



Meeting the needs of households at risk of domestic violence in England

**The role of accommodation and housing-related support services**



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November 2010  
Department for Communities and Local Government

**The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or proposed policies of the Department for Communities and Local Government.**

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November 2010

ISBN: 978 1 4098 2598 2

## Acknowledgements

We are very grateful indeed to all the service providers, individuals and organisations that took the time and trouble to be involved in this research. The project would not have been feasible without the very considerable assistance provided by Women's Aid, with our particular thanks being due to Jackie Barron at Women's Aid national office. We are also very grateful to all the members of the Research Reference Group who assisted with a number of stages of the work: Nicola Harwin and Jackie Barron (Women's Aid); Jane Keeper and Nicola Sharp (Refuge); Sumanta Roy (Imkaan); Mark Coulter (Respect); Davina James-Hanman (Greater London Domestic Violence Project/Home Office); Tracey Brushett (DCLG Specialist Advisor); Samantha Darby (Home Office); Caroline Evely and Andy Cross (Wiltshire Police); Gabrielle Crane, Kevin Mantle and Sarah Morgan (Government Equalities Office).

A special thanks to the agencies who helped organise the service user focus groups, and of course, to the households at risk of domestic violence who very generously shared their views of services with us at a difficult time in their lives. As ever, we are very grateful for the patience and support of the research managers Helen Smith and Keith Kirby at the Department for Communities and Local Government and we would also like to thank John Bentham from DCLG for his help and support. Within the Centre for Housing Policy, we would like to thank Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, for her expert advice and support throughout the research. We would also like to thank David Rhodes, who provided invaluable help with GIS software and helped cross check the results of the mapping exercise. We are also very grateful to our colleague Karen Croucher for her expertise in carrying out the focus groups and consultation exercises. We would also like to thank Mark Bevan who assisted with the initial telephone interviews of national providers. A special thanks to Jane Allen for her great help in the administration of the two surveys.

Responsibility for any errors lies with the authors.

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## Glossary of terms

**Advice and assistance:** A local authority has a duty to ensure that advice and assistance is provided to all housing applicants found to be homeless and eligible for assistance, but not owed the main homelessness duty, i.e. those who are intentionally homeless and/or not in priority need.

**Advice and information:** A local authority has a general duty to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness are available free of charge to everyone in their district, including people who may not be eligible for assistance.

**Choice based lettings:** A relatively new system for the allocation of social housing which is designed to offer more choice and involvement for customers in selecting a new home. Available social rented housing is let by being openly advertised, allowing customers to 'bid' or 'register an interest' in those homes.

**Domestic violence:** The Government definition of domestic violence is 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality'.

**Eligible for assistance:** Some groups of persons from abroad are not eligible for homelessness assistance, for example, nationals of countries outside the European Economic Area who have short term leave to enter the UK on condition they do not have recourse to public funds. The rules on eligibility for homelessness assistance broadly align with the rules on eligibility for housing benefit.

**Floating support and outreach services:** are delivered by visiting workers to households with domestic violence in their own homes/alternative safe venues, in hostels/other temporary accommodation or in community venues like community centres, children's centres etc. Floating support services are primarily designed to support households with maintaining their accommodation. Outreach services usually have a broader focus than accommodation, but may include support with accommodation.

**Homelessness:** Broadly speaking, somebody is 'homeless' if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in. It would not be reasonable for someone to continue to live in their home, for example, if that was likely to lead to violence against them (or a

member of their family)<sup>1</sup>. The legal definition of 'homeless' is included in the Housing Act, 1996 (Part 7).

**Housing options:** 'Housing options' services is a term used to describe a general, non-statutory, service which many local authorities provide to assist people seeking help with accommodation. In many local authorities, this service is also used to discharge their statutory obligation to ensure that individuals accepted as homeless are provided with advice and assistance. Housing options services will often include services to prevent homelessness.

**Independent domestic violence advisor:** Trained specialists who provide a service to victims at medium to high risk of domestic violence, to address their safety needs and to help them to manage the risks that they face.

**Intentionally homeless:** Under the homelessness legislation, applicants become intentionally homeless if they deliberately did (or did not do) something that caused them to leave accommodation, in circumstances where the accommodation was available for them and it would have been reasonable for them to continue to occupy it.

**Local connection:** Under the homelessness legislation, a local authority can seek to refer a case to another local authority only once it is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and has a priority need for accommodation (i.e. meets the criteria for the main homelessness duty). If the authority consider that the applicant does not have a local connection with their district, does have one elsewhere in Great Britain, and would not be at risk of violence in the other district, the authority can seek to refer the case to the authority in that other district. The authority has a temporary duty to secure accommodation until the question of referral is agreed.

Under the legislation, a person may establish a local connection with a district because s/he is, or was previously, resident there by choice; because s/he is employed there; because of family associations, or because of special circumstances. The local authority associations have published procedures for referral of homeless applicants which suggest the following non-statutory working guidelines for establishing a local connection:

- Normal residence of at least six months during the previous 12 months.
- Normal residence of at least three out of the last five years.
- Current employment in the borough (not of a casual nature).
- A close relative has lived in the borough for the last five years.

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006 *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities* London: Communities and Local Government, p. 10) Online at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode>

**Large scale voluntary transfers:** It can also be called local stock voluntary transfers if the number of properties is relatively small. This is in reference to the movement of ownership of council housing stock from local authorities to housing associations.

**Main homelessness duty:** A local authority owes the main homelessness duty to applicants who are eligible for assistance, homeless through no fault of their own, and fall within a priority need group. Under the duty the local authority must secure suitable temporary accommodation until a suitable settled home can be offered. In most cases, the offer of settled accommodation that ends the homelessness duty is an offer of social housing.

**Multi-agency risk assessment conferences:** A multi-agency meeting which has the safety of high risk victims of domestic violence as its focus. Usually led by the police, multi-agency risk assessment conferences are made up of statutory and voluntary sector representatives, including social services, independent domestic violence advisors, victim support services, health representatives, housing providers, probation services and education services.

**Priority need:** Broadly speaking, under the homelessness legislation, a person has a priority need for accommodation if, they are pregnant, have dependent children, are vulnerable for some reason (for example, because of old age, mental illness, disability or other special reason or having to cease to occupy accommodation by reason of violence or threats of violence which are likely to be carried out) or are homeless as a result of an emergency (such as a fire or flood). In some cases, a person is also in priority need if they are a person with whom a vulnerable person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside. Housing applicants in priority need will be owed the main homelessness duty if they are eligible for assistance and unintentionally homeless.

**Private rented sector:** Any residential accommodation provided at a market rent by a private landlord (individual or organisation).

**Private registered provider:** A housing association or other agency registered with, and regulated by, the Tenant Services Authority as a provider of social housing. These agencies were previously known as registered social landlords.

**Resettlement support:** Follow-on support provided to ex- residents of women's refuges and other hostels/supported accommodation to help people settle into and/or manage their new housing.

**Sanctuary schemes:** Offers people the prospect of staying safely in their own home by substantially enhancing their security and safety from direct or indirect attack by installing a range of reinforced doors (to one particular room in the home as a Sanctuary Room or external doors), added locks and bolts to windows and doors,

fire safety equipment, smoke detectors, break glass hammers, security lights, fire blankets, window grilles and mobile phones and home and personal alarms.

**Settled accommodation:** This term is used generally to distinguish from accommodation that is temporary or short term. It may include social housing, a tenancy with a private landlord or owner occupation. It is sometimes referred to as permanent accommodation. The term is also used to distinguish accommodation that is capable of ending the main homelessness duty from temporary or interim accommodation (which does not). This can include social housing or a tenancy in the private rented sector.

**Social housing:** Publicly subsidised housing usually provided at sub-market rent levels under, e.g. a secure tenancy provided by a local authority or an assured tenancy provided by a private registered provider.

**Specialist domestic violence court:** Trained and dedicated criminal justice staff with enhanced expertise in dealing with domestic violence, including magistrates specially trained in dealing with domestic violence cases alongside tailored support and advice from independent domestic violence advisors.

**Temporary accommodation:** This term is often used to refer to accommodation provided under the homelessness legislation which is not settled accommodation. Settled accommodation ends a homelessness duty; temporary accommodation does not. The term 'temporary accommodation' can also have a more general meaning, for example, it can include accommodation that homeless people secure for themselves on a temporary basis whilst they look for settled accommodation. It can include women's refuges, bed and breakfast accommodation, hostels or other forms of accommodation intended to be temporary or short term.

**Vulnerable:** Under the homelessness legislation, a person is in priority need if, among other things, they are vulnerable for some reason. For example, the legislation provides that a person may be vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason. A person will also be in priority need if he or she is vulnerable due to domestic violence. Case law has established that an applicant will be vulnerable for the purpose of the legislation if, when homeless, he or she would be "less able to fend for himself than an ordinary homeless person so that he or she would suffer injury or detriment in circumstances where a less vulnerable person would be able to cope without harmful effects"<sup>2</sup>.

**Woman's refuge:** In this report, women's refuges are defined as any specialist accommodation that is provided exclusively for women with children and/or single women at risk of domestic violence.

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<sup>2</sup> The leading case on vulnerability is *R. v Camden LBC Ex. p Pereira* (1998) 31 HLR 317, CA

## Summary

Tackling domestic violence has been a key priority for Government in the last decade. The provision of appropriate accommodation and support is crucial to households at risk of domestic violence. Recently sanctuary scheme services have been developed to help households to safely stay in their own home where this is possible, with a national evaluation just published (Jones *et al*, 2010). Other households will need to move accommodation either temporarily or permanently and many people will need support to resettle.

This research mapped and reviewed the role of accommodation and support services for households at risk of domestic violence in England. It involved two major surveys (of local authorities and housing providers) and focus groups that explored the experiences of service users and key professionals.

### **Refuges and other accommodation based services**

A total of 445 accommodation based services specifically designed for households at risk of domestic violence were mapped in England, offering over 4,000 household places in 2009. The vast majority (88%) were refuges. This represented an average of 0.96 household places in specialist accommodation based provision nationally per 10,000 people in the population. However, it is important to note that an average (mean) of 2.7 places per 10,000 population existed in England taking into account both floating support and specialist accommodation services.

The vast majority (93%) of counties and unitary authorities contained specialist accommodation services. Over two-thirds (70%) of referrals to this provision in 2008-09 were from other local authority areas, highlighting that most provision was more than a local resource.

Specialist accommodation based services provided a wide range of support to residents (including children), and nearly eight in ten (78%) of these services provided follow-on support to residents leaving their accommodation.

One in six accommodation based services were specifically provided for women and women with children from black, Asian and minority ethnic or refugee communities. Less than a third of all accommodation based services stated that they were 'always able' to accommodate people with mental health problems and/or substance misuse problems.

### **Floating support services**

Floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence were operating in 79 per cent of the county councils and unitary authorities in England. A total of 301 services were mapped, providing over 7,750 places. This represented an



average of 1.7 places in specialist floating support services nationally per 10,000 people in the population.

As with accommodation based services, floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence were offering a wide range of services to households, including support with safety planning and counselling as well as more housing related support.

Floating support services were viewed as accessible to households who might not be able to use some shared specialist accommodation based services, for example those with older male children. Specialist floating support services for specific groups of households at risk of domestic violence, such as lone women, men and black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups, were quite unusual.

### **Sanctuary schemes**

Seventy-seven per cent of all local housing authorities were mapped as having access to sanctuary scheme measures to assist households at risk of domestic violence. Sixty-eight per cent of responding sanctuary schemes offered an accompanying support service for households and 49 per cent offered specific legal advice and support.

### **Access to services and settled housing**

The majority (78%) of local authority respondents reported that they had a published directory of domestic violence services in place. However, only about half (53%) reported that information provision was 'very' or 'quite' good' in their area. This was an area for improvement identified by service users.

The majority of London boroughs and unitary councils had specific policies in place for households at risk of domestic violence on their housing registers and in their transfer policies, however this was the case for only a minority of district councils.

Two thirds of local authorities reported that they were 'usually' able to meet the main duty to households at risk of domestic violence within six months of accepting them as homeless and in priority need.

### **Developing services**

A majority (65%) of service providers reported a need to expand specialist accommodation based services and floating support, and a significant minority (41%) sanctuary scheme services. A much lower proportion of local authorities reported a need to expand services, with 39 per cent of authorities reporting a need to expand floating support services and 31 per cent specialist accommodation. The vast majority (80%) of local authorities did not report the need to expand sanctuary scheme services further.

A high proportion of local authorities and service providers were likely to report the need for more services that could address the needs of particular sub-groups amongst households at risk of domestic violence.

Flexibility in funding arrangements and joint commissioning were most commonly identified as factors enabling new service development. Short term funding and changes in funding levels for services were most commonly identified as factors inhibiting service development. Overall, the research showed no evidence of extensive service 'deserts', i.e. parts of England in which no accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence were available. There was significant evidence that relative levels of service provision, and service mix, varied. An average (mean) of 2.7 places per 10,000 population existed in England across both floating support and specialist accommodation services, varying between 1.6 and 3.7 places across different regions of England.

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings from an independent study into the housing and support options for households at risk of domestic violence, commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government and conducted by the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York. This first chapter outlines the policy background to the research and introduces the aims and methods of the study.

## **Background to the study**

- 1.2 Domestic violence is defined by the Government as ‘any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality’<sup>3</sup>. It is estimated that one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic violence during their lifetime. However, 77 per cent of all victims of domestic violence in 2008-09 were women (Walker et al, 2009) and previous surveys recorded that 89 per cent of victims of severe and repeated (four or more incidents) domestic violence were women (Walby and Allen, 2004). In 2008-09, 101 women, and 31 men, were murdered by their partner or former partner<sup>4</sup> (Smith and Flatley, 2010).
- 1.3 Children are also disproportionately affected by domestic violence, with an estimated 750,000 children a year witnessing domestic violence. Children affected are also more likely to experience physical and sexual abuse themselves, as well as suffer a range of detrimental health, education and welfare impacts (Saunders, 1995; Department of Health, 2002; National Children’s Home Action for Children, 2002; McGee, 2000).
- 1.4 Tackling domestic violence has been a key priority for Government in the last decade. Its three pronged approach of prevention, protection and justice and support was first outlined in the strategy document, Safety and Justice (Home Office, 2003) and an annual progress report is produced on the National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan introduced in 2005 (HM Government, 2009a).
- 1.5 The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 brought in new powers for the police and courts and increased the support and protection for victims. Ahead of this, Specialist Domestic Violence Courts were already being developed (with 141 in place by March 2010). Independent domestic violence advisors were also introduced to provide specialist assistance to the victim, with over 700 independent domestic violence advisors across England and

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violentcrime/>.

<sup>4</sup> The gender of the partner/ ex-partner is not given in the statistics.

Wales by summer 2009 (HM Government, 2009a). In addition, over 200 multi-agency risk assessment conferences are now in place where local agencies work together to meet the needs of the highest risk victims of domestic violence.

