

Accommodation for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Discussion Paper – April 2021

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This paper is supported by and features contributions from members of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)-led Perpetrators and Housing working Group, comprising:

Chartered Institute of Housing, The Drive Partnership, Gentoo, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, London Borough of Camden, National Housing Federation, Peabody, RISE Mutual CIC, Safer London, St Mungo Community Housing Association, Standing Together and Supporting Safe and Confident Communities

Introduction and Purpose

Domestic abuse is not acceptable or inevitable. Perpetrators must be recognised as the cause of harm and to eradicate it, we need a holistic response for perpetrators as well as support for victims. Perpetrator work should never come at a cost to victim-survivor services, the two must complement each other.

The Covid-19 pandemic and discussions surrounding amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill, have highlighted the need to consider perpetrator housing options as a means to address perpetrators' abuse and to increase victim safety and housing security.

The new statutory duty on local authorities to provide safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse means the challenge of delivering safe, sustainable accommodation outcomes for victims is going to be a key issue for local government for years to come. The government will now also have a statutory duty to publish a strategic approach to DA perpetrators by April 2022 and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government is likely to be asked for its input into this. As this paper will show, the department has a significant potential policy contribution to make.

The government manifesto commitment to eliminate rough sleeping by 2027 has also built interest in this issue. There are high levels of domestic abuse recorded amongst those experiencing rough sleeping both as victims and perpetrators. When perpetrators' housing needs are not met, they continue to present a risk of harm and homelessness to victims who may already be experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness, or the victims they approach for accommodation.

We recognise that facilitating accommodation for perpetrators may appear at face-value to incentivise harmful behaviour. However, without the option to remove and rehouse a perpetrator, victims including children will continue to suffer by remaining trapped in abusive relationships or being forced to flee their home. This is not a new challenge. Formulation of accommodation policy for ex-offenders involves similar dilemmas. Victims' views are central here. In the words of a survivor:

“Keep me in the home, for my mental health and my sons mental health. When the police got involved, they didn't let me know what they'd done with him, I was just moved even though I didn't want to.” **Survivor**

Over the past year, DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) and the Drive Partnership alongside a broad alliance of voluntary and statutory sector organisations have been building the case for why more formalised perpetrator housing support and pathways are needed to keep victims safe and prevent further abuse. In 2021, this alliance was formalised through the establishment of the Perpetrator and Housing Working Group, a subgroup of the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group led by DAHA, who are progressing this agenda, including through this paper and wider engagement with MHCLG.

In October 2020, a group of housing charities, the Local Government Association, local councillor leaders, and domestic abuse/ women's sector charities wrote to then Housing

Minister Kelly Tolhurst to ask MHCLG to work with us to better develop effective responses. We welcome the invitation to meet with MHCLG Officials to further discuss the nature of this challenge, why ignoring it is so costly for victims, to share some examples of approaches that are underway to test solutions, and what further steps might be necessary. Whilst we firmly believe there is a strong case for why this is needed, we understand there are no simple answers or solutions, hence our desire to work with MHCLG to explore the challenges to overcome.

We hope this paper can provide valuable foundations for our discussions by setting out:

- i. The role of housing and homelessness services in the response to domestic abuse and the potential benefits of housing perpetrators as part of a Whole Housing Approach for victims-survivors.
- ii. The barriers which currently prevent victims-survivors from having the option to stay in their own accommodation when the perpetrator's housing needs are not formally addressed.
- iii. Examples of emerging practice and pilots providing accommodation to perpetrators alongside behaviour change interventions.
- iv. Early thinking on what is needed in the short and longer term to drive change on this important issue.

Role of housing for domestic abuse perpetrators in supporting victim safety

The Home Secretary Priti Patel stated on 11th April 2020 that, "*perpetrators should be the ones who have to leave the family home, not the supposed loved ones whom they torment and abuse.*" In May, the Drive Partnership published a paper¹ which laid out the key issues/risks to the safety of victims-survivors that can arise because of a lack of risk-managed housing pathways for perpetrators, especially in the context of COVID-19.

While welcome efforts have been made by central and local government to open up additional pathways to safe accommodation for victims and families; where it would be in the best interests of the victim and better ensure their safety and wellbeing, adequate housing provision is still urgently needed for perpetrators. The lack of availability of such accommodation is limiting options available to victims and the police in their endeavour to keep victims safe.

¹ <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Accommodation-for-Perpetrators-of-DA-Emerging-Issues-and-Responses-May-2020.pdf>

Staying safe at home – part of the Whole Housing Approach

2.3 million people are subjected to domestic abuse in the UK annually². Victims are predominantly female (est.67-75%)³, often with children also subjected to the abuse. Housing is often used to exert control over the victim; with the perpetrator using their need for housing to return to the victim's address or manipulate the victim economically. Or, in the case of women who are rough sleeping, the perpetrator may block her access to housing and support completely. At least 26,000 people in England were made homeless in the year April 2019 – March 2020 due to domestic abuse⁴. Research led by St. Mungo's found that 32% of homeless women said domestic violence contributed to their homelessness and 35% of women who have slept rough left home to escape violence⁵.

