 2015, 27% of all domestic homicides recorded had a male victim¹², and this was also observed in the total cases reviewed in the Home office assessment of a random sample of 40 DHRs¹³. The percentage reduces when only intimate relationships are observed, and four of 33 (or 13%) intimate partner homicides had a female perpetrator. Here in Sheffield there has been a serious incident involving a male victim but no male Domestic homicide victims (April 2011 to November 2016). Locally therefore males only have access to temporary and (where need determined) supported accommodation, if a duty of care to house is determined.

Action – There is a need to ensure male victims have access to refuge provision, where a duty of care is determined.

⁶ Where the Council has a landlord provider who is allocated a number of council properties. Their role as landlord is to collect the rent but to also provide support at the start of the tenancy, working with individuals to develop skills and work towards them being able to maintaining a tenancy, start to pay back rent arrears and once established the Landlord will withdraw, the individual is left in the property which is then given back to the council to maintain the tenancy with the individual from there on in.

⁷ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/research-and-publications/annual-survey-2016/> published 2017 using 2015/16 data

⁸ These were the services who responded to the survey, and therefore do not cover all refuges nationally.

⁹ A person can be referred several times to several different refuges; therefore there will be some double counting here.

¹⁰ CSEW 2015/16

¹¹ SafeLives data

¹² The Domestic Abuse Office of National Statistics Data Tool was published on 8th December 2016

¹³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesdatatool>

The Home Office, *DHRs: KEY FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-homicide-review-lessons-learned#history> December 2016



The refuge provision is based across two locations; with 20 units of accommodation in the recently 'purpose-built' refuge and a second, separate facility which contains 15 self-contained units. This includes several units that are accessible to people using wheelchairs / with mobility issues. The larger refuge of the two also has one emergency unit or crash pad. Accommodation is available for females and their dependent children (up to the age of 18 or in full time education or otherwise still dependent on their mother) and for young (16 and 17 year old) female victims and their households) where their needs are specific to requiring refuge as opposed to a young person's service.

The overall aim of the refuge contract is for the service user and their dependents to be safe and reduce their risk level and incidences of domestic abuse and homelessness, for the service user to become independent, having increased control over their daily life and prevent social isolation. The refuge does this by supporting service users on a one to one basis, providing group support and by being a conduit for the service user; referring into the most relevant services (e.g. health, training/ education and welfare) based on each individual's assessed need.

The refuge assess all service users for the risk of domestic abuse using the ACPO DASH risk assessment tool, refer to MARAC where high risk is identified and complete the Family CAF for all residents with children.

Outcomes are measured on overall outcome (Positive end to support) and the local Outcomes Framework. The framework has five areas – Economic Wellbeing, Enjoy & Achieve, Being Healthy, Staying Safe And Making A Positive Contribution / Develop Confidence And Involvement.

Sheffield Refuge Activity

In 2015/16 137 new households entered the refuge¹⁴. The HIS data below provides an insight, but is not a full picture of activity because of missing data in the dataset provided:-

- 100% had a female victim (which is line with the contract for refuge which is female only provision).
- 100% of those in the refuge should have domestic abuse as either the primary or secondary need. Data entry was limited in the primary and secondary need. 50% of the households had a primary need 'People at Risk of Domestic Violence'¹⁵, and 9% had a secondary need of People at Risk of Domestic Violence. 32% have 'primary reason unknown' or 'blank' and 16% were other (includes mental health, drugs and alcohol problems and complex needs).
- 46% of the households had children
- 40% of the victims were aged between 26 to 34 years. The average age was 31 years, with the youngest aged 18 and the oldest aged 59 years.
- 77% were heterosexual, 4% were LBGT (19% did not have this information provided).
- 54% stated their ethnicity as White British and 35% BME; (11% did not have this information provided).
- 9% did not state their nationality as British, with most of these being from outside the European Economic Area (EEA)
- 31% stated they had no religion, 15% said they were Muslim, 9.5% were Christian, 2% were other, and the remaining 42.5% did not have this information provided.
- 5% disclosed a disability, and mental health was the primary disability stated.
- Referrals to the refuge came from six named sources; self-referrals accounted for 55% of the total, 12% were referred by other domestic abuse agencies, Friends, Not Known, Other, Police, Children And Young People Social Care & Voluntary Agency accounted for 11% and 23% had no referral source stated.
- In 2015/16 the refuge made 17 referrals to MARAC; however referrals have fallen to less than 10 in the first three quarters of 2016/17.