- 1.6 The needs of children affected by domestic violence are addressed through the Every Child Matters agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and a good practice guide on how to support children who have witnessed domestic violence has been produced (Mullender, 2004). Most recently, the Government published a strategy to end *Violence Against Women and Girls* (HM Government, 2009b) which included a commitment to introduce compulsory gender equality and domestic violence education in the personal, social, health and economic curriculum from 2011 as well as to develop new Domestic Violence Protection Orders (also known as 'GO' orders) which would remove the perpetrator from the home quickly for a temporary period providing an opportunity for the victim to consider options and arrange support.
- 1.7 One of the four objectives of the National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan is to build capacity within the domestic violence sector to provide effective advice and support to victims of domestic violence. A key component of this is the provision of appropriate accommodation and housing related support. The Delivery Plan highlights the three main areas of Government provision for households at risk of domestic violence:
  - assistance to households at risk of domestic violence who are accepted as homeless under the homelessness legislation
  - the funding of accommodation and housing related support services for households at risk of domestic violence, and
  - sanctuary scheme services to assist households at risk of domestic violence remain in their own homes

#### **ASSISTANCE FOR HOUSEHOLDS THAT ARE HOMELESS AS A RESULT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

- 1.8 The first area of Government provision is the homelessness legislation which provides a statutory safety net for households who become homeless, including those who have to leave their accommodation to escape domestic violence. This statutory scheme, with some modifications, has been in place since the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act came into force.
- 1.9 Under the present homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996), local authorities have a statutory duty to secure that suitable accommodation is available for occupation by those assessed as homeless, eligible for assistance, in 'priority need' and who are homeless through no fault of their own (this is known as the 'main homelessness duty', see Glossary). In

practice, the local authority must secure suitable temporary accommodation until an offer of 'settled' accommodation brings the duty to an end (or some other circumstance ends the duty.)

- A person is statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation anywhere in the World which they have a legal right to occupy; if they cannot access their existing housing, or they cannot reasonably be expected to continue to live there, for example because of a risk of violence.
- Applicants must also be 'eligible' for assistance as certain categories of 'person from abroad' cannot be assisted under the legislation.
- The priority need groups include, among others, applicants whose household contains dependent children; pregnant women; adults who are 'vulnerable' for some reason. They also include people who are homeless due to an emergency. In 2002 the priority need categories were extended to include, among others, single people and those without children, who are 'vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation by reason of violence from another person or threats of violence from another person which are likely to be carried out'<sup>5</sup>.
- Intentional homelessness is the result of *deliberate* acts or omissions that cause a person to lose their accommodation. People forced to leave their home because of domestic violence should not be considered to have become homeless intentionally.

1.10 Where the main homelessness duty (to secure suitable accommodation) is owed, but the household has no 'local connection' with the authority to which they have applied, and does have one somewhere else in Great Britain, the duty can be transferred to the local authority where they have a connection. However, conditions for referring a case to another local authority are not met where an applicant would be at risk of violence in the district of the other authority. So, where someone fleeing violence in one district applies for homelessness assistance in another district where they do not have a local connection, and is accepted as meeting the criteria for the main duty, the local authority would not be able to refer them back to the authority in their home district.

1.11 In 2008-09, the main reason for the loss of last settled home was recorded as violent relationship breakdown for 6,820 applicants accepted by local housing authorities in England as being owed a main homelessness duty (13% of

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<sup>5</sup> Section 10 of the Act. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2006) states that a person should be assessed as vulnerable if they 'are less able to fend for him/herself than an ordinary homeless person so that he or she would suffer injury or detriment, in circumstances where a less vulnerable person would be able to cope without harmful effects'.

acceptances) (Table 1.1) <sup>6</sup>. A lower number of households (1,760; 3% of acceptances) were recorded as being accepted by local authorities as they were in 'priority need' due to domestic violence. This lower figure is explained by the fact that the principal reason why most households accepted as owed the main homelessness duty (where the reason for homelessness is related to domestic violence) have priority need is because they have dependent children.

- 1.12 Recent large scale survey research has also suggested that a higher proportion of families accepted as owed the main homelessness duty have experienced domestic violence. Twenty-two per cent of a representative sample of families owed the main homelessness duty reported that they were homeless as a result of violent relationship breakdown. However, 41 per cent of the sample reported experience of domestic violence as an adult (Pleace *et al*, 2008).
- 1.13 Table 1.1 shows that levels of homeless acceptances have fallen markedly in recent years, from a peak of 135,430 households in 2003/4 to 53,430 in 2008-09. Fewer and fewer households are now accepted as owed the main homelessness duty because of a major change in emphasis within Government policy towards homelessness prevention (Pawson *et al*, 2006). Local housing authorities predominantly operate a 'housing options' approach whereby they attempt to assist households at the earliest opportunity and before they become homeless. New and enhanced services have been put into place, including housing advice services, rent deposit schemes, tenancy sustainment services and, crucially for those at risk of domestic violence, sanctuary schemes (see below).

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<sup>6</sup> Source: DCLG

**Table 1.1: Homelessness acceptances due to domestic violence and reported loss of last settled home recorded as domestic violence 1998/99 to 2008/9**

Year	Total homelessness acceptance	Of which accepted as in priority need due to domestic violence	%	Of which recorded as losing last settled home due to domestic violence	%
1998/99	104,260	6,190	6%	18,130	17%
1999/00	105,580	6,140	6%	17,620	17%
2000/01	114,670	6,640	6%	18,070	16%
2001/02	116,660	6,290	5%	17,750	15%
2002/03	128,540	6,780	5%	17,680	14%
2003/04	135,430	6,160	5%	17,400	13%
2004/05	120,860	5,960	5%	15,360	13%
2005/06	93,980	4,020	4%	12,100	13%
2006/07	73,360	2,890	4%	9,770	13%
2007/08	63,170	2,140	3%	7,850	12%
2008/09	53,430	1,760	3%	6,820	13%

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government. Percentages are rounded.

## ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT

- 1.14 The second key area of Government provision of accommodation services for households at risk of domestic violence is via specific funding for specialist accommodation and housing related support. In 2003, the Government introduced the Supporting People Programme which provides funding to deliver housing related support services for households fleeing domestic violence, alongside other groups of people with support needs. Supporting People is a devolved programme with strategic spending decisions made by local authorities based on local assessment of need. Since April 2009, Supporting People has been a non-ringfenced grant and, since April 2010, has been paid through area-based grant.
- 1.15 In 2007-08, the Supporting People Programme provided over £64.5n of housing related support services to women at risk of domestic violence (HM Government, 2009a). Table 1.2 shows that this funding included 606 services which had their primary client group of women escaping domestic violence. The two predominant types of services funded were accommodation based services (57%) and floating support services (30%). In addition, some services will also have been supported where households at risk of domestic violence were a 'secondary client group', that is where they were not the main client group for the services but the service also delivered some services to these households.

**Table 1.2: Supporting People services whose primary client group was women escaping domestic violence (England, December 2007)**

Broad type of service	Number of services	Percentage
Accommodation based service (refuges)	355	57%
Floating support service	184	30%
Accommodation based with floating support	49	8%
Outreach service	8	1%
Resettlement service	7	1%
Other	3	<1%
Total	606	100.0

Source: Supporting People Local System statistics *CHP analysis*

- 1.16 The Supporting People Programme, now delivered via the area-based grant, is the main funding source for housing related support including refuges for women fleeing domestic violence, as well as other accommodation based services, resettlement and floating support for households at risk of domestic violence. Providers may also receive some more limited funding particularly via the charitable sector (for example, Lottery funds), and will also obviously collect rents (often via housing benefit) on any accommodation based services.

#### **SANCTUARY SCHEME SERVICES TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

- 1.17 As part of the Government's focus on homelessness prevention (outlined above), since 2006, the Government has also encouraged local authorities to develop interventions to enable households at risk of domestic violence, where appropriate and acceptable to the households at risk, to stay in their own homes (DCLG, 2006; Pawson *et al*, 2006; Jones *et al*, 2010). These interventions are usually referred to as sanctuary scheme services and attempt to secure the home so it is safe for victims to continue living there. Government guidance has indicated that they should be developed alongside specialist support services and criminal justice interventions (for example, occupation orders which define or regulate rights of occupation in the home). In 2008-09, local authorities reported that there were 3,820 cases where people were able to remain in their existing home due to sanctuary scheme measures (DCLG, 2009)<sup>7</sup>.

#### **HOUSEHOLDS' PATHWAYS THROUGH SERVICES**

- 1.18 As outlined below, this study focused on the extent and nature of accommodation provision available. The research did not examine the pathways of households through services. However, it is very important to note that households at risk of domestic violence will use very different

<sup>7</sup> Please see Chapter 2 for further analysis of these statistics.



pathways through accommodation and housing related services depending on their particular needs as well as the availability, and accessibility, of services in their area.

- 1.19 Domestic violence affects people from all socio-economic backgrounds and households will be living in very different housing situations, with different resources available to them, when they experience domestic violence. For example, some people will be in owner-occupied property, others in social housing or the private rented sector. They may wish to stay in the same tenure or want or need to move into a new tenure, for example an owner occupier might need a rented home following relationship breakdown as a result of domestic violence.
- 1.20 Research shows that households are often unable to leave or ensure that an abusive partner (or family) leaves their home immediately that they are affected by violence. Households might lack information on their options and/or they may also lack confidence or support to address the abusive situation. Some households will leave a situation many times before they are able to do so permanently (for example, 41% of women in refuges had left her abuser at least once before their current stay (Barron, 2009)). Others may never leave and some may successfully address the situation, with or without the support of external services.
- 1.21 Households at risk of domestic violence might take one or more of the following pathways through services:
  - *Remaining in one's own home:* Sanctuary scheme services may make existing housing safe to continue living there. Criminal justice interventions might remove a perpetrator from the home. Outreach and floating support service might help people to manage the situation. Some people may remain in their own home permanently; others may do so temporarily before a move becomes necessary.
  - *A move to friends and/or relatives:* Many households may at first move in with relatives, although research shows that these may only be temporary solutions (Warrington, 2001).
  - *A move to temporary accommodation:* Some households might not feel safe remaining in their own home, irrespective of support available, and will need to leave a violent situation. They may move temporarily into a refuge or other temporary accommodation, and then return home when the perpetrator has been removed, their housing is made safe or safer, or when they hope the abuse might end. Others will need to secure new suitable and safe housing. People may stay in one or more types of temporary accommodation.
  - *A move to a new home:* Those who cannot return to their previous home will need to find new accommodation. Some people will find this

accommodation themselves; others will need the support of professional agencies. This might include being assessed as homeless under the homelessness legislation; alternatively a person may be supported to apply for new housing via local authority 'housing options' services or with the help of refuges or other support services. When new housing is found, some households will be able to live independently immediately, others will require short term or longer support to re-establish themselves in a new location.

- 1.22 As can be seen, there are many possible pathways that any one household at risk of domestic violence might take through services. The task of each and every service is to be responsive enough to ensure that people can be supported through any pathway that they have to take to ensure that they no longer have to experience domestic violence.

### **The research study**

#### **THE NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH**

- 1.23 Despite the fundamental importance of appropriate and safe housing for households at risk of domestic violence, relatively little research has been conducted in this area. One exception is the Government funded research in this area undertaken just before the introduction of the Supporting People Programme (Levison and Kenny, 2002). This research highlighted the importance of a coordinated approach to domestic violence, the high regard for refuge provision, the difficulties faced by local authorities in re-housing households and the need for increased floating and outreach support services. Overall, however, the findings indicated that practice appeared to have improved significantly on earlier decades when local authority homelessness policy and practice on domestic violence appeared to have been much more uneven (Hague and Malos, 1994),
- 1.24 Research in Scotland (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2003) also reported on the value of specialist refuge provision in meeting the needs of households escaping domestic violence, although highlighted some of the tensions involved in the provision of shared accommodation, particularly where there is a shortage of move-on accommodation. More recently, refuges and other specialist women-only domestic violence support services were part of a mapping exercise undertaken by End Violence Against Women in partnership with Equality and Human Rights Commission which reported an uneven distribution of services across the UK (Coy *et al.*, 2007; 2009). Women's Aid also conducts its own annual survey of its members which estimated that 16,750 women and 19,005 children were accommodated by refuges at some point during the course of 2008-09 (Barron, 2009).
- 1.25 The present research is one of three major research projects funded by Communities and Local Government to provide better information on housing

options available for households at risk of domestic violence. This project is focused on mapping the full range of housing options available to all households, with a second project evaluating the effectiveness of sanctuary scheme services (Jones *et al*, 2010) and a third investigating the response of local housing authorities to adults without dependent children (Clarke *et al*, forthcoming).

## **RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS**

- 1.26 The overall aim of the research was to identify the housing options that are available for households at risk of domestic violence in England and to establish whether this provision meets current needs. There were four key objectives of the study:
- Establish the extent and type of temporary and settled accommodation available for households at risk of domestic violence in England.
  - Establish the extent and nature of other options which enable households to remain safely in their homes.
  - Establish whether current provision meets the needs of households at risk of domestic violence.
  - Identify what gaps in provision exist.
- 1.27 In addition, there were a number of more detailed requirements for the study:
- Establish the extent of temporary accommodation and housing related support available for households at risk of domestic violence.
  - Map the provision of temporary accommodation and housing related support.
  - Provide information on the providers, funding and costs of this accommodation and support.
  - Identify whether current provision of temporary accommodation and housing related support meets needs and to identify any gaps in provision.
  - Identify lengths of stay in temporary accommodation, and patterns of move-on.
  - Establish whether there is sufficient, appropriate move-on and housing related support for households moving in to settled accommodation.
  - Identify and map other housing options available for households at risk of domestic violence, including Sanctuary Schemes and other preventative measures.
- 1.28 The research involved a programme of both quantitative and qualitative work utilising five interrelated data collection methods:
- a mapping exercise of provision

- a survey of local authorities
- a survey of service providers
- qualitative interviews and focus groups, and
- analysis of other key national data sources

Appendix 1 provides more detail on all the methods outlined briefly below.

### ***A mapping exercise of provision***

- 1.29 A detailed mapping exercise of accommodation and housing related support services for households at risk of domestic violence was undertaken (referred to as 'mapping exercise' hereafter). Administrative data held by the Department for Communities and Local Government (centring on the Supporting People Local System) and the UK Gold Book (produced by Women's Aid Federation of England, in partnership with Welsh Women's Aid, Scottish Women's Aid and Northern Ireland Women's Aid), formed the starting point for the mapping exercise. This was supplemented and also cross-checked by Survey 1 and 2 (see below), follow-up contact with local authorities, web searches and cross checking results with Women's Aid. The mapping exercise therefore utilised up to five data collection exercises to verify the existence, function, size and nature of each accommodation related domestic violence service in England.
- 1.30 The mapping exercise and the reporting of the mapping exercise was based on commissioning level authorities, as the core administrative data (supporting people local system) are collated at that level. This means the data were collected, analysed and are reported at the level of county councils in two-tier areas, unitary authorities in single tier areas and at the level of individual boroughs in London. All analysis is according to the local government boundaries established in the 2009 reorganisation.

### ***A survey of local authorities (Survey 1)***

- 1.31 Homelessness/housing option departments in all district level/unitary local authorities (N=343) were surveyed in May 2009 to identify the full range of accommodation and housing related support provision at a local level that could be accessed by households at risk of domestic violence.
- 1.32 Authorities were sent a provisional list of services understood to be in their local area (devised from the first stage of the mapping exercise) and asked to check, correct and amend this list accordingly. Authorities were also asked a series of questions to explore their views on the adequacy of different types of services and the overall appropriateness of the service mix in their area. Full responses were received from 185 authorities (response rate of 54%), with a list of accommodation related services used by households at risk of domestic

violence (without survey questions being completed) being provided for a further 67 authorities<sup>8</sup> (252 authorities in total, overall response rate of 73%).

- 1.33 Appendix 1 gives more detail on the robustness of the data. Coverage was generally good for each of the government office regions in England with the exception of the North East. Survey 1 was conducted when elements of the 2009 local government reorganisation were still taking place. This meant a few responses were received from authorities that were about to cease to exist, while others were from authorities that just been formed.