Routes into secure, long-term accommodation for victims-survivors through refuge services, social housing, the private rented sector, private ownership and supported/sheltered housing are crucial in enabling safety and recovery. DAHA's Whole Housing Approach outlines the core tenancy types and the policy and practice components which together *"improve the housing options and outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse so that they can achieve stable housing, live safely and overcome their experiences of abuse"*.⁶

As part of this approach, it is critical that victims-survivors also have the choice to remain safe in their own accommodation. To ensure that this option is available, where possible and where the principles outlined below are met, perpetrators should be removed or diverted from the victim-survivor's home to stop and/or prevent abuse and serious harm from occurring. In some cases, accommodation may need to be provided to perpetrators to enable the victim-survivor and their family to remain safely in their home. This is not about incentivising abusive behaviour but is necessary to improve victims-survivors safety, agency, and choice.

Principles for this approach

- **It must be safe and in the best interest of the adult and child victims-survivors** – The wellbeing and safety of adult and child victim-survivors must be at the centre of a perpetrator housing response.
- **It must be survivor-led and informed** – The approach must be based on the expressed needs and wishes of victim-survivors, who are the experts of their own experiences, have the greatest understanding of the risks posed by the perpetrator and what they need to achieve safety and housing security.
- **Adequate and ongoing support must be offered to the adult and child victim-survivors** – Any response to the perpetrator must be complemented by the provision of specialist domestic abuse support to victim-survivors.
- **There must be an adequate and ongoing multi-agency response to the perpetrator to hold them to account** – The approach must involve multi-agency

² ONS Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2020

³ ONS Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2020

⁴ MHCLG Statutory Homelessness Statistics

⁵ Rebuilding Shattered Lives, St. Mungo's, 2014

⁶ Whole Housing Approach Toolkit, Chapter 1 - <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach/whole-housing-toolkit/>

perpetrator risk assessment and management, challenging their behaviour and offering support where it is safe to do so.

In applying these principles and assessing risk, we must also consider the intersectional circumstances of victims who are minoritized due to their ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality and homeless status.

Women from some racialised communities are more likely to experience abuse from multiple perpetrators, who may all be located within the home and/or in the immediate community⁷. They are also likely to be disproportionately and negatively affected by no recourse to public funds rules and concerns around their immigration status – this may impact on their ability to stay in their home and access support.

Furthermore, survivors living in supported housing or accessing homelessness support services are more likely to be experiencing multiple disadvantage. This group of survivors face considerable barriers to accessing safe, specialist accommodation and support, highlighting the need for a different and contextual approach.

Benefits and outcomes of this approach

We have heard from frontline practitioners, local authority workers and those with lived experience about the benefits of enabling the victim-survivor to stay within their accommodation by removing or diverting the perpetrator from the family home and offering alternative housing, including:

Victim-survivors' benefits

- Physical separation from the perpetrator may⁸ **reduce harm from abuse** and give increased survivor safety, choices and increase her space for action^{9,10}.
- The survivor will remain close to existing **support networks** near their home – whether this is friends and family or professional services (e.g. health and mental health services). Ongoing support for survivors offers a buffer against post-separation abuse which is common (and now recognised through the Domestic Abuse Bill).
- **Less disruption** to the **children's** schooling, friendships, and overall stability
- **Less trauma** to children through continued exposure to abuse, contributing to adverse childhood experience (ACE)
- **Reduce the economic burden of relocating**, including maintaining continuity of employment and benefits.

⁷ Guidance for Multi-Agency Forums: Cases involving victims who are black or minority ethnic https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/National%20Scrutiny%20Panel%20Guidance%20BME%202017_0.pdf

⁸ It is important to note that physical separation does not guarantee a reduction in abuse and harm but can be a step towards it if there are ongoing safety and support measures in place.

⁹ Finding the Costs of Freedom. How women and children rebuild their lives after domestic violence. Solace Women's Aid, 2018

¹⁰ Long Journeys Toward Freedom: The Relationship Between Coercive Control and Space for Action— Measurement and Emerging Evidence, Sharpe-Jeffs, Kelly, Klein, 2017

- Reducing the need for victims to struggle to know and plan for the future.
- **Reducing the stress and anxiety** of victims and families struggling to cope with loss of the family home, toys, possessions, clothing etc.
- **Reducing the risk of perpetrators continuing coercive controlling behaviour** in the form of manipulating victim-survivors into believing that they are responsible for 'making their partner / father of their child homeless'.
- **Perpetrators will be better equipped to engage in behavioural change programmes** if their basic needs (including housing) are met.

"If we're not moving her and her children out - those kids that have already been traumatised now have to go to a different school, maybe have six weeks off school while they're waiting for a place, and then go and live in some crappy box room in the refuge for the next three or four months; and that refuge costs, what, £900 a week. If we can move him out where, actually, all we do is pay the first month, or the deposit, and then he has to pay for himself - but it could be a longer-term offer - then cost effectiveness is far cheaper. The kids aren't being retraumatised. She's still around her support networks." Perpetrator Practitioner

Local authority and wider system benefits

- The domestic abuse victim and/or perpetrator will be **less likely to become homeless and sleep rough**, which decreases the risk presented by perpetrators to victims and other vulnerable individuals experiencing rough sleeping.
- Any children may be **less likely to have contact with children's social care**, than if the perpetrator was not rehoused.
- Any additional costs may be counterbalanced by **smaller housing requirements** for a single perpetrator rather than a family.
- Support and interventions provided to victims and perpetrators will have better chance of success if basic needs, including stable accommodation, are being met – **reducing the likelihood of the perpetrator continuing to cause abuse toward the victims or new victims.**

Whilst there is persuasive anecdotal evidence for these benefits, we need to build out the cost benefit analysis to better understand the potential savings case.

