

Support for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation

Equalities Impact Assessment of the Strategy for London

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1 Background

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Mayor has new duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) to support survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation, including conducting a needs assessment, producing a strategy and commissioning services. These new duties come with government funding – over £20m for London in 2021-22.

The needs assessment and strategy

The London needs assessment, published in November 2021, identified gaps in current provision and informed the development of the strategy. Some of the key areas highlighted in the needs assessment are as follows:

- the current limitations of safe accommodation provision lead to an increased risk of victim/survivors returning to the perpetrator or experiencing further negative mental health impacts
- the current approach does not ensure quality provision¹
- the operating model across London is not meeting the needs of victim/survivors²
- the quality and sustainability of existing provision requires improvement to better enable the recovery of victim/survivors, as well as increasing the capacity and breadth of provision in London³
- more complete and coordinated data across demand, supply and funding will better inform future strategies.

The Mayor's vision in relation to the Part 4 duties is that all victims/survivors of domestic abuse, including children, are able to access and be supported by safe accommodation-based services, tailored to their needs, to enable them to move on with their lives.⁴

The vision is underpinned by six objectives which, in summary, are to ensure:

- a clear and integrated pathway of support through all stages of a survivor's journey
- that victims/survivors can access physically and psychologically safe spaces

¹ Sherman, L., Neyroud, P. W. and Neyroud, E. (2016). Policing, 10(3), 171-183

² Council of Europe (2008). Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services; RTS' Domestic Abuse Housing and Alliance (DAHA) and Women's Aid,

³ Amanecer evaluation on behalf of the Greater London Authority (2021).

⁴ Safety is defined as physical and psychological safety at each stage of a survivor's journey – see Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 2015.

- that services reflect the diversity of the communities that they serve, including delivery by 'by and for' providers where appropriate
- that barriers faced by victims/survivors in accessing services are reduced
- that the quality of services is consistently high
- that commissioning is more strategic in its processes and how it is delivered and accessed, and supports providers to deliver high quality services.

The proposals are, in turn, centred around five key policies:

- improving early intervention
- improving access to and the provision of safe crisis accommodation
- improving access to and the provision of second-stage and move-on accommodation and resettlement
- improving the quality of safe accommodation
- tackling overarching issues.

Consideration to the equality of impacts was given during the development of the needs assessment and the strategy.

2 Outcomes

An assessment was undertaken to understand if the strategy would likely result in different outcomes for different groups, and consideration given to whether outcomes would likely be adverse or beneficial.

Table 1 – Outcomes for groups within protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	
Age	Yes – young people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support – including children who are now victims in their own right under the 2021 Act.
Disability	Yes – disabled people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support.
Sex	Yes – people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support based on sex, including for male victims in London.
Race	Yes – people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support, including culturally specific services.
Religion or belief	Yes – people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support, including culturally specific services.
Sexual orientation	Yes – people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support.
Gender identity	Yes – people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support based on gender identity, including trans people.
Marriage and civil partnership	Yes – people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support.
Maternity and pregnancy	Yes – people potentially offered additional specialist accommodation and support.

3 Mitigations

The strategy – the first of its kind in the capital – provides a blueprint to underpin the commissioning of support services over the next year and beyond, to meet the diverse needs of survivors and their children. It also sets out wider proposals to address the challenges many survivors of domestic abuse face accessing and receiving appropriate support for themselves and their children (who are now recognised as victims in their own right, under the 2021 Act). It is underpinned by the Whole Housing Approach, which covers all stages of a survivor’s journey.

Diversity of need

There are opportunities to promote equality and mitigate inequalities through the implementation of the proposals in the strategy. Many of the issues and challenges that the strategy is seeking to address, and proposals to do so, relate to specific stages of a ‘pathway’ for survivors. These are set out in sections 6, 7 and 8 of the strategy. Issues such as diversity of need are overarching and cut across all stages and pathways. The strategy sets out a clear intention to provide support relevant to individuals who hold a diversity of different protected characteristics, and it is also expected that providers will share policies/practices which promote equality and commit to anti-racist practices.

Gaps in service provision

The strategy, informed by the needs assessment, will be used to guide the commissioning of services, so that commissioned services address the identified gaps in provision and needs of survivors, such as:

- the shortage of spaces for victims/survivors with NRPF; and for families with more than two children and/or boys aged 12 or older
- the lack of ongoing specialist refuge accommodation for LGBTQ+ and/or male victims/survivors
- the limited specialist provision for victims/survivors who: are Black and minoritised; are Deaf and disabled, including those with a physical disability, a learning disability and mental health support needs; are young; are affected by multiple disadvantages; or have substance misuse support needs.