### ***A survey of service providers (Survey 2)***

- 1.34 With the assistance of Women's Aid, a second survey was distributed in August 2009 to all providers identified by the mapping exercise outlined above. This survey gathered more detailed information on services, their development plans and their view on the need for services relative to supply. Many service providers deliver several types of service at once. The providers range in size from national level agencies, such as Refuge, down to small individual projects within one local authority area. In addition, there are also umbrella organisations encompassing varying numbers of quasi-independent services.
- 1.35 Giving a response rate in terms of providing agencies would not give a true picture of how comprehensive the response rate was, as one provider might run one service or 20. If the response rate for Survey 2 is expressed in terms of the services that were mapped in England (including incorporating any changes as a result of Survey 1) the responses to Survey 2 accounted for:
- Three hundred and twenty-one refuges and specialist accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence managed by 156 agencies (72% of the total of 445 services of this sort mapped in England).
  - Two hundred and twenty-six floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence managed by 129 service providers (75% of the total of 301 such services mapped in England).
  - Sixty-five sanctuary schemes provided by 63 service providers (26% of the 251 local housing authorities that reported they provided, or had access to, a sanctuary scheme service in England).

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<sup>8</sup> Following a second request for data to these homelessness sections, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors for those areas from which there had been either no response or, in the case of rural counties containing several district councils, a response had been received from less than 75% of districts, were also approached. As IDVAs tended to be found at County level in rural areas this meant that a different tier of local government was approached in some rural areas. Supporting People teams at County level in these areas were also approached.

### ***Qualitative research***

1.36 A programme of qualitative research was undertaken that involved 30 agency representatives and 44 service users:

- *Telephone interviews with key national stakeholders:* Detailed interviews were conducted with eight national experts to explore the overall patterns of service provision and possible areas of unmet need at the outset of the project. This included representatives within government departments, specialist domestic violence organisations and a national homelessness organisation.
- *Focus groups with service users:* Five focus groups (three in London, one in the Midlands and one in the North East) were conducted with service users involving a total of 44 women who had experienced domestic violence and were utilising refuge provision (the majority of people), floating support or sanctuary provision. Two of the groups were conducted with women from black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities utilising specialist provision. It was also intended to include a focus group with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people and one with men but this did not prove possible (see Appendix 1); these groups were replaced by three interviews with key experts in these areas.
- *A national consultation exercise with service providers:* Two consultation exercises were undertaken with local service providers (one in London and one in York). Fifteen representatives attended the two groups. A balance of statutory and voluntary sector providers (specialist and generic) were invited but attendees were mainly specialist voluntary sector providers (N=12, with three statutory sector representatives). A further two telephone interviews were conducted with generic housing providers delivering domestic violence accommodation based services, and also two interviews with a specialist service providers in the North East.

### ***Analysis of other key national data sources***

1.37 Four other key data sources were utilised in the study:

- The Supporting People Client Record, a database of all housing related support service delivery in England, which records the characteristics of client groups as they enter services. These data were used to look at changing patterns of housing support service provision for households at risk of domestic violence.
- The Supporting People Outcomes Data, which for those in receipt of short-term services, is comprised of short exit interviews with clients upon leaving housing support services. For this report, the main focus of this

part of the data analysis was to look at emergent evidence on service outcomes<sup>9</sup>.

- The CORE data record information about tenants receiving new social lettings in England. For this report, these data were used to look at the housing pathways of statutorily and non-statutorily homeless people at risk of domestic violence who had left their existing accommodation.
- P1E data records the discharge of duty towards homeless households under the statutory homelessness system by local housing authorities. Since 2008-09 this has included basic data on homelessness prevention. The data were used to look at how the statutory homelessness system assisted households at risk of domestic violence as well as to look at how sanctuary scheme provision was being used to prevent homelessness.

1.38 It should be noted that all correlations reported in the analysis of the surveys and related information are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level of confidence or above (that is,  $p < 0.05$  or higher), unless otherwise stated.

### **The structure of this report**

- 1.39 The report presents the findings of the research in a further six chapters. Chapter Two examines the role of services that can enable households at risk of domestic violence to remain in their own homes, with a particular focus on sanctuary scheme services. Chapter Three examines the extent, nature and adequacy of refuge provision alongside other specialist accommodation meant primarily for households at risk of domestic violence. It also looks at the provision of other accommodation used for households at risk of domestic violence, where the households are not the primary client group but the service has a secondary role of providing support to these households.
- 1.40 Chapter Four considers the role of floating support and outreach services in assisting people to live safely in either their existing or new home following resettlement from accommodation based services. Chapter Five examines access to settled housing, examining the nature and adequacy of housing advice, housing supply issues as well as the main duty owed to homeless households at risk of domestic violence accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need.
- 1.41 Chapter Six reviews the overall provision of accommodation and housing related services available to households, identifying gaps in services. The final chapter presents the conclusions from the research.
- 1.42 Within each chapter, findings from both Survey 1 and 2, along with relevant information from the mapping exercise, and any relevant analysis of additional

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<sup>9</sup> Covering periods of service delivery ranging from 28 days or more to up to (but not equal to or exceeding) two years. This would have covered the typical periods of service delivery for almost all housing support services and refuges.

data, are presented. At the end of each substantive section within the chapter, the key findings from the qualitative work are presented.



## 2 Sanctuary scheme services and other initiatives to assist households at risk of domestic violence to remain in their home

### Key points

- Homelessness prevention data collected by the Department for Communities and Local Government recorded that 3,820 households at risk of domestic violence were able to remain in their existing home as a result of sanctuary scheme measures. This represented the equivalent of 7 per cent of the total number of households owed a main duty under the homelessness legislation in 2008-09, and 45 per cent of households who were owed a main duty stating violent relationship breakdown as a reason for homelessness.
- Seventy-seven per cent of all local housing authorities were mapped as having access to sanctuary scheme measures to assist households at risk of domestic violence.
- The most commonly reported services provided by sanctuary schemes were extra locks and bolts, fire safety equipment, external security lights and alarms. Less than half of the responding schemes provided video entry systems.
- Sixty-eight per cent of responding sanctuary schemes offered an accompanying support service for households and 49 per cent offered specific legal advice and support.
- Most sanctuary scheme providers were able to install sanctuaries for households living in any tenure and offer service to people with severe mental illness and/or substance misuse problems.
- Forty per cent of sanctuary scheme providers considered that the needs of service users were met 'very well' and 43 per cent reported that households' needs were met 'quite well'.
- Overall, 40 per cent of domestic violence service providers, and 32 per cent of local authority respondents, considered that sanctuary schemes required expanding.
- The qualitative work reported that some service providers and service users considered that sanctuary scheme services required further development to ensure they offered an appropriate range of services to households at risk of domestic violence. Their value was seen as an additional option for some households at risk of domestic violence.

- Three-quarters (75%) of local authorities highlighted the risk of eviction of those who are perpetrators of domestic violence in the information they provided to tenants, however only 22 per cent of authorities had ever used this provision.
- Sixty per cent of service providers, and 47 per cent of local authorities, reported a need to expand perpetrator programmes.

## **Introduction**

- 2.1 The prevention of homelessness is a central aim of local housing authorities, with domestic violence support identified as a key priority area (ODPM, 2005; Pawson *et al*, 2006). This chapter focuses on services that are designed to assist the household to remain in their own home wherever possible, rather than result in a housing move including into refuges or other forms of temporary accommodation. As outlined in Chapter 1, the Government has encouraged local authorities, working in partnership with other key agencies, to develop sanctuary scheme services that will enable some service users to remain in their own home safely on a temporary or permanent basis, and has recently published new research and guidance in this area (Jones *et al*, 2010). This chapter examines the present coverage of these schemes in England. It also explores the range of services provided by sanctuary scheme services, their accessibility, effectiveness and the reported need for any expansion of services.
- 2.2 A second, shorter, section examines the potential of housing related initiatives designed to remove the perpetrator from the homes of people at risk of domestic violence. Three types of initiatives are considered: firstly, the eviction of perpetrators from the households' home; secondly, the role of perpetrator programmes in addressing the behaviour of abusers; and, thirdly, the provision of accommodation related initiatives for perpetrators to remove their need to return to the family home.
- 2.3 The chapter draws on the study's primary data collection via the mapping exercise, the survey of local authorities (Survey 1), the survey of service providers (Survey 2) and the qualitative interviews with agency representatives and service users (see Chapter 1 and Appendix 1).

## **Sanctuary scheme services**

### **DEFINITION**

- 2.4 The first sanctuary scheme was set up in 2002 by the Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) in partnership with the London Borough of Harrow Housing Department. 'Sanctuary Schemes' have been promoted by the Department for Communities and Local Government since 2005 as part of the then best value performance indicators (No 225) on domestic violence services.

- 2.5 The DCLG guidance document *Options for Setting up a Sanctuary Scheme* (DCLG, 2006) describes Sanctuary Schemes as offering people the prospect of staying safely in their own home through enhanced security and safety. The guidance describes a Sanctuary model composed of two main elements: the installation of a Sanctuary room (often referred to as a ‘panic room’) where a main room has a reinforced door (that opens outwards) fitted with a door viewer and additional locks and bolts providing a ‘safe room’ where household members can call and wait safely for the police; and secondly, a Sanctuary Plus model also includes added security measures in the rest of the property such as reinforced front and back doors, fire safety equipment, emergency lights and reinforced windows.
- 2.6 A study on the effectiveness of sanctuary scheme provision, along with a new guide for providers, has recently been published (Jones *et al*, 2010). The Jones *et al* study was a detailed qualitative study focused on eight local authorities where sanctuary schemes had been established and were delivering a number of different models. Interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders as well as services users with direct experience of sanctuary schemes. This study should be consulted for a detailed assessment of the experience of running and being supported by a sanctuary scheme. The present study took a different methodological approach. The research was primarily quantitative in nature, attempting to map provision across England as well as describing the main features of this provision. Service users involved in the qualitative focus groups (see Chapter 1) were asked about their views on sanctuary schemes but only one person had direct experience of a scheme. Service user views therefore present people’s perspectives of the potential value of a sanctuary scheme rather than their direct experience of one.
- 2.7 In this study, the definition of sanctuary scheme services was ‘security measures to enable households at risk of domestic violence to remain safely in their existing homes or to be secure in a new home’.

#### **MAPPING SANCTUARY SCHEME PROVISION IN ENGLAND**

- 2.8 As outlined in Chapter 1, newly introduced statistical monitoring of homelessness prevention by local housing authorities in England shows that 3,820 households at risk of domestic violence were able to remain in their own home as a result of sanctuary scheme measures in 2008-09. Table 2.1 summarises these data at regional level. The most widespread use of sanctuary schemes was in the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber and within London. Relatively lower levels of activity were reported in the North East, the Midlands, the East of England and the South East and South West.

**Table 2.1: Use of sanctuary scheme provision to prevent homelessness by region in 2008/9**

Region	Homelessness prevented by remaining in existing home via Sanctuary Scheme	Percentage
North East	396	10%
North West	905	24%
Yorkshire & Humber	1,170	31%
East Midlands	97	3%
West Midlands	142	4%
East of England	154	4%
London	616	16%
South East	193	5%
South West	147	4%
Total	3,820	100%

Source: Local housing authority data on use of sanctuary schemes to prevent homelessness (P1E returns). CHP analysis.

- 2.9 Table 2.2 shows the comparative scale of sanctuary scheme usage for homelessness prevention relative to the operation of the statutory homelessness system. It cannot be assumed that the use of sanctuary provision to prevent homelessness is always diverting households, who would otherwise always be owed the main duty, away from the statutory system. Some of these households might be found not to be owed the main duty, or might have sought alternative housing solutions to the statutory system, if the option of sanctuary had not been available. Further, sanctuary schemes will not be able to meet the needs of every household (see below). Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the use of sanctuary provision to prevent homelessness will have some impact on the statutory homelessness system. Table 2.2 shows that, during 2008-09, sanctuary provision was providing a service to a number of households at risk of domestic violence that ranged between the equivalent of 2 per cent and 19 per cent of households owed the main duty, looking at the available figures at a regional level. Nationally, the number of households supported by sanctuary schemes (3,820) represented the equivalent of 7 per cent of the total number of households owed a main duty under the homelessness legislation (53,051).
- 2.10 Table 2.2 also shows that the number of households supported by sanctuary schemes represented the equivalent of 45 per cent of households who were owed a main duty stating violent relationship breakdown as a reason for homelessness (8,493). On this measure, regional differences were more prominent than when looking at all households owed a main duty, varying from representing an equivalent of 7 per cent and 99 per cent of households owed a main duty due to violent relationship breakdown. This suggests that some regions are utilising sanctuary scheme provision to a much greater extent than others to meet the housing and support needs of households at risk of domestic violence.

**Table 2.2: Use of sanctuary provision for homelessness prevention relative to the operation of the statutorily homelessness system during 2008/9**

Region	Homelessness prevented by remaining in existing home via Sanctuary Scheme	Households owed main duty under homelessness legislation	Sanctuary scheme users as percentage equivalent of number of households owed main duty	Households owed main duty giving violent relationship breakdown as reason for homelessness	Sanctuary scheme users as percentage equivalent of number of households owed main duty giving violent relationship breakdown as reason
North East	396	3,141	13%	696	57%
North West	905	5,491	16%	1,239	73%
Yorkshire & Humber	1,170	6,260	19%	1,183	99%
East Midlands	97	3,610	3%	587	17%
West Midlands	142	8,595	2%	1,968	7%
East of England	154	5,048	3%	668	23%
London	616	12,578	5%	1,075	57%
South East	193	4,705	4%	616	31%
South West	147	3,623	4%	461	32%
Total	3,820	53,051	7%	8,493	45%

Source: Local housing authority data on use of sanctuary schemes to prevent homelessness (P1E returns). CHP analysis. Percentages are rounded

- 2.11 As noted in Chapter 1 and described in detail in Appendix 1, the mapping exercise involved cross checking existing service databases with the results of Survey 1 and Survey 2 and web based searches. In respect of sanctuary scheme services, the results of the mapping exercise were also crossed checked with the 2008-09 data on sanctuary scheme use, to prevent homelessness, from local housing authorities.
- 2.12 This detailed analysis at local housing authority level found that sanctuary scheme provision was diverse in administration and operational area. Some services were led by local authorities, others by the voluntary sector, housing associations, police authorities or through multi-agency partnerships. Services could cover a single district council or small city, a group of smaller authorities within a major city or county council area, or the entire area covered by a county council or major city. Services could also be strategically administered at county or city-wide level, but have local branches. Thus a district council, or one of several authorities administering a major city, could each have a sanctuary scheme that appeared to be ‘theirs’ but was actually a conduit to a service organised and delivered at a higher administrative level.
- 2.13 A number of local authority areas reported cases where sanctuary schemes had enabled households to remain in their own home in the DCLG homelessness prevention statistics, but a dedicated service was not identified

in the mapping exercise<sup>10</sup>. It is possible that some local authorities were using the services of schemes proximate to their authority. The mapping exercise also suggested that the areas within which sanctuary schemes operated did not necessarily reconcile with local authority boundaries. Some areas may have been utilising provision that had more than one function, for example, a few local authorities had made provision for their care and repair services, which originally could be used to enhance home security for older people, to also fit sanctuaries. In a small number of cases, it is possible that the mapping exercise simply did not identify the local scheme.

- 2.14 In this context, it is much more logical to attempt to map the areas that had sanctuary scheme 'coverage' i.e. report the number of areas with and without access to sanctuary services, than to try to map 'sanctuary schemes'. Table 2.3 shows the coverage of sanctuary scheme provision at regional level. In London, for example, 29 of the 33 authorities in the city were mapped as having access to sanctuary provision (88% of the authorities administering London). While access to sanctuary provision was not universal, it did appear to be generally widespread. A clear majority of district and unitary authorities in each region of England were mapped as having access to services (77% of all unitary and district authorities in England).
- 2.15 Areas that were mapped as not having access to sanctuary provision were disproportionately rural district councils with lower population density (68% of the 75 authorities). Otherwise, the councils that were mapped as lacking access to sanctuary provision were socioeconomically diverse and scattered across England (see Table 2.3 and also Map 2.1).