Analysis by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness¹¹, estimated the potential indicative cost to help a single domestic abuse victim household into secure accommodation would range between £3,617 to £11,434.

Greater investment will be needed in larger scale pilots and evaluation activities to build our understanding of costs averted due to:

- **Reducing housing costs for victims-survivors**

¹¹ A Safe Home: Breaking the link between homelessness and domestic abuse, All Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness, 2019

- **Reducing children’s social care costs**
- **Preventing serial perpetration** by reducing the likelihood that perpetrators will seek housing with other family members or start new relationships to secure housing, which places those individuals at risk.
- **Other system costs** such as the perpetrator remaining in the larger family home while the victim-survivor is forced into higher cost temporary accommodation or voids/property vacancies, cost of repairs to damages resulting from domestic abuse, cost of rent arrears.

Current barriers to victim safety and accommodation security

Our collective experience and the increased pressure on services due to COVID-19 has brought to light several systemic barriers which prevent the option of victim-survivors staying safe in their own home.

Low availability and access to housing for perpetrators

The **high demand for social housing and the lack of supply** in many areas of the UK means there is a high threshold for single perpetrators to access housing (unless they are classed as priority need for other reasons). They are also prevented from presenting as homeless in other LA areas as they need a local connection to be housed (lived there 6 months out of last 12 or 3 years out of last 5). The Homelessness Reduction Act goes some way to prevent this but can be dangerous as authorities may be inclined to negotiate with families to keep them together to prevent homelessness.

Homelessness charities regularly see women with existing vulnerabilities and multiple disadvantage who are homeless and experiencing domestic abuse, accommodated within mixed-sex homelessness provision, which is neither suitable nor appropriate as women are often accommodated with predators and perpetrators of abuse. This highlights the importance of women-only accommodation options and housing pathways for this cohort of women to bypass mixed-sex provision, but equally there needs to be male-only provision to divert perpetrators away from survivors.

Perception and awareness

We recognise that housing perpetrators may pose a moral dilemma for some professionals or appear at face-value to incentivise harmful behaviour. However, without the option to remove and rehouse a perpetrator, victims will continue to suffer by remaining trapped in abusive relationships or being forced to flee their home. Awareness raising and training is needed to support wide culture change among housing and homelessness professionals, and wider agencies, to empower them to consider perpetrator housing as a route to keep victims, including children, safe. It is vital that any investment and efforts towards perpetrator housing should not come at a cost to housing options and wider support for victims who are seeking accommodation security.

Policy and practice barriers

There are several policy and practice barriers which restrict housing pathways for the perpetrator from being secured which can extend or exacerbate risk and harm to the victim-survivor.

We have heard of cases where **police and judges have been reluctant to issue Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPN/Os)** in case they should make the perpetrator homeless (this has particularly been an issue during lockdown where other options for accommodation such as staying with family and friends has been cut off). This is also the case with Occupation Orders.

Where a DVPN/O or Occupation Order has been issued, and **safe and appropriate alternative accommodation has not been secured**, the perpetrator may return to the victim's home to continue the abuse or seek residence with another victim. This can be an issue where accommodation is not secured following release from prison and can render the victim and family homeless as they are forced to flee.

A lack of coordination between police and housing services can lead to delays and uncertainty in securing housing and accommodation. The Northumbria coordination mechanism discussed in the next section goes some way to addressing this, as does institutional advocacy provided by domestic abuse case managers.

Legal and financial barriers

After the removal of a perpetrator from the family home, victims-survivors can face significant legal and economic **barriers to sustaining the tenancy** in their own home.

There is currently no specific legal mechanism to enable social housing providers to support survivors to stay in their homes and remove a perpetrator from a joint tenancy shared with survivor. The legal mechanism that addresses domestic abuse specifically only allows social housing providers to evict a perpetrator after a survivor has permanently left a shared property. This does not address the needs of the survivor to safely remain within their own home and is dependent on her fleeing. This leaves the few social housing providers who are able and willing, to creatively use other legal remedies that are not specifically designed to address domestic abuse, such as antisocial behaviour legislation.

Even after the perpetrator has physically moved out of the property, while he remains named on the tenancy the survivor will not be able to change the locks or restrict his access to the property. She may seek a temporarily court order to do so, but when this inevitably ends, he has a right to return to the family home. The perpetrator can continue to cause rent arrears or and damages to the property, which both the survivor and the perpetrator will be jointly and severally liable for. This may cause the survivor lasting debt, economic harm, and risks of eviction and homelessness. While the perpetrator remains on the tenancy, he can limit the survivor's access to housing benefit to solely cover the rent.

The survivor's only option, other than complex and costly court proceedings, is to end the joint tenancy with the perpetrator, and in doing so, place herself at risk of homelessness as

there is no guarantee that the landlord will issue a sole tenancy to the survivor. Even if they do reissue the tenancy, they may not relet on the same terms and conditions, and these can become less favourable over time. This leaves survivors in the precarious position of being dependent on the will of housing providers and without any guarantee that their immediate housing and safety needs will be met.