Part 4 of the 2021 Act applies to the provision of support services within accommodation, not the provision of the buildings in which they are situated. However, the strategy proposes that the quality of the fabric of existing refuges and other safe crisis accommodation should be improved, and Part 4 funding may be made available to providers for this purpose, where it will improve outcomes for survivors.

Geography of service provision

The strategy aims to create a more equitable and sustainable approach to funding across London. It is vital that victims/survivors who need to flee their homes can access accommodation and services in different locations, where appropriate, to ensure their safety. Provision is therefore needed in all areas for victims/survivors from all areas. However, as set out in section 3, there are marked variations between boroughs, unrelated to need, in the level of funding for and provision of accommodation-based services for victims/survivors. The Mayor's Part 4 funding for commissioning services is focused on creating additionality rather than addressing the currently uneven pattern of provision. That is, its purpose is to create new provision rather than replace funding for services that already exist. The new strategic oversight enabled by Part 4, particularly through the new Partnership Board, aims to assure a more equitable approach to funding across London can be achieved.

'By and for' provision

The strategy, and the commissioning approach that follows it, is aimed at promoting and protecting the specialisms held within grassroots organisations and 'by and for' providers, in order to maximise the provision of these services. In line with the Mayor's Violence Against Women and Girls Fund, 'by and for' organisations are defined here as those where at least 80 per cent of trustees, 80 per cent of managers and 80 per cent of staff reflect the protected characteristic(s) of the people the organisation aims to work with - including women, LGBTQ+, disabled, and Black and minoritised communities.

Data collection and monitoring

Improving data on the organisations and services provided to survivors, and how services are accessed and by whom, creates the potential to mitigate adverse outcomes whereby individuals are denied opportunities to receive support. Data monitoring can help mitigate the risk that gaps/under-provision continues, with data relating to the scale of take-up of services by specific groups, communities and demographics.

Governance and oversight

The Mayor's new multi-agency London Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Partnership Board also has a critical role, by continuing to support the Mayor to deliver the new duties and by doing the work needed to take forward the proposals the strategy specifically ascribes to it. The Partnership Board, which is key to advising and supporting the Mayor to develop and implement the strategy, includes London boroughs, the health sector, organisations representing the interests of survivors and their children, housing providers and domestic abuse service providers.

4 Actions

- The Equalities Impact Assessment will be updated periodically to ensure any new actions are taken into account.
- Data on commissioned service provision will be collected analysed to monitor provision, coverage and access to services.
- All providers will be expected to share their policies/practices which promote equality and commit to anti-racist practices.

5 Considerations

Table 2 – The evidence considered in assessing impact

Context and evidence		Policy/provision	Impact
Age	<p>There is a clear picture of which age groups are most likely to experience domestic abuse. Most datasets highlight those aged 25-40, but there is evidence that those aged 16-25 are also at high risk.⁵</p> <p>Police data demonstrates that 55 per cent of victims/survivors were aged 25-44, with victims/survivors aged 20-34 most frequently recorded in 2020-21. However, 2019-20 Crime Survey for England and Wales data estimates that those aged 16-24 most frequently experience domestic abuse.</p> <p>Younger people are more likely to be subject to interpersonal violence. Most high-risk victims are in their 20s or 30s. Those under 25 are the most likely to suffer interpersonal violence.</p>	The strategy impacts individuals of all ages – specifically proposals 5.2, 5.9, 6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3 and 9	Positive

⁵ Barter, C, et al. (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships. London

	Context and evidence	Policy/provision	Impact
	<p>Those rough sleeping in London in 2020-21 tend to be a slightly older cohort than the Police Recorded Crime (PRC) and Crime Survey for England and Wales data suggests. This might indicate there is less provision available for those groups.</p> <p>Those aged 25-34 account for almost half of those accessing specialist refuge, which largely corroborates PRC and Crime Survey for England and Wales data. Those aged 18-24 account for 12 per cent of this population, which is higher than other datasets suggest and may reflect the type of specialist provision available.</p> <p>An NSPCC report (Barter et al., 2009) found that almost 25 per cent of girls aged 13-17 reported experiencing physical abuse in their own intimate partnership relationships; and 18 per cent of boys reported experiencing physical abuse.</p> <p>In 2020-21, fewer than 10 women under the age of 18 were successfully placed in refuge; but more than 17.5 per cent of applications were unsuccessful (approximately 174). This indicates a particular gap in provision.</p> <p>The 2021 Act recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right.</p>		