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<sup>10</sup> i.e. respondents to surveys 1 and 2, existing service databases and also web searches did not find evidence of a dedicated sanctuary scheme service.

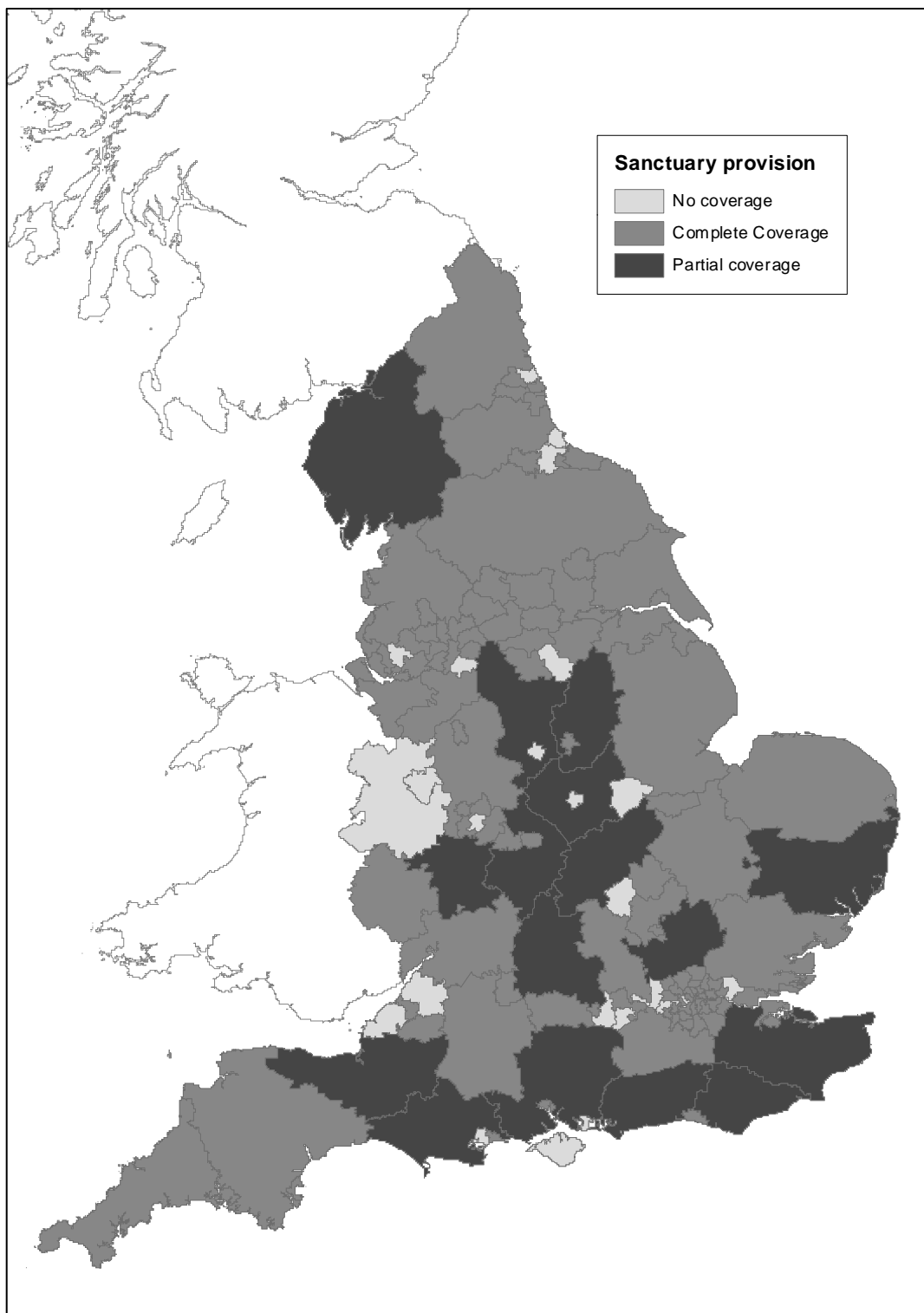
**Table 2.3: Access to sanctuary provision by proportion of district and unitary councils in each region mapped as having access to a service during 2009**

Region	Number of district & unitary councils	Number of district & unitary councils reporting sanctuary provision	Percentage of district & unitary councils reporting sanctuary provision
North East	12	9	75%
North West	39	32	82%
Yorkshire & Humber	21	20	95%
East Midlands	40	26	65%
West Midlands	30	24	80%
East of England	47	36	77%
London	33	29	88%
South East	67	47	70%
South West	37	28	76%
Total	326	251	77%

Sources: Mapping exercise and local housing authority data on use of sanctuary schemes to prevent homelessness (P1E Returns). CHP analysis. Percentages are rounded

- 2.16 Map 2.1 shows the distribution of sanctuary scheme provision in more detail. As evidenced in Table 2.3, this strongly suggests there is very good coverage of this type of provision on a geographical basis across England.

**Map 2.1: The coverage of sanctuary scheme provision in England by County Councils, Unitary authorities and London boroughs**



Source: Mapping Exercise

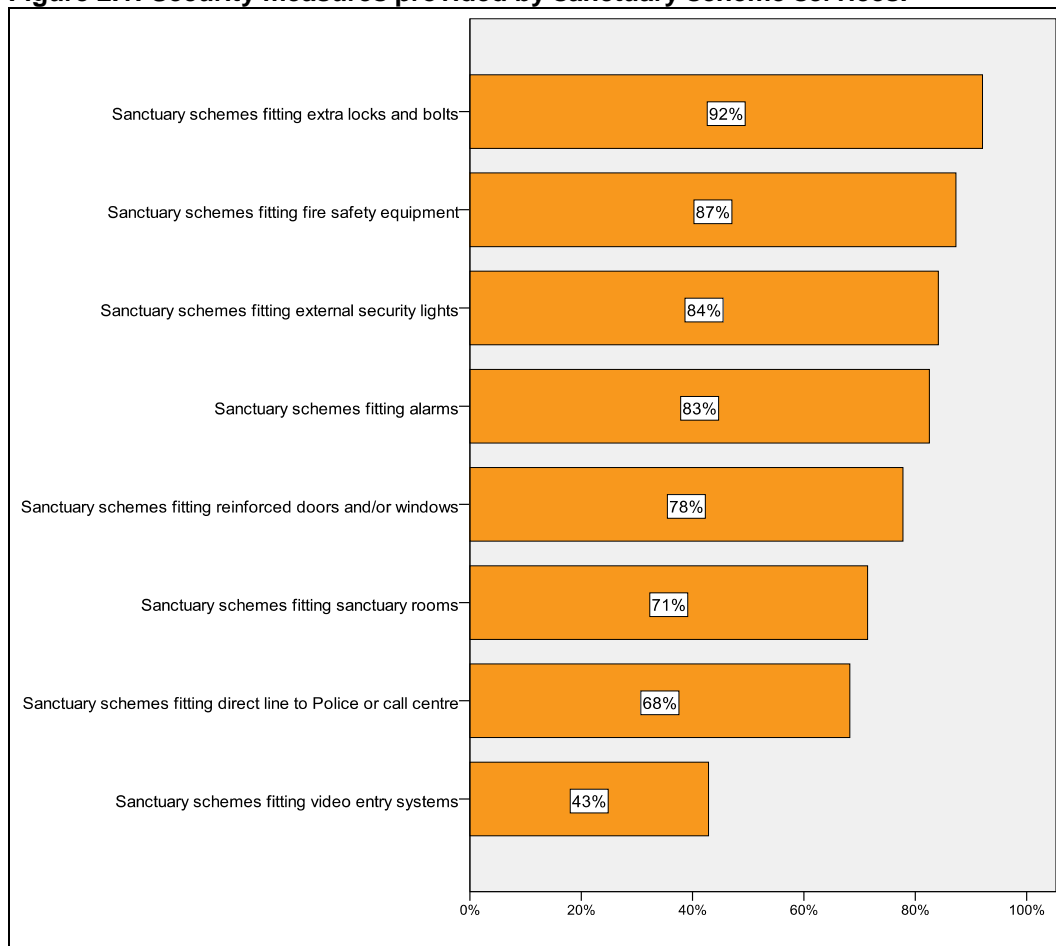


## The range of services provided by sanctuary scheme services

### SECURITY MEASURES PROVIDED BY SANCTUARY SCHEME SERVICES

2.17 Information was collected on 65 sanctuary scheme services in Survey 2 (see Appendix 1). Figure 2.1 summarises the security measures provided by these sanctuary scheme services. Extra locks and bolts were the most commonly reported service (92%), followed by fire safety equipment (87%), external security lights (84%) and alarms (83%). Slightly lower proportions of schemes provided reinforced doors and/or windows (78%), 'sanctuary rooms' (a secure room into which households could retreat if a perpetrator managed to get into the house) (71%) and direct lines to the police or a call centre (68%). A minority of schemes (43%) were currently able to fit video entry systems. These findings suggest that the scope of schemes may be quite different, offering varying types and levels of security protection.

**Figure 2.1: Security measures provided by sanctuary scheme services.**



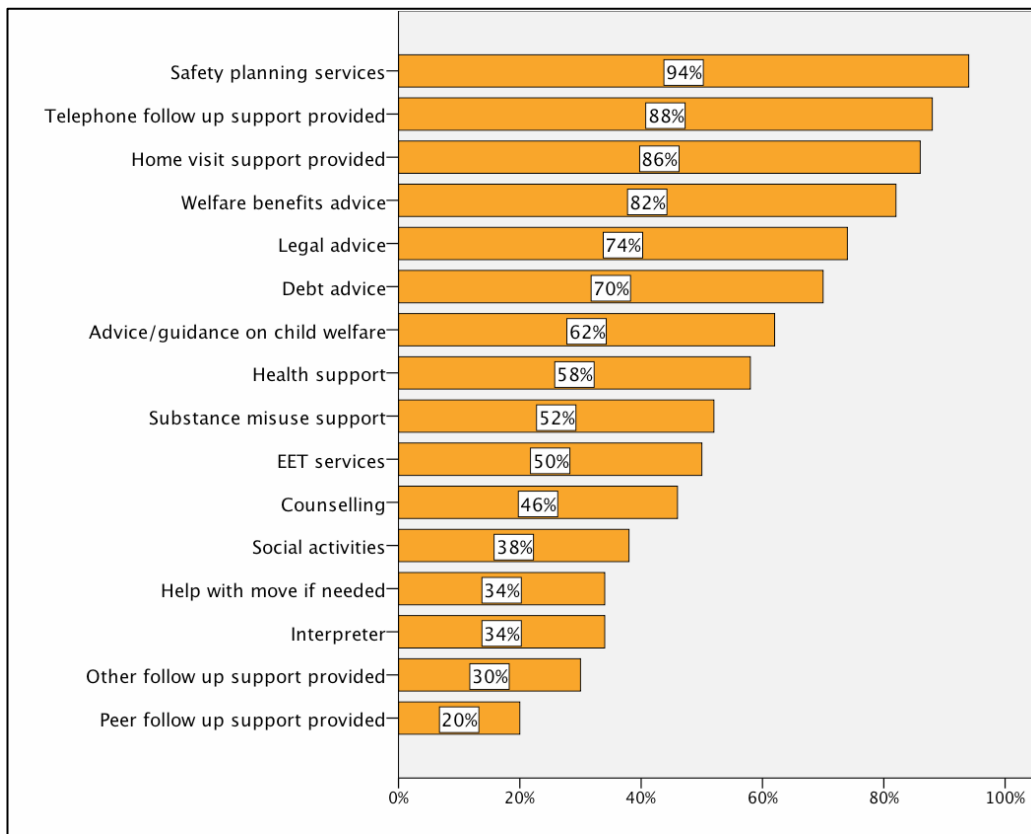
Source: Survey 2. Base: 63 service providers delivering 65 sanctuary schemes<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> The responding service providers operated 40% of the sanctuary schemes found by the mapping exercise for England.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY SANCTUARY SCHEMES**

- 2.18 Survey 2 asked sanctuary scheme providers to identify whether they provided specific help with getting legal advice (assistance with injunctions, exclusion orders, divorce proceedings etc) alongside security measures. Legal advice and support was provided by 49 per cent of the service providers delivering sanctuary schemes.
- 2.19 Sanctuary scheme providers were also asked to identify whether they provided a specific 'support service' alongside the installation of sanctuaries. Two-thirds (68%) of schemes offered a floating support service to all households with sanctuary measures installed. In addition, a further 17 per cent of schemes offered floating support to some service users.
- 2.20 Figure 2.2 summarises the different types of help offered by sanctuary scheme providers with a support service. As can be seen, the most commonly reported form of support was safety planning (94% of those with a support service), followed closely by telephone follow up support (88%), home visit support (86%) and welfare benefits advice (82%). Some forms of support were less frequently provided, including help with an accommodation move if needed (34%), interpretation assistance (34%) and peer support (20%).
- 2.21 Some providers offered a wider range of types of support than other providers. One-quarter of those service providers offering support services as part of their sanctuary schemes delivered five or fewer of the type of help shown in Figure 2.2. By contrast, another 32 per cent delivered 14 or more of these services. The average (mean) number of services delivered as part of a support service in sanctuary schemes was nine.
- 2.22 Sanctuary scheme providers were also asked whether the service provided any specific support to children. Only five service providers reported that child specific services were delivered as a part of their sanctuary schemes (8%).

**Figure 2.2: Range of support services delivered as part of sanctuary schemes.**



Source: Survey 2. Base: 50 service providers delivering support services as a part of their sanctuary schemes<sup>12</sup>.

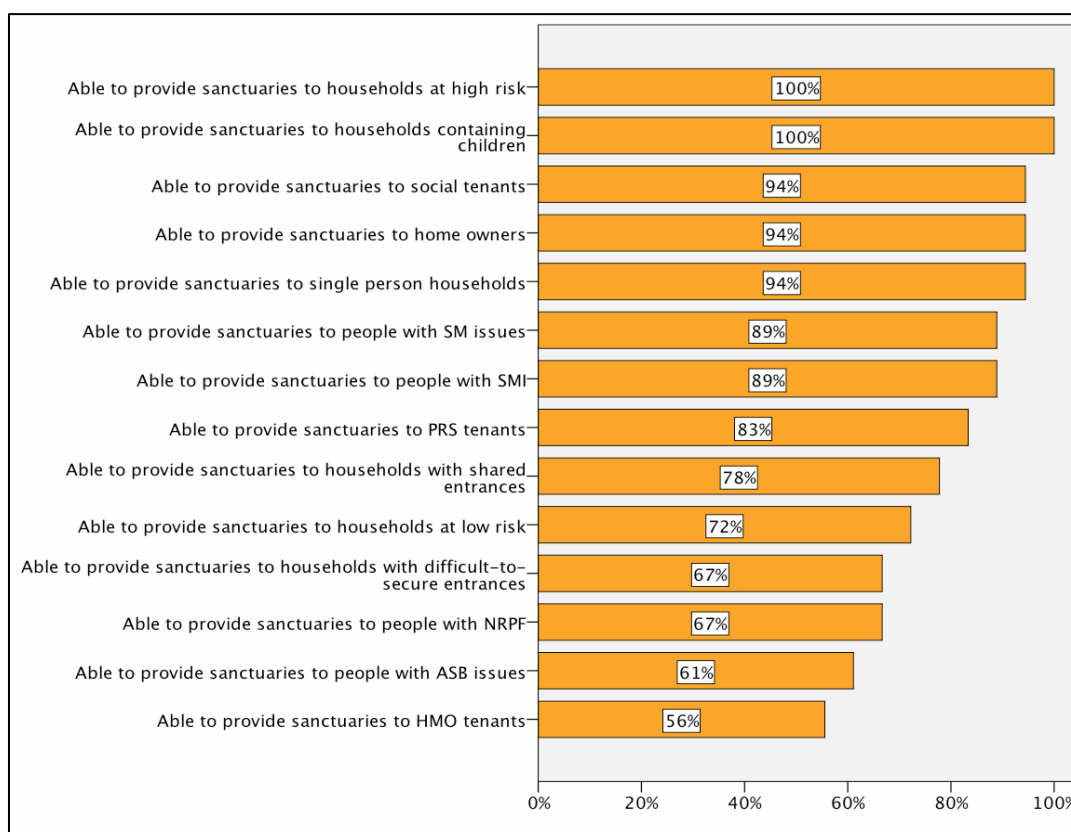
### Accessibility of sanctuary schemes

2.23 Sanctuary scheme providers were asked the extent to which they were able to provide services to specific group of households. Figure 2.3 shows that all responding providers reported that they were ‘always’ or ‘usually’ able to provide sanctuary to households at high risk<sup>13</sup> and to households containing children. Almost all sanctuary scheme providers reported that sanctuary could always or usually be installed in owner-occupied (94% of providers) and private rented housing (83%). Seventy-eight per cent of service providers reported that it was always or usually possible to install sanctuary in buildings with shared entrances. A high proportion of service providers reported that they could always or usually support people with severe mental illness (shown as SMI in Figure 2.3) (89%) and substance misuse (shown as SM) issues (89%).