Many survivors living in private housing, including privately rented and privately owned accommodation, face additional barriers to remaining safely in their own homes, including high rental costs and mortgages, benefit gaps, insecure and shared tenancies and mortgages with the perpetrator, shared deposits with the perpetrator, and landlords and letting agents who may have minimal understanding, awareness, or ability to support tenants experiencing domestic abuse. According to research conducted by the University of Bristol¹² on behalf of DAHA, the largest barrier to survivors achieving safety and housing security in the private rented sector was sharing a joint tenancy with the perpetrator. For survivors both in social and privately rented accommodation, sharing a joint tenancy with the perpetrator force many to become homeless and carry the practical, economic, and emotional burden of starting again.

Standing Together, DAHA and Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE) have recommended an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill (soon to be Act) to simplify the legal mechanism that could be used by a survivor in the county court to remove a perpetrator of domestic abuse from a secured or assured joint social tenancy. Although the amendment was not included within the Domestic Abuse Bill, we welcome the commitment made by the government to hold a consultation this summer to find a solution to this issue and include within relevant forthcoming legislation such as the Renter's Reform Bill. Standing Together, DAHA, WAFE and the whole National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group look forward to working with the MHCLG to achieve this, including consideration for how it can be extended to the private rented sector where a significant number of survivors face these same issues.

[The availability of risk management and behaviour change interventions which are needed alongside accommodation support](#)

Following the removal/separation of the perpetrator from the victim-survivor's accommodation, the coordination of a multi-agency response to the perpetrator is required to ensure victim-survivor safety. Without comprehensive measures that are suitable to cohorts across risk levels and consider wider circumstances such as multiple disadvantage or cultural contexts, the victim-survivor may remain at risk and the perpetrator could move on to another victim (the University of Bristol evaluation of the Drive pilot found that 28% of perpetrators seen at Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are serial perpetrators).

Multi-agency action coordinated through initiatives such as Multi-Agency Task and Coordination (MATAC) and/or wrap-around interventions such as Drive can enable risk to be

¹² Policy Evidence Summary 4: Justice, housing and domestic abuse, the experiences of homeowners and private renters, Walker and Hester for the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, 2019

better assessed and managed, and actions put in place to hold the perpetrator to account and address their behaviour, alongside support for the victims-survivors and families. Wider risk management and accountability mechanisms for lower risk perpetrators, as well as access to behaviour change programmes such as Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPP) are also essential parts of the picture.

There is strong evidence that interventions such as these can reduce risk, change behaviour, and reduce re-offending; however, they are not widely and consistently available across the country. The Domestic Abuse Commissioners Office is currently mapping provision of perpetrator programmes however know there are only 22 Respect Accredited interventions which is a fraction of the need for quality in this area of work. There is also a need for development of more specialist services, for instance:

- Perpetrators in homelessness support settings, many of whom will fall into the multiple disadvantage category and their needs would be considered too high for structured perpetrator work.
- Perpetrators from racialised communities are not well served by mainstream/generic services that typically do not have cultural-informed practice.
- More effective responses for
- More effective responses for LGBT+ communities, female perpetrators, and non-interpersonal relationship abuse

Emerging innovative models and practice

Pilot models which combine housing and intervention to hold perpetrators to account

There are emerging models in which perpetrators are removed from the family home, rehoused and provided with a wrap-around intervention which seeks to manage risk, hold them to account and change behaviour. Valuable learning is being generated through these pilots, and larger scale models will support building the evidence base.

London Early Intervention and Accommodation project

The London Early Intervention and Accommodation pilot is managed by Respect, SafeLives and Social Finance in partnership with 10 London Boroughs and has been funded for 1 year by MOPAC under their Covid-19 Emergency Accommodation programme. The intervention offers temporary hotel accommodation and intensive behaviour change support for those identified by Children's Social Care as being at risk of, or already, perpetrating abuse.

Evidence from the first 6 months of delivery demonstrates removing the perpetrator from the family home can lead to a reduction in abuse and provide emotional space for them to engage in the intervention and begin to understand and address the issues underlying their abuse:

Case Study 1

On Monday evening there was a further incident where Client B attacked his wife causing injury where she needed hospital treatment. We were able to work with the arresting officer and talk to Client B whilst in custody and reached a point where he agreed to the intervention. We identified alternative accommodation in the form of a hotel quickly and were able to work with the police to have condition of residency at the hotel as part of his DVPN. We were able to work with the victim and refer her into the borough's Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) provision and an emergency non-molestation order is being applied for today. An initial meeting went ahead with the perpetrator and follow up intervention has been booked in. The victim is now heard, believed, supported and safer. Without the accommodation offer it is likely the perpetrator would have breached the initial DVPN and further assault may have taken place. The police have no further actioned the case as again the perpetrator made counter allegations. The victim and her children are in a safer position and he can now be held to account through the behavioural change intervention he is engaging with.

Whilst the accommodation option is very important, and when it has been put in place has been very beneficial to the family, it needs to be more flexible (than short-term hotel funding) so that it can meet different needs, and be put in place quickly, for example when there is a crisis or an incident. Supporting people into alternative accommodation can come in different forms, for some it might be direct funding (either long term through Housing Allowance or support for an initial rental deposit), for others it may be support to find accommodation or to access the housing options team.