¹⁴ Data provided by Lucy Hagan, HIS September 2016

¹⁵ Although 30% in total recorded this was not known



Action – The quality of the refuge data available and used in the needs assessment was poor for some fields of data. There is a need to ensure data quality is improved to ensure all data fields are collected from services users and input onto the system, in order for accurate interpretation to be undertaken.

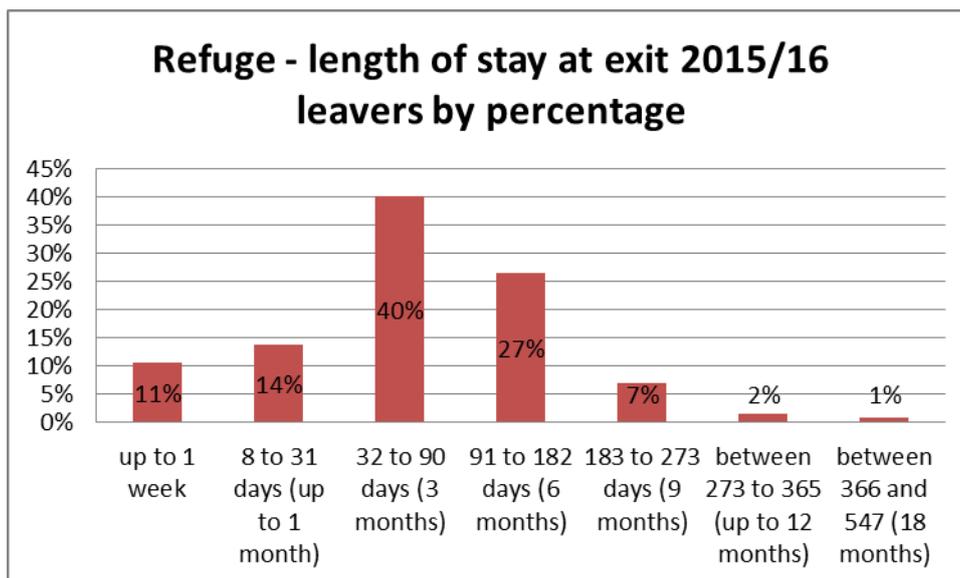
Action - The reduction in refuge referrals to MARAC in 2016/17 needs reviewing with the refuge provider and housing services to ensure all victims are DASH risk assessed and referred to MARAC accordingly.

Refuge Outcomes

There were a total of 132 households that exited the refuge in 2015/16.