<sup>12</sup> These service providers collectively operated 51 sanctuary schemes, 32% of the total found by the mapping exercise.

<sup>13</sup> Service providers have differing definitions and means of assessing what constitutes a high risk. This may include households in which the perpetrator is still proximate and represents an ongoing threat, as well as a minority of households that may represent a risk to themselves or others because of high support needs. No specific definition was given of ‘high risk’ in the research.

**Figure 2.3: Types of household to which sanctuary could always or usually be provided**



Source: Survey 2. Base: 55 service providers (eight service providers did not respond to this question).

- 2.24 It was less common for sanctuary schemes to be ‘always’ or ‘usually’ able to support households with no recourse to public funds (shown as NRPF in Figure 2.3) or those presenting with anti-social behaviour problems (shown as ASB in Figure 2.3). It was also less common to report that sanctuary could be provided to tenants in houses in multiple occupation (shown as HMO tenants in Figure 2.3).
- 2.25 The mapping exercise showed that sanctuary schemes were almost exclusively targeted on women and women with children. This finding was as expected and reflects the highly gendered experience of domestic violence in England and the UK (see Chapter 1). However, the mapping exercise found that 13 per cent of sanctuary schemes reported, or were described, as working with households containing an adult male.
- 2.26 The mapping exercise did not show the presence of any sanctuary schemes that were focused solely upon black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups. This finding almost certainly reflects the nature of these services, in that they are designed to enhance physical security to properties. However, certain black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups might have specific

needs that would be important to consider in the delivery of legal support and floating support services as part of sanctuary schemes. For example, as highlighted above, only a third of services were able to provide interpreting facilities. The research was not able to explore whether this potential issue was being dealt with by referral to culturally specific support services, where these were present.

### **Effectiveness of sanctuary schemes**

- 2.27 Service providers were asked about the time it typically took to install sanctuary for households experiencing different levels of risk. It should be noted that sanctuary schemes are not usually able to provide an emergency response as security measures need to be installed. Guidance suggests that households should be moved to a refuge or other accommodation based service if they are in immediate danger whilst the sanctuary is being installed (DCLG, 2006a). Nonetheless, all households at risk of domestic violence are likely to benefit from as quick a response as possible. The data collected in response to this question were limited, as many providers (44%) were unable to provide an answer. When asked about the time taken to install sanctuary for a 'high risk' household, i.e. one that was in immediate physical danger, 48 per cent reported that sanctuary could be installed in one week or less. A small number reported that it took more than one week to install sanctuary for a 'high risk' household (8%).
- 2.28 Service providers were also asked to rate how well their sanctuary scheme was able to meet the needs of households who had security measures installed. Forty per cent of providers reported the needs of service users were met 'very well' by sanctuary schemes and 43 per cent reported that needs were met 'quite well' (Table 2.4). Sixteen per cent reported 'mixed success' in meeting needs, whilst only 2 per cent assessed the scheme as working 'not very well'.

**Table 2.4: Service providers views on the extent to which their sanctuary scheme were able to meet the needs of households who have a sanctuary installed**

Service providers' views on effectiveness	Number of service providers	Percentage
Very well	23	40%
Quite well	25	43%
Mixed success	9	16%
Not very well	1	2%
Base	58 <sup>1</sup>	100%

Source: Survey 2. Percentages are rounded. <sup>1</sup> Seven service providers did not respond to this question.

- 2.29 Service providers were asked to explain their response to the question on how effectively service users' needs were being met. Positive responses centred on feedback from women using the sanctuary schemes, the effectiveness with which they were able to enhance security and on effective multi-agency working in sanctuary provision.

*[service provider] have put together a package that covers all aspects of support, after the sanctuary has been completed there is an automatic referral to the X Fire Brigade. We offer the Freedom Programme<sup>14</sup> for those who wish to take it up and finally Floating Support if not in place. This is optional if the client feels that they need it (Written response to Survey 2).*

*Each sanctuary is individually tailored and although there are similarities with the types of works done on some properties, we have good information sharing between agencies and are able to meet the varied need of each household, we receive positive feedback and the only negative feedback that has come into the scheme has been to do with individual tradesmen and has been solved (Written response to Survey 2).*

- 2.30 Where success was viewed as 'mixed' or meeting need 'quite well', the explanations centred on three factors. The first was that it had not always been possible to provide the level of security that households at risk of domestic violence wanted. The second was that, despite the provision of additional security, some households still did not feel sufficiently safe and secure (sometimes because of the safety issues outside the home), and, as a result, took the decision to move on. The third was that security measures could sometimes have a negative impact on how safe children in a household felt.

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<sup>14</sup> The FREEDOM programme is a free 12-week rolling programme for people wishing to learn more about the reality of domestic violence and abuse <http://www.freedomprogramme.co.uk>

*Not always possible to provide everything the customer would like  
(Written response to Survey 2).*

*On a couple of [occasions] the client left the home because they still  
didn't feel safe (Written response to Survey 2).*

*False sense of security - no social/community safety when out and  
about. Limited amount of ongoing or peer support (Written response  
to Survey 2).*

*They only deal with one part of the problem. Not dealing with the  
cause just the symptoms. All about location and not life choices.  
Women and children want to be free from abuse not reminded and  
scared witless by the constant fear and threat. What is it protecting?  
Not who! (Written response to Survey 2).*

- 2.31 Data on breaches of sanctuary were not widely available from the service providers responding to Survey 2. In total, 25 of the 63 responding service providers were able to provide data (40%) of which 14 (56% of those able to provide data) reported one or more breaches. Among those service providers that had data, breaches appeared quite uncommon, as 30 in total were reported.
- 2.32 These findings on breaches of sanctuary, like those on response times, suggest inconsistency in data collection across sanctuary schemes. As with response time, the recording of breaches would perhaps be thought to be a fundamental indicator of service effectiveness. These results suggest that it may be productive to consider the introduction of a minimum data set for monitoring sanctuary scheme activity.

### **The adequacy of sanctuary scheme provision**

#### **RESOURCE ISSUES IN PROVIDING SANCTUARIES**

- 2.33 In total, 12 service providers (19%) reported that they had been unable to install one or more sanctuaries because of a lack of funds. Data collection on this issue was quite variable as 41 service providers (65%) were unable to answer this question and only four that did answer reported that they had well maintained records in this area. However, from the limited data available, it appeared that resource issues were not widely viewed as limiting the availability of sanctuaries to households that required them.

#### **REPORTED NEED TO EXPAND SANCTUARY SCHEME SERVICES**

- 2.34 Overall, just under one third of local authorities reported that they wished to expand commissioning of sanctuary schemes (32%). A majority of local authorities (66%) reported no plans to change their existing commissioning in this area. Local authorities were very unlikely to report that they wished to

contract existing provision of sanctuary scheme (2% of authorities responding to Survey 1).

- 2.35 There was no statistically significant relationship between existing sanctuary service coverage and a local authority reporting it wished to commission new or additional sanctuary schemes. However, larger authorities, measured as those containing 50,000 or more households, were significantly more likely to report plans to commission new or additional sanctuary schemes (40% compared to 20%). It was not possible to explore the reasons for this in the research but it may have been a result of economies of scale (sanctuary schemes being relatively more affordable for larger authorities), or perhaps that larger level multi-agency joint funded sanctuary schemes are easier to organise if they correspond, for example, with the larger areas covered by police forces.
- 2.36 Service provider views on commissioning were not dissimilar to those reported by local authorities. Overall, 43 per cent of service providers responding to Survey 2 reported that sanctuary scheme provision should be 'expanded', a handful reported it should be 'contracted' (2%), but the largest group reported it should remain at current levels (55%). There was no relationship between a service provider running a sanctuary scheme and the likelihood of their reporting a need to increase sanctuary scheme provision.
- 2.37 While a slightly higher proportion of service providers reported a need for more commissioning in this area than (43% compared to 32%), there was no evidence of a uniform wish to see this aspect of provision expanded.

#### **QUALITATIVE WORK: THE ROLE OF SANCTUARY SCHEMES**

- 2.38 As the parallel study on sanctuary scheme services (Jones *et al*, 2010) involved considerable qualitative work, the present study did not seek to explore the views of sanctuary scheme providers or users in detail. Nonetheless, three providers of sanctuary scheme services took part in the consultation exercise and one service user utilising a sanctuary scheme took part in a focus group (see Appendix 1). In addition, the views of other domestic violence service providers and households at risk of domestic violence taking part in the qualitative work were sought about the principles of sanctuary schemes.
- 2.39 There appeared to be a general view shared by most domestic violence service providers taking part in the consultation exercise that sanctuary scheme services were presently still in development and that some schemes were more comprehensive than others. Generally, respondents believed that an effective sanctuary scheme was likely to offer a range of security measures and support as necessary:

*It's quite easy for a local authority to say we have got a sanctuary scheme but actually the provision can be quite minimal so stuff that*



*used to be target hardening is now called a sanctuary scheme.*  
(Service provider)

- 2.40 Respondents did not raise any specific concerns related to the potential for households to access schemes or possible exclusions from schemes. This chimes with Jones *et al* (2010) which found that schemes were generally accessible to all types of households.
- 2.41 Service users and providers interviewed agreed that the key strength of an effective sanctuary scheme was the potential to assist households to remain living in their own home, where this could be achieved safely. The one focus group participant who was using a sanctuary scheme explained that this service was working very well as she had not had to move the children or move away from nearby friends. She also explained that her neighbours understood her situation and would help by alerting her to the whereabouts of her ex-partner.
- 2.42 When women in refuges who were interviewed for the present study were asked whether they might have considered such a model, most felt that it would not have worked for them as they thought the perpetrator would have found ways around the security measures and/or they still would not have felt safe outside the home. Most felt that they had no choice but to leave their homes, with some literally fearing for their lives if they had remained there, even with a Sanctuary.

*I couldn't have stayed there, he wouldn't have left me alone, the fact of having a panic alarm, that wouldn't have fazed him, you're looking over your shoulder every time you go to the shop...(Service user)*

- 2.43 Service users felt that much more effective policing and housing policies were required for a sanctuary scheme service to have the potential to work, particularly in terms of a much quicker response.

*If they're not on the tenancy, you need to go there with the police and get them out...not oh, we'll send them a letter and give them two weeks' notice...(Service user)*

- 2.44 Some women from black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities explained that a sanctuary scheme service could not work for them, at least where installed in their existing home, as they were escaping from wider family and community networks.
- 2.45 Service providers who participated in the consultation exercise were also sceptical of their value for a number of reasons. They were not convinced that sanctuary scheme services could offer the high level of intensive support that they considered people needed when they first left a violent situation, or whether sanctuaries could be installed quickly enough for those at high risk of violence. A number of providers thought that women might accept sanctuary

scheme services because they did not want to lose their current permanent tenancy rather than for safety reasons. They tended to conclude that:

*... sanctuary schemes are also good when they are good and terribly bad when they are bad... the limitations of sanctuary schemes are the way that they are being implemented...(Service provider)*

- 2.46 Service providers felt very strongly that sanctuary scheme services could not replace the need for adequate refuge and other accommodation services. Instead services providers saw their potential as an additional option for some households in some circumstances which reflects current policy (Jones *et al*, 2010).

### **Other initiatives to enable households to remain in their own home**

- 2.47 This research did not explore the full range of options that might be available to households to remain in their own home. In particular, the research did not evaluate the range of criminal or civil court measures which may remove the perpetrator from the household's home, including orders that prohibit a perpetrator from living in the household's home or approaching the victim's home or in person, as well as criminal prosecutions that may result in a custodial sentence.
- 2.48 However, the research did seek to explore specific housing and support related initiatives which might enable a household to remain in their own home. This chapter has already looked at the role of sanctuary schemes, and Chapter 4 considers floating and outreach services. This section considers the value of housing and support initiatives directed at the perpetrator. In particular, three main initiatives are explored:
- local housing authority policies on evicting the perpetrator
  - perpetrator programmes and associated support for victims, and
  - specific accommodation related support for perpetrators
- 2.49 The section ends with the views of the respondents in the qualitative work on initiatives designed to remove the perpetrator from the home of households at risk of domestic violence.

### **EVICTION OF PERPETRATOR FROM HOUSING**

- 2.50 Survey 1 asked local authorities whether they highlighted the risk of eviction of those who are perpetrators of domestic violence in the information provided to tenants. Three-quarters (75%) of local authorities stated that they did this. More urbanised authorities, defined for the purposes of the research as those areas in which less than 30 per cent of the population was 'rural' according to DEFRA definitions, were more likely than more rural areas to report these arrangements were in place (81% compared to 68%).

- 2.51 Local authorities were also asked whether they had ever taken action to evict a perpetrator of domestic violence. Only twenty-two per cent of authorities reported that they had ever taken action against perpetrators on this basis. No associations were detected between a tendency to take action and particular types of local authority or area characteristics.

### **PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES**

- 2.52 A relatively recent policy initiative has involved the development of programmes which attempt to reduce the ongoing risk of violence to households through targeted programmes that aim to assist perpetrators to understand and challenge their behaviour. Perpetrator programmes were not mapped in this research, rather secondary sources of information were reviewed on the extent and nature of such schemes.
- 2.53 There are two main forms of perpetrator programmes. Firstly, since 2006, all Probation Areas have run perpetrator programmes for men (over the age of 18) who have received a conviction for violent behaviour. Entry onto a Probation Service programme is only through referral from a court or Probation Service. These programmes are accredited by the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel. All programmes include the assignment of a Women's Safety Worker to the partner of the perpetrator. Whilst coverage of programmes are good in respect of being available in every area of the country, evidence collected for the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2008) pointed to a shortage of places on the statutory perpetrator programmes.
- 2.54 Secondly, community-based perpetrator programmes are also run by third sector organisations catering primarily for non-convicted perpetrators. These schemes tend to take self-referral and referral from a wide range of agencies. The programmes do not necessarily have to meet the standards set by the statutory programmes and are not regulated to the extent that Correctional Services Accreditation Panel accredited programmes have to be (unpublished information, NOMS). Some schemes are accredited by Respect, the UK third sector organisation and membership-based association for professionals working with people to end their abusive behaviour. Third sector perpetrator programmes rely on ad hoc local funding and are therefore not always available in any one area.
- 2.55 Respect (2004) recommends that perpetrator programmes should provide an associated women's support service. Non-statutory services are sometimes run by or in partnership with women's domestic violence organisations, which then run parallel support services for the women partners of men participating in the programmes. Coy *et al* (2009) found 37 third sector perpetrator programmes in England with a women's support service. Some regions were particularly underserved by such programmes including the East, East Midlands, the West Midlands and the South East. Barron (2009) reports on an

annual survey which collected information on 21 women's support services linked to a perpetrator programme, recording 939 women using these services in 2008-09.