A social worker interviewee noted that having an accommodation option for perpetrators was important because it allows intensive work to be undertaken with the perpetrator, who may need space, mentally and physically, to face up to and explore their own issues and behaviour. At the same time, it safeguards the victim and children. We hear from other services about the challenges to engage perpetrators with behavioural change if basic needs are not met, for instance if they are living out of their car or in shared accommodation where they do not want to be overheard on virtual sessions.

reMove Abuse

The reMove Abuse housing and case management pilot in Barking and Dagenham places perpetrators of domestic abuse into short-term leases in dispersed units where the council have nomination rights or direct ownership. This is part of the borough's whole system response to domestic abuse, supplementing the existing offer to survivors and perpetrators. The pilot, running January-December 2021, is match funded between the Home Office Perpetrator Fund and London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, with an aim that participants are charged rent where they have sufficient means.

The case below highlights that whilst removing the perpetrator from the home does not guarantee an end to the abuse, and ongoing support and risk management is essential, it does illustrate how providing alternative housing for the perpetrator has enabled the victim-survivor, to achieve greater stability within her known environment and with support structures nearby.

Case Study 2

'Female A's' husband has stopped paying the mortgage and has transferred bills to her name. He is not paying any maintenance for the children and refused to help pay towards their recent birthday. He still has an element of control despite not living in the family home. He had previously threatened not to sign divorce papers if she did not agree to the sale. Initially she was reluctant to do this because of the children as she wants them to have stability. 'Female A' is now fearful that once he buys the family home, he will be able to take the children away from her. Without the DVPO 'Female A' would not have felt safe staying in the family home, but it has allowed her to change the door lock, so she feels safe to a certain degree. The children are more relaxed as they no longer must witness the abuse. After the divorce and sale of the house, 'Female A' is intending on moving far way away. However, in the meantime the accommodation offer given to her husband has been the best option for her children as it has given them stability. If she had been placed in a refuge, it would have meant that the children would have needed to move home and schools twice. The children have also built a strong relationship with a neighbour and this has been able to continue.

Making Safe Scheme

Making Safe was a multi-agency service based in North Yorkshire, providing perpetrators with accommodation for up to two years alongside behavioural change intervention as well as advocacy support for victims and families. Findings from the research study¹³ highlighted themes around increased perpetrator accountability, the changing balance of power in abusive relationships and the increased opportunities for victims and their families to engage in recovery work whilst remaining in the family home. Survivors identified four positive outcomes from their abusers being rehoused:

- 1) immediate respite from daily fear and anxiety caused by the controlling presence of the perpetrator.
- 2) spared the hardships associated with having to move into temporary accommodation and settle in a new area at a time of crisis.
- 3) continue drawing on existing formal and informal social support networks.
- 4) feeling empowered to take necessary action to end the violence.

Big Project

The Big Project was a partnership between social housing provider Gentoo, Barnardo's and Impact Family Services in Sunderland. Gentoo's Positive Engagement Officers provide wraparound support to remove barriers to perpetrators participating in behavioural change work. The 2018 evaluation found that this work was important in aiding the service user to engage in the programme, address their behaviour and in preventing homelessness.

Local coordination responses

In several areas across England and Wales, agencies are working in new ways to open accommodation pathways for perpetrators to ensure the safety of victims-survivors and families. The following two examples were initiated as part of the response to Covid-19 but

¹³ 'Making Safe': A Coordinated Community Response to Empowering Victims and Tackling Perpetrators of Domestic Violence, Clarke & Wydall (2013)

it's hoped that safe and effective new ways of working will continue beyond the pandemic crisis.

Northumbria

Northumbria Police and the 6 Tyne and Wear local authorities are working together to keep victims safer and ensure perpetrators have access to accommodation following the issue that those served with a DVPN could attempt to find shelter with vulnerable parents or other relatives and put them at risk. In line with the call to all councils to house rough sleepers during the pandemic, local authorities in the Northumbria area have responded to a request from the police to include perpetrators where a DVPN has been served under this remit and where there is a high likelihood that they could become a rough sleeper. On serving a DVPN, the alleged perpetrator will be given the relevant housing helpline numbers, and in the cases where they have nowhere to reside, the police officer will contact the housing team, who will find temporary accommodation for them. There are two points of contact within the police so that if the homeless teams are having any issues, they can contact a named sergeant or PC. These two officers have all the contact details for the homeless leads enabling two-way communication. Local authorities have been made aware that where an arrest could take place and perpetrators could be charged that would still be the course of action taken by the police. Accommodation options made available so far have been hostels, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and hotels. Information sharing agreements between local authorities and housing providers are needed so that adequate support can be offered to the victim-survivor and perpetrator.

Hampshire

In Hampshire, the Domestic Abuse lead for Portsmouth has negotiated an arrangement with the Director of the Portsmouth Housing Authority to create an emergency housing pathway for perpetrators in receipt of a DVPO. Hampshire Police are including the agreement to house the perpetrator as the evidence presented to the magistrate at the DVPO hearing, preventing the situation where the order may not be granted due to the potential that the perpetrator is made intentionally homeless.