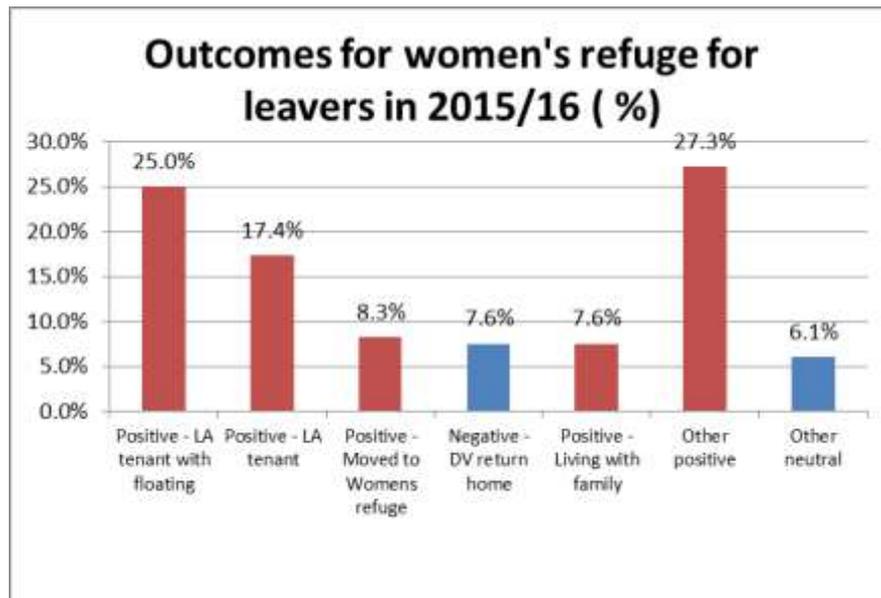
The average length of stay for exits during 2015/16 differs wildly; the shortest is 1 day and the longest 407 days, with an average of 82 days)¹⁶, which is marginally less than the three months (or 90 days) capacity is built around. For those who exit in a positive way the average time in the refuge does not greatly differ to the overall average and is 86 days, thus suggesting that length of stay does not necessarily determine a positive exit.

See the table below for the exit data by length of stay. It shows that the majority of leaver exit between one month and three months after entering the refuge, with 40% of all leavers staying for this period of time, whilst 25% stay less than one month and 27% stay between 3 months and six months.



The outcomes for the 132 households leaving the women’s refuge in 2015/16 are found below. The graph shows the percentage activity, although for data protection purposes where the activity was less than 10, the data is contained in the ‘other positive’ column.

¹⁶ HIS data, 2015/16



- 113 households or 86% of all leavers had a positive outcome.
- Of the successful outcomes 67 (or 59%) moved into rented accommodation, 18 (16%) moved in with friends and 11 (10%) moved to another refuge and 17 (15%) either returned home or stated another reason.
- The other positive category is the highest for exits reasons; however this is the total of six exits reasons where the volume was less than 10. Exits reasons in this category were those who moved to a housing association property (with or without floating support), moved to private rented accommodation (with or without floating support) or moved to supported accommodation (dispersed or hostel).
- 14% households had a negative or neutral outcome, with over half of these victims returning home.

Additional information on the complex needs of refuge residents

The needs assessment questionnaire was completed by the refuge in May 2016. They were asked the same questions as all the other providers attending the PCG. A copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix 8. Data provided by the refuge in the questionnaire¹⁷ provides further information on the forms of abuse and the multiple and complex needs of residents:-

- A total of 226 victims had been victims of domestic abuse plus other forms of abuse such as sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, FGM, trafficking, honour based violence and forced marriage and sex work. The number on the caseload who had been victims of sexual exploitation, trafficking, involved in sex work and forced marriage was higher than that of the previous year.
- On average most victims had been a victim of at least ten domestic abuse incidents in the last year.
- Residents can have a range of mental health illnesses including borderline personality disorder, severe depression, PTSD, self-harming, eating disorders and thought of suicide.
- Residents often have a lack of self-esteem /confidence, trust issues, feel isolated and lonely, have little family support, have a lack of control in their own life, can be in debt and have difficulties budgeting.
- Residents are vulnerable due to a range of other issues including substance misuse issues, are more vulnerable due to having grown up in a household where domestic abuse happened, having been a victim of child abuse, may have an inability to recognise the early signs of domestic abuse and can be a repeat victim, they often have poor parenting skills, educational needs and poor literacy skills

¹⁷ SARAS response to the domestic and sexual abuse questionnaire for the needs assessment, May 2016



- English is often not a first language or residents have poor English speaking skills, have immigration issues and may have no access to public funds, they may have cultural and or religious needs including children's religious education, child birth needs and a lack awareness of their rights.
- Victims who are young (aged 16 and 17) have different need to those of older victims.
 - For example, benefits are often lower resulting in difficulties maintaining the tenancy (the victim pays a service charge) to cover personal heat and lighting etc. to the refuge.
 - It is more difficult to get housing, to move into, again linked to limited benefits and types of tenancy that can be taken up by under 18s. Once rehoused, there are difficulties in maintaining the tenancy and other daily living costs.
 - There are education needs, including learning basic independent living skills and the emotional draw of family members and the isolation of being in a refuge.
 - There are also difficulties with living amongst others, including being vulnerable to developing inappropriate friendships with other residents due to their young age.
 - The provider also mentioned the lack of mental health provision for these victims, thereby suggesting young refuge victims often have mental health issues.