Context and evidence		Policy/provision	Impact
Disability	<p>The overall proportion of domestic abuse victims/survivors with a disability is relatively low; however, people with a disability are disproportionately more likely to become victims/survivors.</p> <p>Safe Lives data shows that 11.9 per cent of cases heard at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) involved victims with disabilities.⁶</p> <p>The Crime Survey for England and Wales (2019-20) reported that women and men with a long-standing illness or disability were more than twice as likely to experience some form of domestic abuse (11.8 per cent) than their counterparts with no long-standing illness or disability (4.6 per cent).</p> <p>Amongst women this figure is higher, with 14.7 per cent of female victims of domestic abuse reporting at least one disability.</p> <p>There is a higher percentage of victims and survivors with a disability represented in Crime Survey for England and Wales and PRC figures, compared with those being placed in refuge. This indicates a lack of appropriate provision for those with disabilities, which was also identified in the Pan-London Needs Assessment</p>	The strategy impacts individuals who have disabilities – specifically proposals 5.2, 5.5, 5.7, 5.9, 6, 7.2, 7.5, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3 and 9	Positive

⁶ SafeLives (2021). [‘We only do bones here’ – Why London needs a whole-health approach to domestic abuse](#). London

Context and evidence		Policy/provision	Impact
Race and ethnicity	<p>Black and minoritised individuals are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse than their white counterparts.</p> <p>According to Police recorded data, the highest rate of domestic abuse victimisation is amongst Black women aged 25-34.</p> <p>Black males also hold higher victimisation rates than men from any other group.</p> <p>Black and minoritised survivors are less likely to be placed in general refuge than white victims/survivors. The lack of specialist access means certain groups are locked out of accessing safety.</p> <p>A higher proportion of successfully housed applicants in 2020/21 are white compared to all cases referred.</p> <p>Of those provided with specialist refuge provision, 76.3 per cent are from Black and minoritised backgrounds. 23 per cent are white.</p> <p>The paucity of specialist provision suggests that those who need this are left behind.</p>	The strategy impacts individuals who are from Black and minoritised groups – including proposals 5.2, 5.3, 5.6 5.9, 6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.7, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3 and 9.1	Positive
Multiple disadvantage	<p>People with multiple disadvantage refers to those facing multiple and intersecting inequalities, including domestic abuse, substance use, mental ill health, homelessness, the disproportionate impact on</p>	The strategy impacts individuals with multiple disadvantage – including proposals 5.2, 5.7, 5.8,	Positive

Context and evidence		Policy/provision	Impact
	<p>women, being involved in the criminal justice system and the removal of children.</p> <p>According to PRC 2020-21 data, there is a strong correlation (0.74) between the average Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score for each London ward and the volume of domestic abuse offences recorded in that area by the Metropolitan Police in 2020-21.</p> <p>Domestic abuse offences were 3.4 times more likely to take places in the highest IMD-scoring London ward, compared with the lowest-scoring grouping</p>	5.9, 6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.7, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3 and 9	
Homelessness	There is correlation between the volumes of homelessness prevention relief duties and new rough sleepers, suggesting these areas may have a higher-than-average demand for refuge and housing.	The strategy impacts homeless people – including proposals 5.2, 5.10, 6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3 and 9	Positive
Sexual orientation	The vast majority of victims/survivors of domestic abuse and those accessing specialist refuge provision identify as heterosexual. However, those identifying as bisexual or lesbian are more likely to be placed in specialist refuge than a general refuge.	The strategy impacts individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ – specifically, proposals 5.2, 5.9, 6, 7.2, 8.2 and 9	Positive