Spot purchasing

The Drive Project in Croydon received funding from the Mayor's London Community Fund for spot-purchased emergency accommodation for situations where no other housing can be secured immediately following release from prison, the serving of a DVPN/DVPO or a serious incident. The spot purchase of short-term accommodation (2-3 days), in some cases, will allow for the immediate separation/removal of the perpetrator from the victim-survivor's home. During this period, the Drive case manager coordinates a response with police, probation, safeguarding and housing to hold the perpetrator to account and ensure the safety of the victim-survivor and family, including securing longer-term housing options through statutory and other routes. Ideally in the case of prison release, this period of planning should be factored in, such that it happens before the release, meaning such spot purchases are not necessary, however this is often not the case.

The following case study from Croydon demonstrates the need for stable housing to protect the victim-survivor from continued abuse, and to effectively engage perpetrators in

behavioural change interventions. However it also highlights the conditions of temporary accommodation are not always suitable or conducive to recovery.

Case Study 3

A male in early thirties was referred to DRIVE through MARAC due to perpetrating domestic abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, financial, coercive control, including stalking) towards his ex-partner and mother of his three children. The Case Manager has built up a solid rapport with the perpetrator through arranged regular face-to-face sessions to build in specific behaviour change work to address identified risks and needs. A key need has been housing throughout this time, with the perpetrator remaining homeless, thus increasing DA risks to victim and children as he kept wanting to return to the family home. The service user was staying with a friend but spending most of their time living out of their car. The Case Manager undertook extensive work to apply for emergency hostel accommodation via the council spot-purchasing scheme. Accommodation was secured and the perpetrator resided here for a short time; he decided to leave after a while due to struggling with the situation regarding the perceived substance misuse of others in the hostel and not being allowed guests on site. The Case Manager has continued to work closely with the perpetrator to apply for local housing and ensure these risks are effectively managed. Case Manager has also continued to liaise closely with Children's Services throughout the intervention via the CP plan that remains; there has been no further reported DV incidents involving the victim-survivor and perpetrator during this period of engagement with DRIVE.

Institutional advocacy

Drive and Respect Accredited Service Managers have experience of multiple cases where secure housing is an identified need and/or where it can be used as a tool to disrupt patterns of abuse. Case Manager and Practitioner frequently play an advocacy role to support perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse but are often constrained by the challenges previously outlined.

This following case study illustrates the importance of perpetrator housing pathways to prevent transferring abuse onto new victims once removed from the primary victims' accommodation, as well as the role of advocacy in demonstrating priority need for housing where this is applicable.

Case Study 4

Service user did not have his own tenancy when he started DRIVE, he was previously evicted from his flat due to multiple police call outs around antisocial behaviour. He then started living with a physically disabled female on the same housing estate. He started taking control of the finances and as a result the victims rent was not paid which led to her being issued a warning and a payment plan being set up. Eventually the victim was evicted from her property, she was deemed intentionally homeless due to losing her flat. The service user then ended the relationship and looked for other vulnerable females on the same estate... The Drive case manager contacted the housing Community Safety Officer and advocated for the victim explaining the dynamics of domestic abuse. Victim was given a property in a different area from the housing associations portfolio as well as victim support... Following an assault related

prison sentence, the Drive case manager advocated for him due to previous mental health diagnosis and priority need was proven for the service user to get temporary accommodation. The service user was then given a 'move on' premises of his own and is undertaking therapy for his dependency on substances. Now he has a secure based from which he can build on, he has pride in his flat and is looking for work.

In consideration of new approaches, it is important to learn from cases where efforts to provide accommodation to perpetrators have been unsuccessful. The case study below highlights the challenges of inappropriate standards of temporary accommodation as well as the limitations of the legislation with respect to victims or perpetrators deemed to be 'intentionally homeless'.

Case Study 5

Perpetrator was initially referred to DRIVE after he was discussed at MARAC following being arrested for common assault on ex-partner and Grandmother. The service user seemed to thrive whilst inside prison as he had all needs catered for but there was a concern that, upon prison release, the service user would go back to the ex-partner or Grandmother as he had nowhere to go. The local authority housing department deemed the service user as 'nonpriority' despite two serious suicide attempts in last year. The case manager advocated for the service user, obtaining a mental health assessment and anti-psychotic medication was prescribed. Service user was assigned temporary accommodation upon release but was very hesitant in accepting this due to the reputation of the hotel assigned. The case manager attended the property and found the room to be very dirty, but the service user would not let them complain as the owner had a reputation of violence. On the first night, the service user was attacked, and his discharge grant and medication were stolen. The service user left the accommodation the next day and duty was then refused by the local authority as he made himself "intentionally homeless". The case manager applied for another temporary accommodation, but this was denied so the service user went back to the Grandmother's house. The service user started to reuse substances and the risk to the victim increased. The service user returned to prison following further criminal damage.

Support for housing providers, homelessness support services and wider agencies

Housing providers are in a unique position for identifying domestic abuse, whether through conversations with tenants, complaints from neighbours or repairs data, and to provide an effective response to address survivors' housing needs. Staff in homelessness support services are in another unique position to address abusive behaviour as they sometimes support both survivors and perpetrators, and they are in a direct support role (rather than housing management). Staff across both settings say they do not have the confidence and knowledge to address abusive behaviour.