The refuge explained that they support the complex needs of the victims by applying a multi-agency model. This includes workers from the Homeless Assessment and Support Team (HAST) which provides access to healthcare and support services for homeless people in Sheffield who have mental health problems. HAST workers visit the service regularly to support women with their mental and physical health needs. Staff also support residents with access to a midwife, solicitors and specialist BAMER support services and referrals can be made and are made to drug and alcohol services where required. A concierge model is now part of the spec (piloted using DCLG refuge funding in 2015/16) enabling access out of hours and offering more accessible support to residents when so many have complex needs and issues.

Social media and the refuge - HIS have explained that historically a refuge hid the person from the perpetrator; however this appears to be changing. The use of and access to social media by residents (mobile phones etc.) means that often the victim's location is shared and known to those who know her, and therefore refuges remain a safe haven to protect the victim physically, but residents are often no longer 'hidden' from the perpetrator.

Going into a refuge is a big decision. When service users were consulted it was found that they had a number of fears over accessing such provision. For example, one of the service users did not consider a refuge for fear of losing her house, and another feared refuge initially because she had an older male child and a number of children and therefore did not think it would be an option based on the size of the family. Based on this victim information these questions about refuge provision could be clearly explained on the local DACT website.

Action - Work with the SURG, HIS and the local refuge to update the refuge section on the 'get help' pages

The national position

Many articles in the media focus on reducing refuge accommodation and high demand. The Women's Aid¹⁸ annual survey high lights this each year.

Sheffield has not reduced its commissioned capacity for the last few years and has instead increased the support available for those with complex needs and improved the accommodation available including a new purpose built building.

¹⁸ *The Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015* <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/womens-aid-annual-survey-reports/>



The Women's Aid survey 2015 also shows a snap shot of the refuge accommodation available nationwide across the country on one day¹⁹, according to the UK ONLINE refuge database. This was not repeated in 2016 survey.

Should Sheffield not have capacity on a given day, the findings from the 2015 survey found 190 refuge spaces were available on their 'snap shot' day. The number reduced however when specific needs were considered. Of the 190 bed spaces around half would accept a parent and two children, a third could fit a cot in, and 17 would accept a woman with three or more children.

10% could accommodate women with mobility needs, 60% could accommodate victims with an older male child (60%), 10% (but a third of these needed funding to be in place) were available for victims who were NRPF.

63% would accommodate a victim with drug and alcohol issues and the majority (83%) would accommodate a victim with mental health needs.

Requests for a refuge in a specific geographic region (e.g. Yorkshire or Leeds) reduced availability further.

The number of Sheffield residents who self-refer to other areas in the country is unknown and therefore we do not know the number of people who are being turned away from refuges that are located outside of Sheffield for our residents. However if this was a significant issue for local victims then it is likely that there would be more victims in contact with the Housing support pathway, HIS and the domestic abuse helpline seeking support for a referral to a refuge.

Action 33 of the VAWG strategy was to invest £40 million over the four year spending review period to support domestic abuse services including refuge provision another accommodation based services. In 2016 November the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) made available a £20 million fund, provided over two years (2016/17 and 2017/18). The fund prospectus acknowledges that refuges need to meet the complex needs of victims and should be available to all victims. Not all LAs have a refuge (and the issues for victims living in these areas have been well publicised over recent years), indeed a Women's Aid survey from 2014²⁰ revealed that around 74% of all survey respondents came from another LA. This may be a precise intention to place victims away from offenders as well as absence of refuges in certain LA²¹.