Context and evidence		Policy/provision	Impact
	<p>Safe Lives data shows that 2.1 per cent of cases heard at MARACs relate to LGBTQ+ victims.⁷</p> <p>An NSPCC report (Barter et al., 2009) found that amongst those aged 13-17, having a same-sex partner increased the risk of experiencing domestic abuse.⁸</p> <p>Whilst a small proportion of women placed in specialist refuge identified as LGBTQ+, this proportion is higher than those placed in general refuge by Women's Aid – fewer than 10 of the 997 women placed in refuge via Women's Aid identified as lesbian or bisexual⁹.</p> <p>Specialist provision is currently very limited – this means that many LGBTQ+ victims are unable to access routes to safety.</p>		
Gender identity	<p>Women account for a disproportionate number of survivors needing to flee to safe accommodation.</p> <p>The Crime Survey for England and Wales¹⁰ shows that men account for 36 per cent of victims of domestic abuse in 2020-21; PRC data,</p>	The strategy positively impacts individuals of all genders – specifically, proposals 5.2, 5.9, 6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.8, 7.9, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 9	Positive

⁷ SafeLives (2021). 'We only do bones here' – Why London needs a whole-health approach to domestic abuse. London

⁸ Barter, C, et al. (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships. London

⁹ Women's Aid. (2017). Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the first year of the No Woman Turned Away project

¹⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2021#domestic-abuse-and-sexual-offences>

	Context and evidence	Policy/provision	Impact
	<p>meanwhile, shows that men account for 27 per cent of victims of reported domestic abuse.</p> <p>Of the 2,140 homicide victims in London between 2005 and 2020, 361 (17 per cent) were victims of domestic abuse. Three-quarters of these domestic abuse victims were women; over half of these were aged between 25 and 44.</p> <p>Women and children are disproportionately affected and faced with fleeing their homes, often without access to the means to live their lives independently and free from abuse. The lack of a safe exit from an abusive relationship too often costs them their lives. More than four in 10 women killed by a male partner or former partner in 2018 had separated or taken steps to separate from them¹¹</p> <p>Women account for 98 per cent of the cases referred to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal scheme due to domestic abuse in 2020/21 and 100 per cent of successfully placed applicants.¹²</p>		
Marital status and children	The majority of victims/survivors had children living with them at the time they were abused. The most likely group of victims/survivors to be placed in a refuge or move homes were single female parents.	The strategy impacts individuals of various family backgrounds and specifically children –	Positive

¹¹ CHAIN

¹² SafeLives (2021). [‘We only do bones here’ – Why London needs a whole-health approach to domestic abuse](#). London

	Context and evidence	Policy/provision	Impact
	<p>Single female parent households accounted for 60 per cent (n=114) of all the domestic violence cases that were referred to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal scheme in 2020-21. For households successfully moved, they accounted for 70 per cent (n=19).</p> <p>Nearly one in three women who suffer from domestic abuse during their lifetime report that the first incidence of violence happened while they were pregnant.</p> <p>None of the referred cases where the household consisted of a couple with children were accepted onto the scheme. In contrast, two of the 'Other' households, and one of the single male applicants, were accepted and are on the waiting list to be housed.</p> <p>Domestic abuse is likely to increase during pregnancy.</p> <p>Domestic abuse is highest amongst those who have separated, followed by those who are divorced or single.</p> <p>Safe Lives data highlighted that 64 per cent of victims and survivors reported there were children under the age of 18 in the house whilst the abuse happened.</p>	<p>including proposals 5.2, 6, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5, 7.8, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3 and 9</p>	

Context and evidence		Policy/provision	Impact
	<p>This PRC 2020-21 data may reflect the fact that those who have separated from their partners may be more willing to report their experience of domestic abuse to the police.</p>		
Mental health and substance abuse	<p>Victims/survivors of domestic abuse reported a disproportionately high level of mental health concerns and substance use. Victim/survivors with these support needs were less likely to be placed in refuge.</p> <p>Two per cent of those placed in refuge by Women's Aid, and a further 4.7 per cent of those unsuccessful in accessing refuge via Women's Aid, reported substance use.</p> <p>Forty per cent of high-risk victims of abuse report mental health difficulties.</p> <p>Victims of abuse have a higher rate of drug and/or alcohol misuse (whether it starts before or after the abuse); at least 20 per cent of high-risk victims of abuse report using drugs and/or alcohol.</p> <p>Services to meet the specific needs of its diverse population are not always available or easy to access, with particularly acute shortages of provision for some groups, including those with multiple disadvantage.</p>	<p>The strategy positively impacts individuals who have mental health and substance misuse – including proposals 5.2, 5.10, 6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, 7.9, 8.1, 8.3 and 9</p>	Positive

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