- 2.56 The survey of local authorities (Survey 1) and service providers (Survey 2) asked respondents to identify the extent to which they considered the provision of perpetrator programmes (both statutory and non-statutory together) was adequate. Sixty per cent of service providers reported the view that there was a need to expand perpetrator services in their main area of operation. There was no association between the tendency of service providers to report the need to expand services and whether or not they provided a sanctuary scheme or floating support services (see Chapter 4). Forty-seven per cent of local authorities reported a need to expand perpetrator scheme provision. However, no specific relationships with deprivation, the extent of rural population, demographics or administrative type were detected by the research.
- 2.57 The Home Affairs Committee (2008) concluded that there was a need for further research on the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes. Respect has recently been commissioned to undertake a four year study of third sector provision.

#### **ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING RELATED SERVICES FOR PERPETRATORS**

- 2.58 Alongside perpetrator programmes, there appears to be some very early attempts to develop schemes or policies that will provide accommodation and housing related support to perpetrators.
- 2.59 The Select Committee on Violence in Marriage in 1975 commented that:
- 'It may be that ultimately housing provision for single men may be made easier, and women will be sufficiently protected by the law for the normal pattern of violent family break-up to be the departure of the man rather than the women' (pxi)*
- 2.60 One service provider interviewed for this study highlighted an example of a service in Hull that assists the perpetrator in finding alternative accommodation, alongside a support programme which aimed to address their violent behaviour as well as related issues such as drug and alcohol issues. It was argued that this type of service could be effective in some situations for example where the perpetrator is not being prosecuted for the abusive behaviour. It may also reduce the need for the man to attempt to move back into the previous family home as some may seek to do, simply because they are without accommodation.

*I would like to see a total turnaround in housing options. Often it is cheaper economically, but also morally, to remove the perpetrator and leave the victims in situ, where possible....removing the male,*

*providing alternative accommodation, which is conditional on the man accepting a non-molestation order, accepting that he has an issue with his behaviour and has to take responsibility... As a community response it sends a strong message to victims and perpetrators. (Service provider)*

2.61 This type of service has not been evaluated to date.

#### **QUALITATIVE WORK: VIEWS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS AND SERVICE USERS**

2.62 There was considerable concern amongst providers that services for men, particularly perpetrators, could potentially divert resources away from women's services which were already stretched to capacity. It was clear that commissioning decisions in these areas could be contentious at a local level. Providers argued that separate funding sources were required for perpetrator services to ensure that women's services were protected by existing funding streams.

2.63 Service users were not asked to comment on services for perpetrators. A few however did reflect that it would be valuable if appropriate counselling services were available for their ex-partners. A few also commented on the inappropriate response of statutory authorities more generally in terms of the treatment of perpetrators, including the police (for example, calling the perpetrator for interview at the police station when the woman was present).

2.64 It was also pointed out by some specialist black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee service providers that perpetrator programmes were only suitable when the perpetrator was one person; there were no suitable programmes to assist where people were fleeing from wider family and community networks.

2.65 Finally, there was agreement at both consultation events that more emphasis should be placed on evicting the perpetrator from the family home.

*Evict the perpetrators - so many times you get a woman with two or three children fleeing a property and the housing provider whether that is a local authority or housing association, they just transfer the property into his name. (Service provider)*

#### **Conclusion**

2.66 Despite their relatively recent development, the study found that a majority of all local housing authorities had access to sanctuary scheme measures to assist households at risk of domestic violence. The research also found that sanctuary schemes were generally accessible to most types of households including those with high support needs. However, the survey revealed that there was variation in the range of services currently provided by schemes. As would be expected, security measures were most commonly provided. Two-thirds of schemes also provided a support service to sanctuary scheme users, though some types of support such as access to counselling or help with

moving was provided by a minority of schemes. The qualitative work reported that some service providers and services users considered that sanctuary scheme services required further development to ensure they offered an appropriate range of services to households at risk of domestic violence. A third of local authorities and two fifths of service providers considered that sanctuary schemes should be expanded from their present levels.

- 2.67 There was strong support amongst focus group participants for local authorities to evict perpetrators of domestic violence. Three-quarters (75%) of local authorities highlighted this policy in their information provided to tenants, but only 22 per cent of these authorities had ever used this provision.
- 2.68 Sixty per cent of service providers, and 47 per cent of local authorities, reported a need to expand perpetrator programmes. Providers argued that separate funding sources were required for perpetrator services to ensure that women's services were protected by existing funding streams.

### 3 Accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence

#### Key points

- The mapping exercise showed that there were 445 accommodation based services specifically designed for households at risk of domestic violence in 2009 (88% of which were refuges). 4,035 household places were recorded over 418 schemes.
- An average of 0.8 household places in specialist accommodation based provision were provided nationally per 10,000 people in the population. This rose to two household places per 10,000 women aged 15 or over in the population. Overall, London had the highest rate of provision and rural areas had significantly less provision than urban areas.
- Specialist accommodation based services provided a wide range of support to residents, including assistance with safety planning, welfare and benefits, help with finding new housing, setting up a new home, health issues, counselling and social activities.
- Nearly eight in ten (78%) of services provided follow-on support to residents leaving their accommodation, most commonly in the form of home visits.
- Specialist children's workers and a range of support services were also provided for children by most accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence, although specialist workers for young people were rarely employed.
- Specialist accommodation based services often had quite a wide operational area, with two-thirds (70%) of referrals coming from other local authority areas to the one in which the service was located.
- One in six services (16%) were specifically provided for women and women with children from black, Asian and minority ethnic or refugee communities. A similar proportion (17%) of services reported that they were able to support households with no recourse to public funds.
- Services which specialised in supporting people with multiple needs were rare. Yet, only one-quarter (24%) of services stated they were always able to accommodate households with mental health problems, whilst one-third (33%) of services were always able to accommodate people with substance misuse problems.
- Only a small number of specialist accommodation based services were fully wheelchair accessible (9% of services), though 36 per cent of service provision was described as partially accessible to wheelchair users.

- Overall, service users were satisfied with their experience of specialist accommodation based services, particularly valuing self-contained units and the safety features of refuges. Service users felt that services had made a very significant difference to their lives.
- A third of local authorities (33%), and two-thirds of service providers (68%) reported a need to expand specialist accommodation services.

#### Introduction

- The research mapped 71 accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function in England, with a maximum of 826 household spaces (if all spaces were occupied by households at risk of domestic violence). The primary client group for these services were usually homeless families, single homeless people or young people. These services offered a similar range of support but often at lower levels than specialist provision. There was fairly limited support amongst local authorities and service providers for an expansion of this type of provision.

- 3.1 This chapter describes and maps the range of accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence currently available in England. These services provide accommodation that can be used by households at risk of domestic violence in an emergency and/or when they do not feel safe to remain in their own home. The services will also offer support to households whilst they are living in the temporary accommodation. Chapter 5 examines settled housing options for households at risk of domestic violence.
- 3.2 The main part of the chapter maps and describes refuges and other accommodation based services specifically designed for households at risk of domestic violence. The chapter examines the extent of these specialist accommodation based services for households in England, the support provided by the services, the accessibility of services including the extent to which provision is in place for specific groups including black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups and those with high support needs, views on service effectiveness and on the overall adequacy of service levels.
- 3.3 A second section explores the provision of accommodation based services that are primarily focused on other user groups, but which describe themselves as supporting households at risk of domestic violence as a 'secondary' client group. A typical example here would be a hostel primarily for homeless families that can also provide secure accommodation and support to a household at risk of domestic violence. This section also looks at the extent of services, their accessibility, effectiveness and overall adequacy of service levels.
- 3.4 The chapter draws on the study's primary data collection via the mapping exercise, the survey of local authorities (Survey 1), the survey of service



providers (Survey 2) and the qualitative interviews with agency representatives and service users (see Chapter 1 and Appendix 1).

## **Refuges and other specialist accommodation based services**

### **DEFINITION**

- 3.5 An accommodation based service tends to be designed for a *specific* user group. These services offer short and medium stay temporary housing to households, with support being tied to residence.
- 3.6 Specialist accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence were first developed in the 1970s by the women's movement. These schemes were the first to provide secure, supportive emergency accommodation for women and children at risk of domestic violence and became widely known as 'refuges'<sup>15</sup>. Importantly, refuge locations are confidential to protect households at risk of domestic violence and buildings are designed or modified to be physically secure. As will be seen in the mapping exercise below, refuges remain the predominant form of specialist accommodation based provision for households at risk of domestic violence.
- 3.7 The first refuges were set up by local women's organisations in ordinary houses and provided shared accommodation for a number of women with or without children. Early purpose built accommodation often followed this model providing individual rooms, or sometimes bedsits or studio flats on a single, shared site with support being delivered by on-site staff. More recently, following more general trends in supported accommodation provision for vulnerable groups (see Chapter 6), a variety of models have been developed often providing self contained flats, which are sometimes on a shared site or sometimes dispersed (or a mixture of the two).
- 3.8 Alongside women's refuges are other forms of specialist supportive accommodation for households at risk of domestic violence. These supported accommodation based services do not describe themselves as refuges. This might be for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they have a dual role of addressing domestic violence alongside other specialist issues such as substance misuse and mental health problems. They may also have a lower level of security, for example their location may not be confidential to the same extent as refuges. A few schemes offer accommodation for male victims of domestic violence.

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<sup>15</sup> This report follows the convention among service providers, service commissioners and mainstream society that a 'refuge' is a service for women and/or women with children at risk of domestic violence.

## MAPPING SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED ACCOMMODATION SERVICES

- 3.9 The mapping exercise showed that there were 445 accommodation based services specifically designed for households at risk of domestic violence in 2009 (see Appendix 1 for details of methods including comprehensiveness of coverage). The bulk of this service provision, a total of 390 schemes (88% of services), was described, or described itself, as refuges. Twelve per cent were other forms of specialist accommodation for households at risk of domestic violence (see above section for definitions).
- 3.10 Survey 2 showed that specialist accommodation based services were predominately provided by charitable and third sector organisations (79% of responding organisations). Housing association providers, recorded separately, accounted for 20 per cent of provision with local authority run services accounting for the other 1 per cent<sup>16</sup>.
- 3.11 The parameters of what constituted one specialist accommodation based service were varied. The mapping showed many 'dispersed' services in which accommodation was not on a single site, but which were administratively a single service (see nature of services below). Whenever possible, the research took the view that a single administrative entity, i.e. managed and staffed by the same team, constituted a *single* service and mapped it accordingly<sup>17</sup>. If a service had its own dedicated management and staffing, it was counted separately, thus several, independently operating, services that were part of 'umbrella' organisations at either regional or national level would each be counted separately (see Appendix 1).
- 3.12 The mapping recorded 4,035 household places<sup>18</sup> across 418 schemes (27 schemes did not provide place numbers). This was an average of 10 places per scheme.

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<sup>16</sup> The data from Survey 2 were relatively comprehensive as 81% of all mapped service provision was accounted for by the service providers responding to Survey 2.

<sup>17</sup> In many instances, information on whether or not a service was a shared site or occupied several sites was not available. As the data on the extent of dispersed services was not robust, it is not reported here.

<sup>18</sup> 'Places' refer to the number of households that can be accommodated at any one time.

### ***Extent of provision relative to population***

- 3.13 Throughout this report, the extent of provision (mean number of places) is shown relative to the numbers of 10,000 people in the population. The first reference to this measure for domestic violence provision appeared in the 1975 Select Committee on Violence in Marriage report which recommended that one family refuge place should be provided per 10,000 people in the population. At this point, there were only 29 refuge services in Great Britain and the Select Committee argued for a considerable expansion in services. They noted that this measure was “...necessarily an arbitrary figure, based on such scant information as has been supplied” and that the figure “...could be adjusted as the needs and scale of the problem became more apparent”<sup>19</sup>. Whilst this measure has never formally been adopted as a target for the expansion of provision by Government, commentators have continued to return to this as a measure that enables comparison of levels of provision over time. Most recently, the measure was included in the best value performance indicator (BVPI) 225 on domestic violence services.
- 3.14 Table 3.1 shows that the average household places provided in 2009 in England were 0.96 places per 10,000 population<sup>20</sup>, (median 0.7 places). Only two of the nine regions recorded at least one household place per 10,000 population measure (East Midlands and London), with only London very slightly exceeding it (1.30 places). London had almost twice the relative level of places compared to the East, North East and North West.
- 3.15 Considering the different types of administrative area, it was found that a majority of London boroughs (58%) had met the one household place per 10,000 population measure. This was the case for 29 per cent of unitary authorities and 11 per cent of county councils.

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<sup>19</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage together with the proceedings of the Committee. Volume 1. Report. House of Commons London: HMSO, 1975 ISBN 0100297358.

<sup>20</sup> This is not an entirely direct comparison with the 1975 recommendation, because while 88% of mapped specialist accommodation based services were refuges, another 12% were other forms of accommodation based service.

**Table 3.1: The extent of specifically designed accommodation services relative to household numbers in each region**

Region	Total services	Household Places <sup>1</sup>	Mean places per 10,000 population
London	93	872	1.30
East Midlands	48	407	0.70
West Midlands	55	483	1.25
Yorkshire & Humber	38	365	0.77
South East	64	608	1.01
East England	39	364	0.70
South West	42	387	0.96
North East	20	153	0.73
North West	46	396	0.70
Total	445	4,035	0.96

Source: Mapping exercise and ONS household projections. Percentages are rounded. <sup>1</sup> Total household places mapped for services (Data were not available for 27 refuges and accommodation based services) the base for this column is consequently 418 services.

- 3.16 Lower rates of provision were associated with more rural areas. In the most rural unitary and county council areas, those with 50-80 per cent of their populations classified by DEFRA as rural, there was an average (and median) of 0.6 of a place in specialist accommodation based services for every 10,000 in the population (Table 3.2). In urban areas, by contrast, there was an average of just over one place per 10,000 people (a median level of 1 place per 10,000 people). Overall, 54 per cent of urban areas had above the national average provision per 10,000 people, compared to 39 per cent of areas with significant rural populations and 20 per cent of areas made up of mainly rural areas.
- 3.17 This study was unable to explore the provision of services in rural areas in detail, however it is likely that there are specific issues that need to be taken into account when developing refuge provision in rural areas, for example it may be more difficult for refuge addresses to remain confidential.

**Table 3.2: Specialist accommodation based services in local authorities relative to population by extent of rurality**

Area type	Average level of places per 10,000 population	Median level of places per 10,000 population	Total places	Total population (tens of thousands)	No. of authorities
Mainly rural areas (50%+ rural population)	0.6	0.6	890	1359.9	24
Areas with a significant rural population	0.8	0.8	811	1020.4	26
Urban areas	1.1	1.0	2,334	2,155.3	100
All England	0.9	0.8	4,035	4,435.7	151 <sup>1</sup>

Source: Mapping exercise Percentages are rounded. Data were unavailable for one authority. <sup>1</sup> Data on Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have been combined.