The DCLG wanted funding bids to be cross partnership to plug gaps, meet specialist needs and adapt accommodation to meet need. Bids were wanted from commissioners for the specialist accommodations they support and service reform for domestic abuse services. The bidding prospectus specifically stated that *'no victim of domestic abuse is turned away from the accommodation support they need including refuges and other forms of specialist accommodation based services'*. The Women's Aid survey in 2014/15 found that over 18,000 refuge referrals were made to those refuges surveyed, of which around 6,000 (or 33%) were accepted, 23% were refused because there was no capacity in the refuge at the time (the majority of these were referred on to other refuges²²) and 14% were refused because the refuge could not support a specific need.

HIS in Sheffield secured £93,500 of the DCLG funding bid to *'strengthen the capacity of the support provided by the refuge service and build on the work that they already undertake by providing successful routes into independent living for all service users, particularly including those for whom it is more difficult – women with complex needs and those from BME backgrounds with no or poor*

¹⁹ The Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015 <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/womens-aid-annual-survey-reports/>

²⁰ 2014 Survey of Domestic Violence Services Findings <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/womens-aid-annual-survey-reports/>

²¹ Marina Ciaraldi, HIS team, SCC following reviewing the section in February 2017

²² And therefore the 18,000 referrals are likely to include some double counting, where an individual has been referred to one refuge, declined and then referred to another.



English and with greater cultural barriers. The project will ensure that the targeted groups of women can thrive within a supportive environment and can access structured group work and therapeutic activities to support recovery'. It will provide additional IT support to assist all service users to navigate the benefits system, apply for housing and maximise their income; access training and education opportunities; better manage their physical and mental health needs; access social activities and develop confidence and social skills²³".

HIS have explained that the money will be used to make an improved psychological living environment and to work with victims in a more informed way and address complex needs. IT services within the refuges will be updated to allow access to education and employment solutions for those who are in a position to do so. A proportion of the funding will be used for the sanctuary scheme.

Current issues / or concerns

The Supported Accommodation Review

The Government's Supported Accommodation Review proposes changes to the housing benefit. The housing benefit the service user currently receives goes towards paying towards the cost of their refuge, supported or temporary accommodation. The housing benefit received going forward will form part of their universal credit payment²⁴ (i.e. one payment), and will be an amount based on 'the lowest up to the level of the applicable local authority housing (LAH) rate²⁵'. The new funding model is expected from 1 April 2019.

The supported accommodation review finds that ²⁶*Local authorities are best placed to make decisions about how to support vulnerable people in their areas and to commission the supported housing services that are needed locally. The new model will devolve funding to local authorities in England to provide a 'top-up' where necessary to providers, reflecting the often higher costs of offering supported housing'. The review acknowledges 'a different approach may be needed for short term accommodation, including hostels and refuges, but this type of accommodation will benefit from the same protection as supported housing in general'.*

Supported accommodation tends to be more expensive than the LHA amount therefore for those victims in these forms of accommodation, they will have a bigger gap between the housing payment they receive and the total rent payable to the social housing provider.

This means in the future, there is likely to be more victims with a greater 'reliance on local Discretionary Housing Payments²⁷²⁸', which is a limited 'top up' fund (although is likely to be increased following the housing benefit changes) received annually by the LA from central government. It is paid to successful applicants whose personal circumstances mean they are struggling to pay their rent. Whilst this is not as big an issue for SCC as the Housing benefit subsidy loss, it is an issue for some victims.

'The Government has confirmed that it has delayed the introduction of the cap to allow it to carry out a proper strategic review of how supported housing is funded²⁹'. However there is a timetable proposed 'In Autumn 2017, the government will say how we are going to make the changes. In April 2018, there

²³ Marina Ciaraldi, HIS team, SCC following reviewing the section in February 2017

²⁴ For those who do not have universal credit at this point (phased in process), housing benefit will still be paid.