Housing, homelessness, and domestic abuse charities provide a wealth of advocacy and guidance for staff across different agencies on how best to respond and support clients who are experiencing domestic abuse. DAHA's Whole Housing Approach Toolkit¹⁴ covers the range of housing options and initiatives available to those experiencing domestic abuse and

¹⁴ Whole Housing Approach Toolkit - <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach/whole-housing-toolkit/>

includes guidance on how housing associations can utilise current legislation to remove perpetrators. DAHA also offer a range of training for Housing Providers as well as an accreditation standard. The Chartered Institute of Housing, Women's Aid and DAHA have signed up more than 400 housing organisations to publicly commit to take action to support victims of domestic abuse through the Make a Stand pledge. St Mungo's have published a Homeless Couples and Relationships Toolkit¹⁵ that includes guidance for staff working with homeless couples where there is domestic abuse. Standing Together, Single Homeless Project and Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden have published guidance¹⁶ on how to safely work with perpetrators and survivors of DA in homelessness settings.

What is needed to drive change? Approaches to explore

A perpetrator housing response must be framed within a Coordinated Community Response¹⁷: a whole system response to a whole person, that shifts responsibility for safety away from individual survivors to the community and services existing to support them. A domestic abuse housing response that addresses perpetrator housing as a key component, must sit within a wider perpetrator and victim support strategy that is managed at a local level as a part of local Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Domestic Abuse (DA) strategies.

The above examples of promising practice, demonstrate the value of multi-agency responses to domestic abuse, with agencies having a responsibility and role to both perpetrators and victims-survivors. The cases referenced also highlight that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate to meet the varied circumstances of people experiencing and using harm in their relationships, so flexible options are required. That said, there is clearly a need to formalise the pathways and options to address risk of homelessness or continued abuse.

There is a need for MHCLG to take a policy and funding lead on this issue, to promote best practice and ensure housing and homelessness teams and those dealing with domestic abuse and offender management work together to develop specific, risk-managed accommodation pathways for perpetrators where this is required to ensure the safety of victims-survivors and their families. There is no single or simple solution, however we think the following approaches will enable us to make progress in tackling this complex issue.

Guidance and support for Local Authorities is needed to address perpetrator housing as part of their new statutory duty

Under the new statutory duty to provide victims of domestic abuse with safe accommodation, local authority teams should be empowered to take a Whole Housing Approach including options for removing and rehousing a perpetrator to meet the safety and housing security of

¹⁵ St Mungo's Homeless Couples and Relationships Toolkit - <https://www.mungos.org/publication/homeless-couples-and-relationships-toolkit/>

¹⁶ Working Effectively with Perpetrators and Survivors of Domestic Abuse in Homelessness Settings, Standing Together, Single Homeless Project and Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden, 2020

¹⁷ Standing Together In Search of Excellence (Coordinated Community Response)
<https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/blog-3/in-search-of-excellence>

the victim-survivor. As stated at the beginning of this paper, perpetrator work should never come at a cost to victim-survivor services, the two must complement each other, and the government must support and resource the full range of housing options to enable victim-survivor safety and housing security. Furthermore, with the Bill acknowledging children as victims for the first time, local authorities should consider their duty under Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) whereby children have a right to an adequate standard of living and the right to have a home.

Various aspects of the [Whole Housing Approach](#) model come together to enable victim-survivors to stay safe in their own home while ensuring the perpetrator is held to account:

- **Perpetrator management:** this includes perpetrator behaviour programmes as well as the role that housing providers can play in holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour and in some circumstances removing the perpetrator from the property and providing alternative accommodation.
- **Managed reciprocals:** enabling survivors to move area due to domestic abuse while maintaining their social tenancies, which has the potential to be applied to perpetrators as well.
- **Private rented sector and privately-owned housing:** using legislation, policies, procedures, training, and awareness raising to support and enable private landlords and letting agents to have a safe, effective, and consistent response to tenants experiencing domestic abuse and supporting them to remain safely within their own home. PRS properties could also be used to house perpetrators, as demonstrated through the MHCLG and MOJ's offender housing initiative.
- **DAHA Accreditation:** a standard of best practice for housing providers responding to domestic abuse, with 8 key priority areas including policies/procedures, training, case management, risk management, inclusivity/accessibility, perpetrator management, partnership working, training and publicity/awareness raising.
- **Sanctuary schemes:** a multi-agency victim/survivor centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures and support.
- **Mobile Advocacy/ Co-Located Advocacy:** individual advocacy support maintains their accommodation.
- **Flexible Funding:** is a designated funding pot that domestic abuse support workers can access quickly and easily to enable victim-survivors to achieve safe and stable housing.

To effectively deliver their statutory duty, local authority teams should be encouraged and empowered to attain DAHA accreditation, which will equip them with the necessary training, policies, procedures, risk management systems and partnerships with specialist domestic abuse experts, which will enable staff to have the skills, support, and resources to effectively provide safe accommodation to survivors and hold perpetrators to account.

Having a full suite of housing options available through a Whole Housing Approach, and effective prioritisation and coordination between agencies and organisations, enable

survivors to choose a path towards immediate and long-term safety and housing security that best meets their unique needs and circumstances. It is fundamental that this also includes options for rehousing perpetrators who may continue to present a risk to survivors' safety and housing security while they remain homeless or within the family home.