3.18 Similar recommendations to those from 1975 have also been made more recently. Kelly and Dubois in their report for the Council of Europe (2008) on combating violence against women utilised both desk-based research and an expert and wider on-line consultation process to recommend a series of ‘minimum standards’ for members states, including:

- In member states where ‘shelters’ [refuges and other specialist accommodation based services] are the predominant or only form of service provision, there should be one place per 10,000 population.
- In member states where ‘shelters’ form part of a community strategy with intervention projects, there should be one family place (mother and average number of children) per 10,000 women.
- There should be at least one specialist violence against women shelter in every province or region.

3.19 The above paragraphs discuss the first recommendation, which is the same as that specified by the 1975 Select Committee report. The second measure uses a population base that is considerably smaller, as one place is provided for every 10,000 women rather than for every 10,000 people. It could be argued that this measure is more appropriate to England as other forms of community provision have been developed alongside refuge provision, most prominently floating support (Chapter 4) and sanctuary schemes (Chapter 2).

3.20 Table 3.3 shows the places in specialist accommodation based services for people at risk of domestic violence relative to the projected female population aged 15 or over. Higher rates of provision relative to the female population were found in London and the West Midlands. Lower rates were mapped in the East Midlands, the North of England and the East of England. Rates of provision in the West Midlands and London were twice the levels mapped in the East of England and the North and 1.7 times higher than in the South East, South West and Yorkshire and the Humber. There was an overall average of two places per 10,000 women across England.

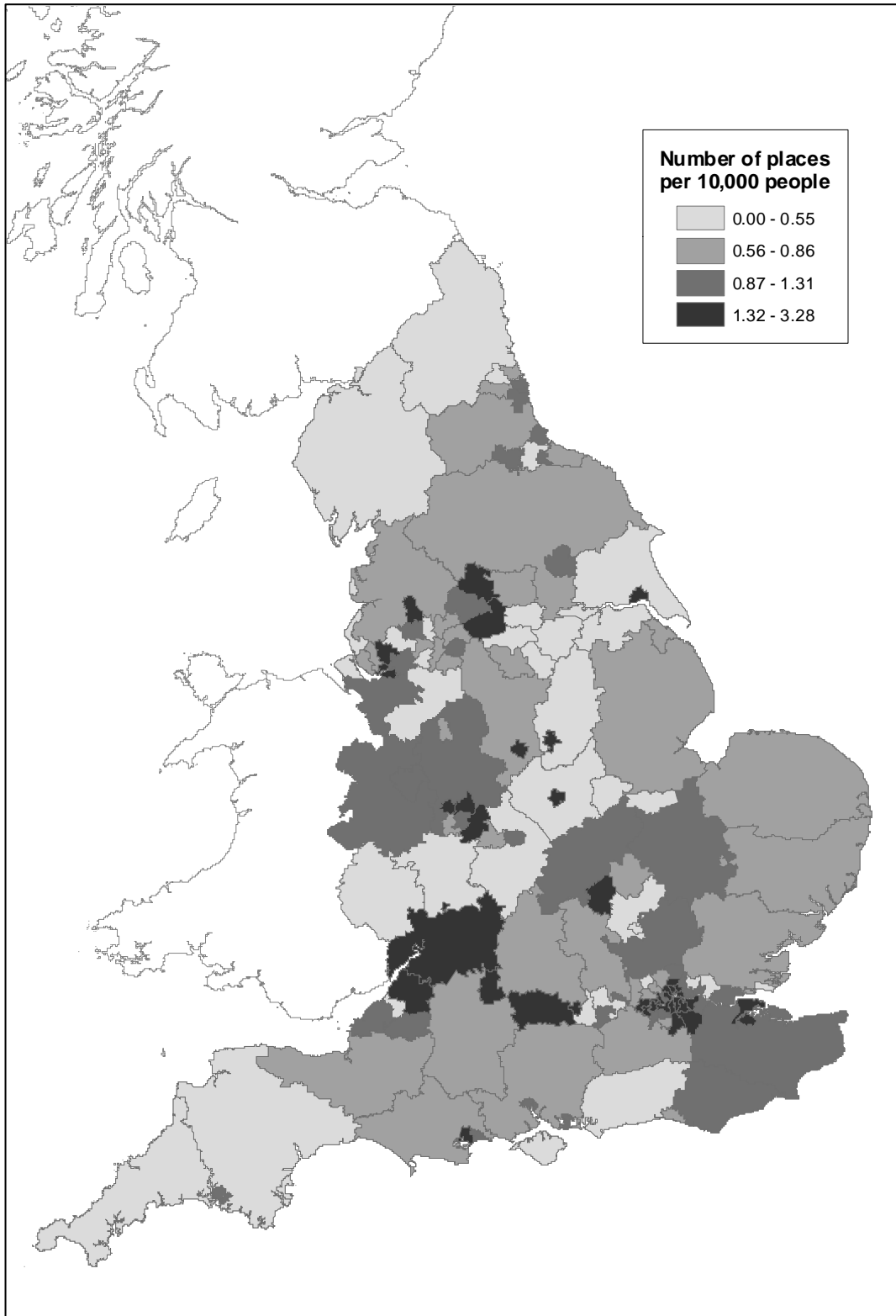
**Table 3.3: Mapped places in specialist accommodation based services for people at risk of domestic violence, in comparison with the projected female population aged 15 and over**

Region	Mid 2008 projection of female population aged 15 and older	Female population aged 15 and older in tens of thousands	Specialist ABS places mapped	Number of specialist ABS places per 10,000 women aged 15 and older
North East	1,103,200	110.3	153	1.4
North West	2,924,800	292.5	396	1.4
Yorkshire & Humber	2,206,600	220.7	365	1.7
East Midlands	1,877,800	187.8	223	1.2
West Midlands	2,269,600	227	667	2.9
East of England	2,412,200	241.2	364	1.5
London	3,168,100	316.8	872	2.8
South East	3,550,000	355	608	1.7
South West	2,242,200	224.2	387	1.7
All	20,651,300	2065.1	4,035	2

**Source:** ONS Regional population projections for 2008 and mapping exercise.

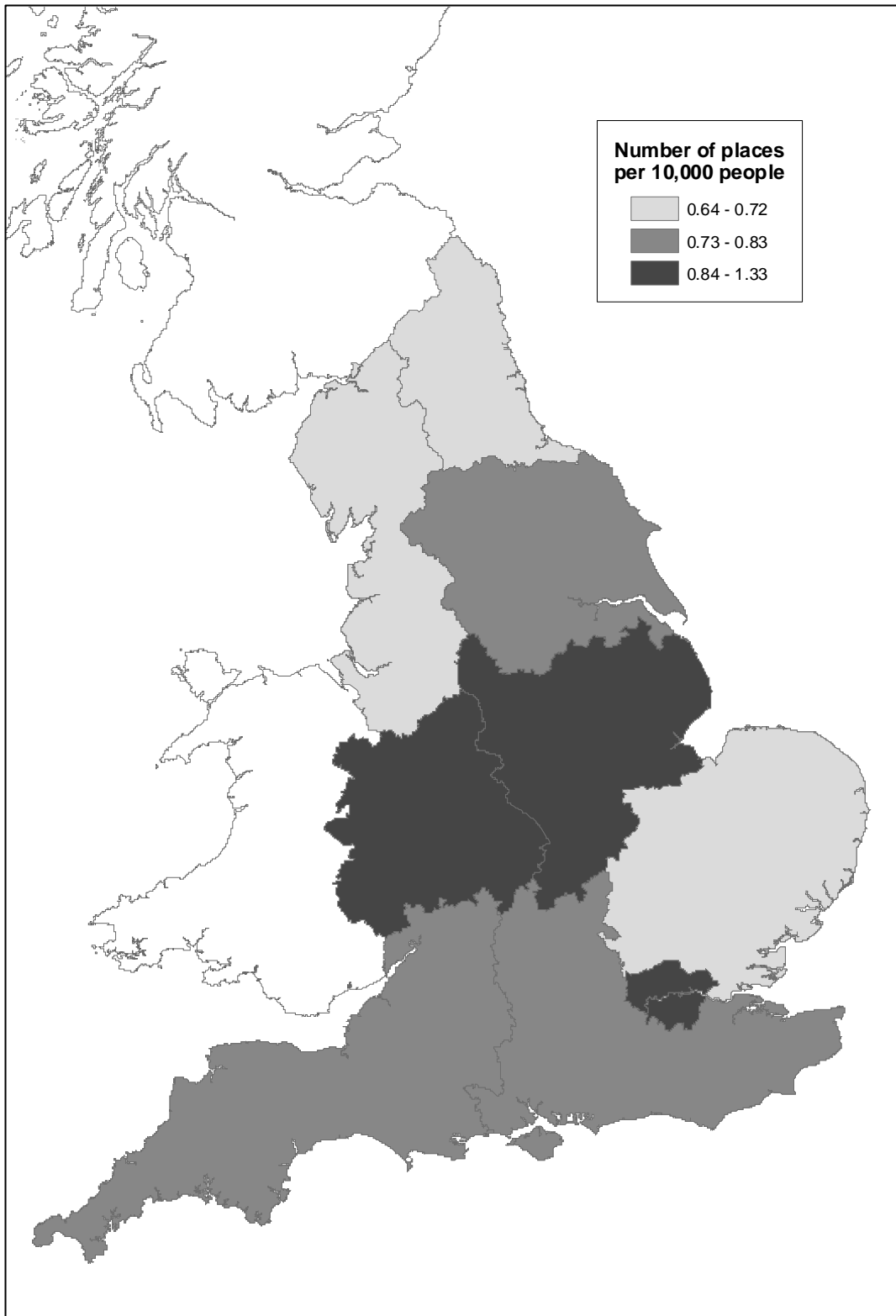
- 3.21 England also currently meets the final suggested measure to a very good extent (at least one specialist violence against women shelter in every province or region). There were only seven unitary authorities and no county councils or London boroughs that entirely lacked specialist accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence. However it should be noted that the seven unitary authorities without a specialist accommodation based service had either a sanctuary scheme and/or floating support provision.
- 3.22 Map 3.1 summarises the relative levels of provision of household places in specialist accommodation based services in England by county council, unitary authority and London borough boundaries. The varying extent of provision is again evident from these findings. Map 3.2 summarises these findings at regional level.
- 3.23 In total, 4,160 places for children were mapped, but data on the number of places available was not always available or varied in quality. This meant this figure was not as robust as the data on total household places. The available data on places for children in specialist accommodation based services in England is shown in Map 3.3. Map 3.4 summarises these findings at regional level.

**Map 3.1: Household places in specialist accommodation based services in England per 10,000 population.**



Source: Mapping exercise.

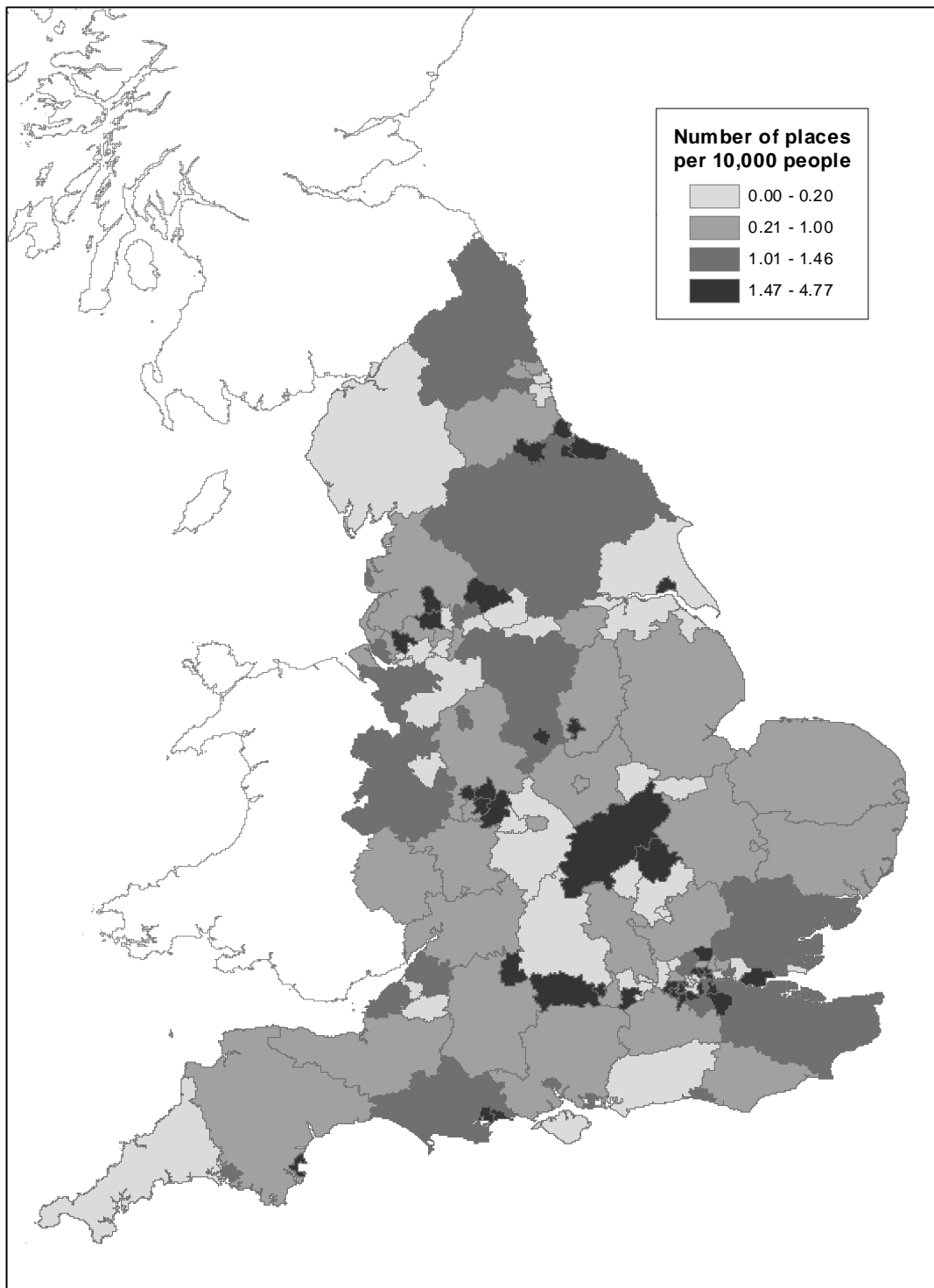
**Map 3.2: Household places in specialist accommodation based services in England per 10,000 population by region**



Source: Mapping exercise.