²⁵ <http://www.housing.org.uk/topics/welfare-reform/supported-and-sheltered-housing/>

²⁶ *Funding for Supported Housing - consultation*, Department of Work and Pensions, November 2016

²⁷ <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/benefit/payments/discretionarypayments.html>

²⁸ http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/housing_benefit_and_local_housing_allowance/changes_to_housing_benefit/discretionary_housing_payments

²⁹ <http://www.housing.org.uk/topics/welfare-reform/supported-and-sheltered-housing/>



will be a 1 year transition period and in April 2019, the new way of funding supported housing will be in place³⁰.

Refuge victims of domestic violence with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)³¹

Sheffield domestic abuse refuges provide accommodation for some domestic abuse victims who have No Recourse to Public Funds, these are victims who are not an EEU national or married to an EEU national³². The local authority has a duty since April 2012 to pay housing benefit for such individuals for an initial three month period if they are granted temporary recourse to public funds under the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession. The concession however only applies to women on partner visas³³, therefore it is even more complex for victims who are an 'over stayer' or for those not on a spousal visa (e.g. student visa) to receive assisted funding.

Victims from the EU and living with domestic abuse

Some individuals live in the UK and are an EU national. Unlike those individuals from outside the EU, they did not need a visa to enter and therefore are not NRPF. These victims may have been financially dependent on the perpetrator, prevented from working, isolated and as part of this isolation have not learnt English. This may mean the victim may struggle to find work, or hold down a job and may struggle with keeping their benefits. Therefore some victims from the EU (up to 8% of victims in the refuge have an ethnicity status of Romany, other ethnic group or white any other background and may find it difficult to pay for their refuge accommodation. This is an area that has been raised by HIS as an emerging area of need for a minority, but may need further consideration.

Further feedback from the needs assessment questionnaire on housing and victim's needs

One of the respondents to the questionnaire was the Young Women's Housing Project³⁴. This is a supported accommodation service in Sheffield. They attend the DSA Provider Consultation Group and the Operational Group. It is not a refuge, but it is a homeless accommodation service for young women (aged 16 to 25 years) who have been affected by sexual and domestic abuse. The service offers a range of support opportunities including accommodation, the Protect Yourself programme focusing on healthy relationships, keeping safe, increasing confidence, managing risk etc, the PAFT (Parents as first teachers) parenting programme, sexual health interventions and therapeutic support,

The service is funded from a number of different sources including Housing Independence Service – SCC, Voluntary sector grant fund – SCC, Children in Need and the South Yorkshire Community fund (CCG).

Information provided by the service finds that in 2015/16 YWHP received 81 referrals for women who were victims of domestic and sexual abuse and they supported 48 victims during the year. HIS data³⁵ finds that 16 were new to the accommodation service and 16 left the accommodation in this year.

The service explained that:-

- Their service users had experienced multiple forms of abuse; sexual abuse (73%), domestic abuse (54%), sexual exploitation (31%) and other abuses including trafficking and sex work.
- The majority of victims had been abused more than 10 times in the last year.

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-accommodation-review>

³¹ An individual, who is subject to immigration control, has no entitlement to welfare benefits, public housing or Home Office asylum support and does not have the right to work.

³² <http://rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Domestic-violence-immigration-law-and-no-recourse-to-public-funds-.pdf> The European Economic Area is the European Union (EU) (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Hungary, the Irish Republic, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK) and three other countries that while not being members of the EU, are treated in a similar way. These countries are Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. Switzerland is not a member of the EU or EEA but it is treated as if it is. The Regulations that bring EEA law into UK law refers to all of these people as 'EEA nationals' and gives them important rights to live and work in the UK.

³³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-benefits-for-visa-holder-domestic-violence>

³⁴ <http://www.ywhp.org.uk/>

³⁵ Lucy Hagan, HIS data 2015/16 informed in 2017



- The victims engaging with their service tend to be vulnerable, are often having 'Looked After Children (LAC), estranged from their family, engaging in risky behaviour (drugs, alcohol, abusive, exploitative friendships).
- The service users has a range of support needs, including learning how to live independently (practically and financially), gaining life skills and building their confidence and their awareness of their support needs so they can access community based support (e.g. welfare and parenting support services) and health services (e.g. sexual health, mental health and physical health).