[Integrating a perpetrator element into existing homelessness interventions and funding streams](#)

The Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme enables councils to bid for long-term accommodation solutions for former rough sleepers and includes an element of specialist support for issues such as mental health and substance misuse for clients. Such specialist support streams could be extended to bring in specialist DA perpetrator professionals who could assist with delivery of or access to behaviour change and risk management interventions.

Equally the new Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Scheme could be used to ensure that offenders with a history of DA (who will constitute a significant proportion of offenders) are offered accommodation that considers the possible continuing DA risk that they pose and that complimentary services – such as behaviour change interventions – are available for those for whom it would be suitable.

[Multi-agency coordination to ensure access to and pathways into accommodation and risk-management of perpetrators](#)

Initiatives such as:

- Joint-working protocols between police and probation and housing such that:
 - Following the removal of a perpetrator from the home, appropriate accommodation options are secured for the perpetrator and support is provided to the victim-survivor.
 - Probation, housing, and social services have adequate time prior to release from prison to ensure that each accommodation option is assessed in terms of risk and temporary accommodation is made available if no safe options are identified.
- Housing teams fully participating in Perpetrator Panels and MATAC

MHCLG will need to work alongside the MOJ to consider the housing needs of perpetrators when piloting the new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders.

[Social Investment to expand available housing stock](#)

More general pressures on housing stock feed into the current environment of limited options for supporting victims to stay safe at home through re-housing perpetrators. Social investment could be used to mobilise additional funding and expand available housing stock. There are several impactful housing investment models, including those targeted at victims of domestic abuse such as the Women in Safe Homes Fund.

The Drive partnership is starting to explore the role social investment might play, building on Social Finance's expertise and networks in housing funds. We consider that social investment could play an important role to:

- Mobilise additional funding, given ethical importance to not reallocate funding from under-resourced victim-survivor support.
- Test novel revenue models to build track record and confidence for institutional investors; both in terms of return and risk management, as well as with regards to the public perception of investment in a potential controversial area.
- Provide housing for larger scale pilots to develop an evidence base around cost savings to government, which could open additional revenue sources down the line.

Develop larger scale models to build evidence base

Larger scale pilot models would provide an opportunity to build the evidence base and cost-benefit potential for perpetrator housing pathways. As part of this, we should seek to build understanding around:

- **Cohort** – what is the nature and size of the population who would benefit from a housing offer. This may include level of risk/harm perpetration; family status; wider support needs e.g. substance dependence; accommodation tenure and type needs; etc)
- **Referral mechanism** – how would cases be identified, referred, and assessed (with particular consideration for minoritized communities who may otherwise be hidden from services).
- **Housing options** – what accommodation options would be available, to who, and for how long and what would be the process and time for securing these.
- **Wraparound support** – what interventions would be needed for the perpetrator, the victim and their families and who would provide these.
- **Multi-agency working** – which agencies will need to coordinate to make the approach successful and what ways of working will enable this.
- **Training** – what additional training would need to be provided to housing providers and other professional to safely address the housing needs of perpetrators and prioritise the needs of victim-survivors.
- **Local context** – what additional services and assets are required to enable housing pathways to be successful e.g. range of victim-survivor support and perpetrator programmes, sufficient and adequate housing stock, etc.
- **Benefits** – what are the desired outcomes and what is the likelihood of success based on existing research. What are the potential cost savings if these outcomes are achieved.
- **Funding** – what are the costs associated with delivery and who are the potential funders (both for piloting and long-term sustainable funding).

It will be vital for this work to be co-developed with and draw on the diverse experiences of victims-survivors of domestic abuse, alongside professionals working across housing providers, domestic abuse, and homelessness services.

Supporting materials

A Safe Home: Breaking the link between homelessness and domestic abuse, All Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness (2019)

Accommodation for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse – Emerging Issues and Responses due to COVID-19, Drive (2020)

Domestic Abuse Bill. Written evidence submitted by the Public Bill Committee from the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy & Practice Group (DAB77) (2020)

In Search of Excellence: a refreshed guide to effective domestic abuse partnership work-The Coordinated Community Response, Standing Together (2020)

Joint Tenancies and Survivors of Domestic Abuse Domestic Abuse Bill Briefing, Standing Together, DAHA, Women's Aid Federation England (2021)

'Making Safe': A Coordinated Community Response to Empowering Victims and Tackling Perpetrators of Domestic Violence, Clarke & Wydall (2013)

Policy Evidence Summary 4: Justice, housing and domestic abuse, the experiences of homeowners and private renters, Walker and Hester for the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (2019)

Rebuilding Shattered Lives, St. Mungo's (2014)

Safe at Home: The case for a response to domestic abuse by housing providers, SafeLives

Spotlight #5: Homelessness and Domestic Abuse, SafeLives

Support for victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation, Shelter (2019)

The Price of Safety: How the housing system is failing women and children fleeing domestic abuse, Solace Women's Aid (2016)

Whole Housing Approach Toolkit, Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

Working Effectively with Perpetrators and Survivors of Domestic Abuse in Homelessness Settings, Standing Together, Single Homeless Project and Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (2020)