The service explains that their residents receive and access wrap around support for their needs. Victim issues are very complex and therefore they are less likely to want to access specialist domestic and sexual abuse services outside the YWHP provision. Reasons for not accessing support may include victims not be ready to deal with the trauma and the abuse they have suffered and they find it difficult to engage with services (likely to miss appointments and often need one on one support).

Specialist support is provided in the service. Three years (2016/17 to 2018/19) of Big Lottery funding for the provision of therapeutic support within the service has been received via the Sheffield 'Recovery & Empowerment Partnership'³⁶. In YWHP's own words funding will be used to 'empower women and girls who have been affected by abuse to take control of their lives, by increasing access and provision of therapeutic and practical support'.

The outcomes of this support will be monitored by the partnership and the Big Lottery; however there is a local need to better understand support provided across the city (and therefore map service provision wider than those services that are directly commissioned by DACT and HIS), as per the Violence Against Women and Girls Services- Supporting Local Commissioning Toolkit³⁷. The questionnaire goes some way to completing this mapping exercise; however a new recording tool will be introduced to complete this exercise. It will be used by voluntary sector domestic and sexual abuse support services to understand the offer available citywide, including the level of engagement and outcomes of victims in wider support services. Go to Section 11 – Domestic Abuse Support Services in Sheffield for further detail.

3. Support to victims in their own home (sanctuary scheme and floating support)

Floating Support

HIS have 13 floating support contracts which all can provide support to victims of domestic abuse. The floating support services role is to support individuals in their accommodation to retain their tenancy and or work with individuals in their new homes, to get established in the home and engaged with the new community. Workers provide housing and benefits advice. For victims of domestic abuse, the services need to consider the specific needs this brings, e.g. vulnerabilities of being in a new area, confidence, being financially in control.

The data for all new entrants to floating support can be found in the table below. A total of **322** new entrants' received floating support in 2015/16 from a total of 13 floating support services, of which 97% were female, 71% had risk of domestic abuse as a priority need, 62% had children (similar to all those in DA support), 27% were BME, 12% had a disability, 91% were heterosexual and 3% LGBT, the average age was 34 years old and over half (52%) had been referred by a domestic abuse support service.

³⁶ The partnership is made up of YWHP, Vida, Haven House, Ashiana & Chilypep

³⁷ Violence against women and girls services: local commissioning toolkit

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf



		Volume	Percentage
Total new entrants		322	
Gender	female	311	97%
	Male	11	3%
Priority Need	Primary need DA	230	71%
	Secondary need DA	92	29%
Children	with children	200	62%
Age	aged between 26 and 34	120	37%
	Average age	34	11%
Sexuality	heterosexual	294	91%
	LGBT	9	3%
	No sexual information	19	6%
Ethnicity	White British	198	61%
	BME	86	27%
	No ethnicity information	10	3%
Nationality	British	256	80%
	Non- British	40	12%
	from EEA	12	4%
Religion	no religion	150	47%
	Muslim	45	14%
	Christian	63	20%
	Other religion	3	1%
	does not wish to disclose	10	3%
Disability	with disability	39	12%
	Mental health	20	6%
Referral source	self - referral	117	36%
	referral from domestic abuse agency	168	52%
	referral source not stated	18	6%
Data source - HIS, February 2017			

There is one floating support contract that aims to provide a more specialist focus to victims of abuse. This Domestic abuse floating support service in Sheffield was tendered by HIS in 2016 and was awarded to Shelter. The contract is a generic floating support contract, which also specifically includes support to victims of domestic abuse. This is a different contract to that commissioned previously when there was a specific domestic abuse floating support service commissioned standalone service.

The domestic abuse contract activity in 2015/16 had 104 new households who entered floating support in 2015/16 for. This means that the service had one third of all victims in floating support in their service.

The profile of those supported was that 96% of households had a female victim, 81% had a primary need of domestic abuse³⁸ and 4% had a secondary need of domestic abuse, 53% had children, 41% of victims were aged between 26-34 years. Of the total, the average age was 35 years (range 20 and to 61 years old). 86% were heterosexual and 1% were LGBT and 13% did not provide this information. 59% stated their ethnicity as White British, 34% BME and 5% did not provide this information. 11% did not state their nationality as British, with half of these being from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). 35.5% stated they had no religion, 14.5% were Muslim, 11.5% were Christian, 1% were 'other' and 37.5% did not provide this information. 7.5% stated they had a disability, with mental health accounting for most of the disabilities stated. Referrals came for six named sources; with self-referrals accounting for 51% of the total, and 33% from domestic abuse agencies.

Whilst one third of domestic abuse victims receiving floating support do so from the new specialist contract, two thirds are seen by the other 12 floating support services. This shows that it is important that all floating support services are trained in working with and supporting those who have been victims of domestic abuse.

Action – Work towards all floating support services commissioned by SCC to have domestic abuse training within the last two years.

³⁸ Although 10% in total recorded this was not known



Outcomes of those in Floating Support

The total number exiting the DA floating support contract in 2015/16 was 102. The majority (98%) having a positive outcome and completed their support programme.

Sanctuary Scheme

The Sanctuary Scheme provides physical alterations/ adaptations to residential properties to provide specific safety and security solutions for victims. The security options provide additional protection from the perpetrator who may be living away from the property but also to protect victims when the abuse happens inside the property. The solutions include door chimes, shock alarms, installing a lockable letterbox, solar lighting and external letterbox, a special hard 'sanctuary door' and new locks.

The recent DCLG funding bid was successful at securing £30,000 towards improving access to BME victims to the sanctuary scheme.

Sanctuary Scheme activity data has been very patchy for the last four years. This makes analysis of the Scheme difficult because it is difficult to ascertain the annual need for the service and therefore annual costs are relatively unknown. This issue has been raised in the HIS report provided to the JCG in February 2016.

Using the data available³⁹ the conclusions we can draw include that referrals are most likely to be from the specialist domestic abuse support service which account for 42%⁴⁰ of referrals; the breakdown of referrals is as follows:-

- IDVA service (22%), which means referrals have also been to MARAC⁴¹
- Other domestic abuse services (20%).
- Other significant referrers include the police (22%)
- Housing (14%).

Further details from the data find that:-

- 78% have a victim who has at least one child living in the house
- the victim is most likely to be living⁴² in either the local authority (50%) or housing association (22%) property
- The property is most likely to be located in S5 (22%) or S2 (12%)⁴³.

A strategic decision was made at the JCG to commission the sanctuary scheme service administration to an external provider for the first time who would be the conduit between victim, referrer and the repair service/ social landlord undertaking the adaptation. The aims include providing consistency in service delivery, reducing costs, ensuring the offer is given to those victims who need it and getting more effective data. Some of the issues the contract will need to respond to are those victims who require an adaption but are living in a privately rented property but the private landlord has the decision to agree to the change.

Until the commissioning is undertaken, the sanctuary scheme offer remains limited.

Action – DACT to commission the sanctuary scheme and monitor the activity to gain a better understanding of the need.

³⁹ Sanctuary data provided for 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 (very limited data), 2014/15, 2015/16 (four months missing). The unknown is what information was not provided. Some years have more data in some fields than others. Therefore only data where it is consistent has been used (e.g. postcode data is available for three year, therefore the percentages are based on the three years of data only).

⁴⁰ Sample size for all the referral data is 1,224

⁴¹ 51% of those who had the information available, data are from a sample size of 257 victims.

⁴² Analysis of the Sanctuary scheme between 5/7/16 and 24/11/16, HIS

⁴³ Sample size is 838, for 2011/12 to 2013/14