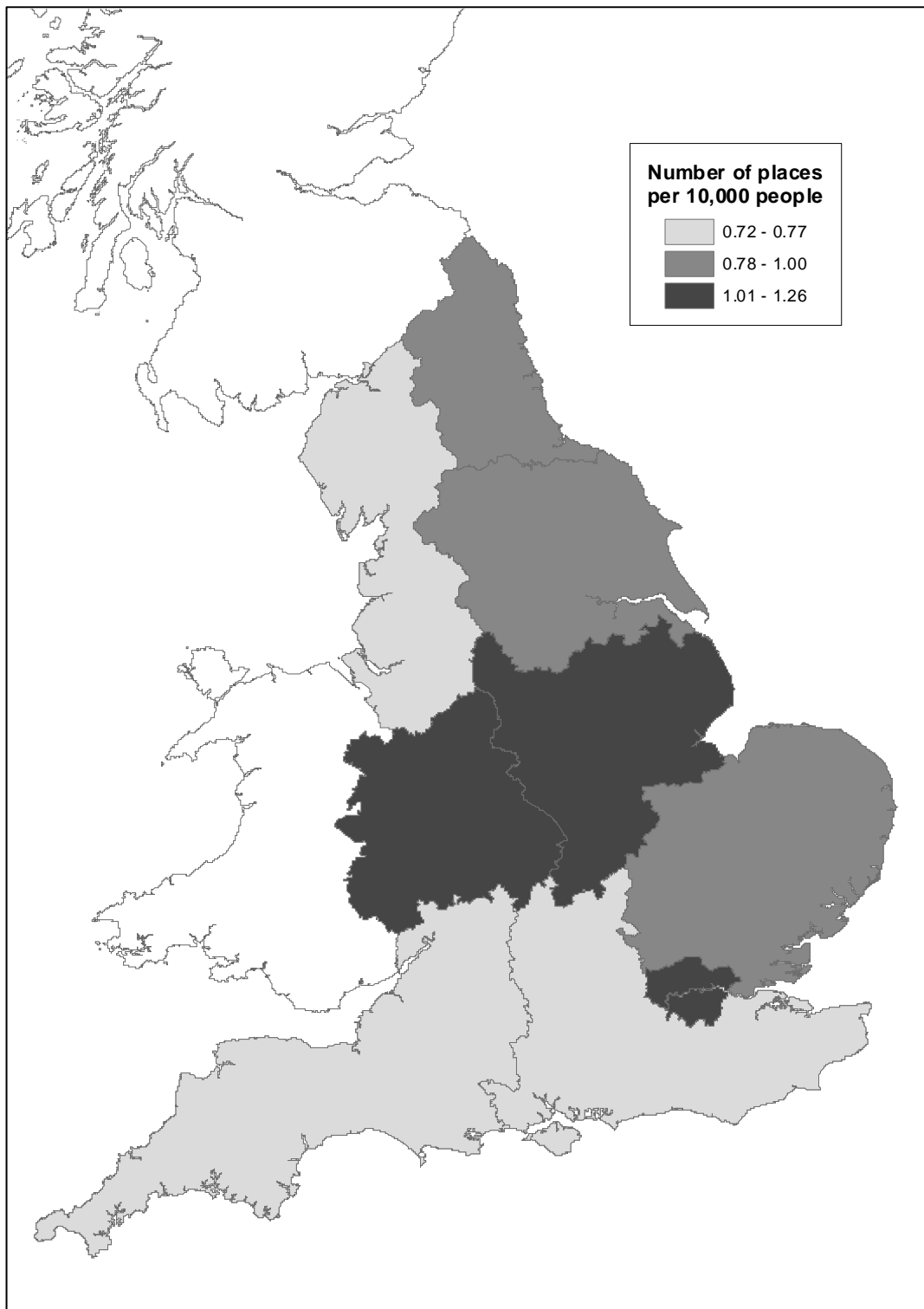


**Map 3.3: Places for children in specialist accommodation based services in England per 10,000 population.**



Source: Mapping exercise

**Map 3.4: Places for children in specialist accommodation based services in England per 10,000 population by region.**



Source: Mapping exercise

## **The nature of specialist accommodation based services**

### **TYPES OF SERVICE PROVISION**

- 3.24 Specialist accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence, in particular refuges, often operate as the centre or hub of a group of domestic violence services. This means that once a household arrives at a refuge, a range of domestic violence services are likely to be available to a service user, provided by the same organisation. The 2008-09 Women's Aid Annual survey (Barron, 2009) provided both refuge provision and non-refuge based provision (such as a help line, a floating support service, support groups and drop-in facilities); 18 per cent provided refuge accommodation only, and 17 per cent provided only non-refuge-based services.
- 3.25 Survey 2 showed that traditional shared refuge provision (where a household has their own room but shares a kitchen and/or bathroom) was still provided by 71 per cent of services. Self-contained flats clustered on the same site, usually with some communal facilities (such as a shared lounge or children's playroom), comprised 21 per cent of specialist services. In addition, a few of the services also provided, or exclusively provided, dispersed accommodation across several geographical locations (8%)<sup>21</sup>. This included some provision of 'second stage' refuge accommodation that enabled households to move from the emergency housing to short-medium term secure self-contained accommodation.

### **TYPE OF SUPPORT PROVIDED**

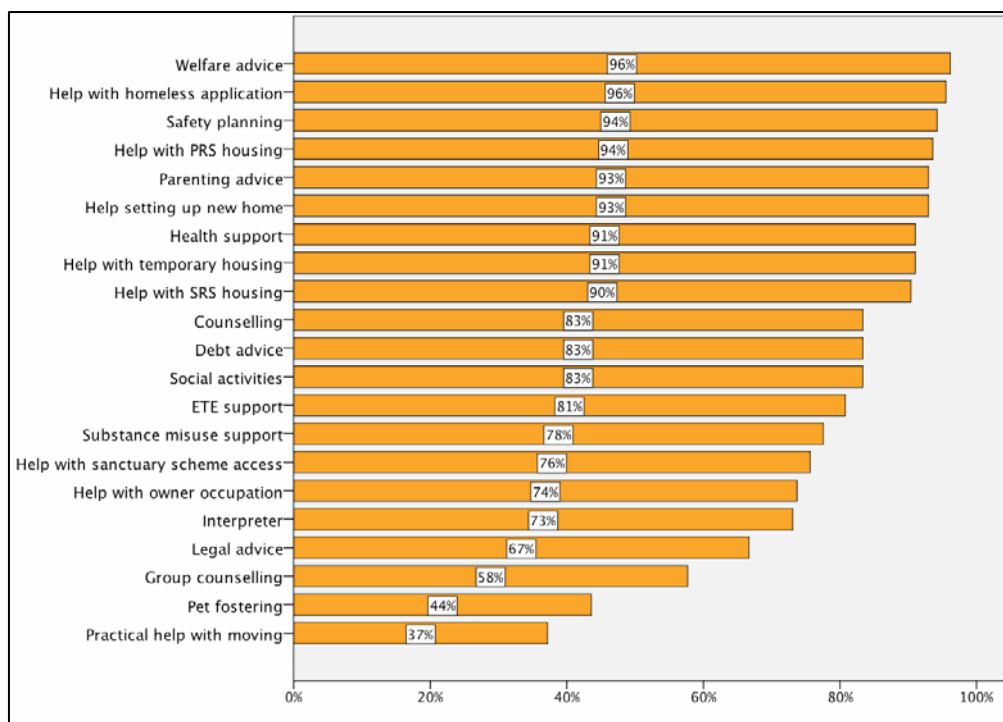
- 3.26 Figure 3.1 summarises the range of support provided by specialist accommodation based services, drawing on the results of Survey 2 where providers were asked to indicate which types of support they provided from a pre-selected list. As can be seen, help with claiming benefits (96% of service providers) and making applications to a local authority under the homelessness legislation were most commonly provided (also 96% of service providers). Safety planning and counselling were almost universally provided (94% and 83%, respectively). Assistance with securing or maintaining housing, in all tenures was common, although slightly less so for assistance with owner occupation (74% of providers compared to 94% providing support for private rented sector housing and 83% with social rented sector housing). Most providers provided assistance with health issues (91%), and 78 per cent helped with substance misuse issues. Four-fifths (81%) of providers provided support with employment, education or training. Legal advice (67% of

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<sup>21</sup> Based on 256 service providers describing 307 specialist accommodation based services in response to Survey 2.

providers), group counselling (58%), pet fostering<sup>22</sup> (44%) and practical help with moving (37%) were the least frequently provided.

**Figure 3.1: Services provided by specifically designed accommodation services**



Source: Survey 2. Base: 156 service providers reporting on the range of services offered by 321 services.

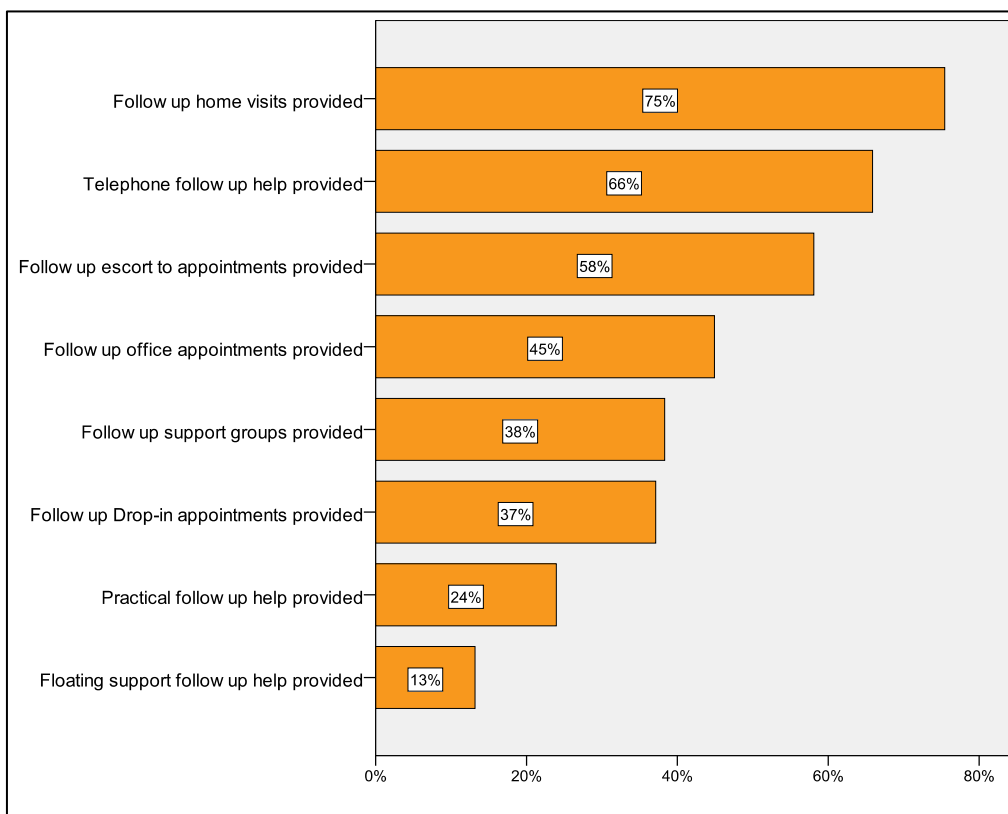
- 3.27 A majority of service providers (63%) reported that they were ‘always’ or ‘usually’ able to arrange access to any support, advice and other services that households required but which were not delivered by their refuges or other specialist accommodation based services.
- 3.28 The use of key worker systems within services was also very widespread. The allocation of a named worker specifically to each household taking up residence in a specifically designed accommodation service was reported for 302 of the 321 services described in Survey 2 (94%).

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that some specialist services exist to assist refugees with pet fostering. The research received information from the Dog’s Trust which is a member of Women’s Aid and provides services in London and Yorkshire. They explained that family pets are often used by the perpetrator to emotionally blackmail their partner (in some cases they will intentionally hurt the pet or threaten to kill them if their partner tries to leave). Women may not leave abusive situations because of pets and the link between children and pets is particularly important. The Dog’s Trust pet fostering service is funded entirely by supporter donations. They reported that demand for their service had increased by 39% in the last two years.

### ***Follow-on support***

- 3.29 Service providers responding to Survey 2 were asked to state whether they provided any 'follow-on support to former residents after they have left the refuge'. Most services provided one or more forms of follow-on support (78%, Figure 3.2), although one in five services (22%) were not currently offering this service.
- 3.30 Figure 3.2 summarises the range of follow-on support delivered. The most common form of follow-on support was home visits after a household had left the service, which were provided by three-quarters (75%) of services. Telephone based support was also extensive (66% of services), as well as the option to be escorted to appointments (58%). Office based support, drop-in appointments and other forms of follow-on support were less commonly provided.

**Figure 3.2: Follow-on support provided by specifically designed accommodation services.**

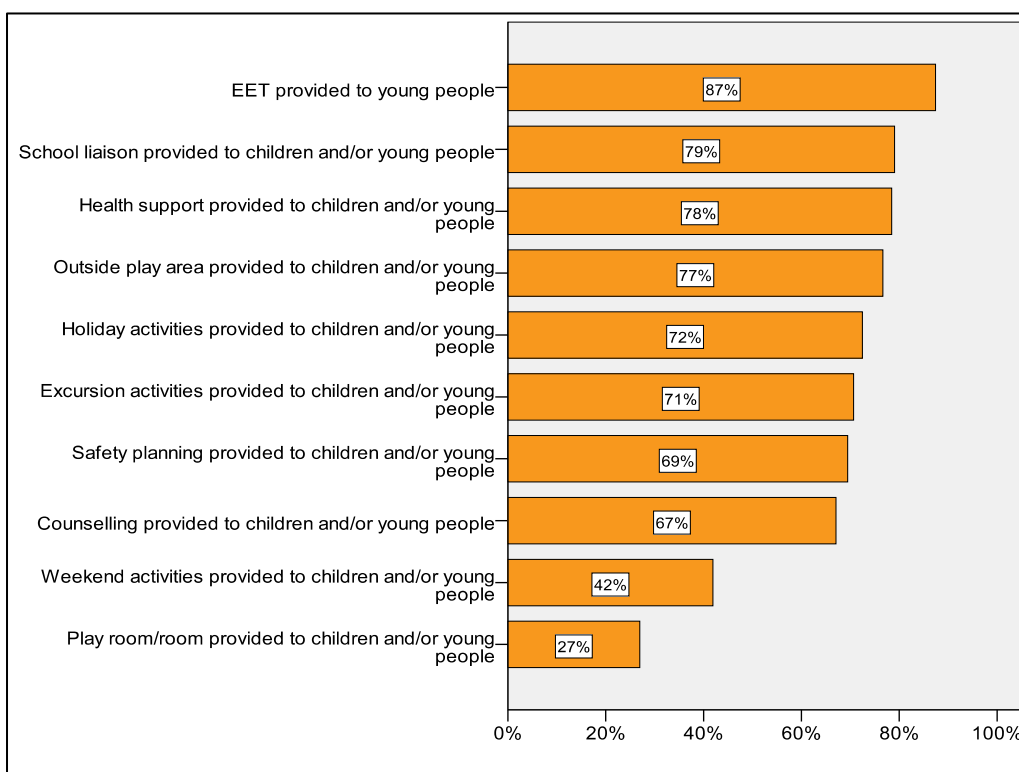


Source: Survey 2. Base: 156 service providers reporting on the range of services offered by 321 services.

## SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

3.31 There was widespread and extensive provision of services specifically for children and young people. Almost every service reported on in Survey 2 worked with children and/or young people within households at risk of domestic violence<sup>23</sup>. Figure 3.3 summarises the services provided for children reported by service providers in response to Survey 2. The vast majority of services (87%) provided employment, education and training provision for young people. School liaison support, health support and outside play areas were provided by over three-quarters of services. Holiday (77%) and excursion activities (71%) were quite commonly provided by services, although weekend activities were less available (42%). Safety planning was provided by 69 per cent of services and counselling was available in 67 per cent of services.

**Figure 3.3: Services for children and young people provided by specifically designed accommodation services.**



Source: Survey 2. Base: 247 service providers reporting on the range of services to children and young people offered by 319 services.

<sup>23</sup> Only two services were reported as exclusively for lone women within the responses from Survey 2 (1% of the services described in Survey 2). Overall, the mapping exercise indicated that 9% of specialist accommodation based services were designed for lone women (see below).

- 3.32 Service providers in Survey 2 were asked whether children and young people in their refuges had access to a specialist children's and/or young person's workers. Forty per cent of services had a dedicated children's worker and another 35 per cent had a combined children's and young person's worker (75% of service provision that worked with families). Single site, shared services were the most likely to have a child/young person's worker (90% of these services). It was very unusual for services to have an exclusive worker for young people (2%). Part of the reason for this latter finding is explained by the fact that approximately 87 per cent of children resident in refuges on a 'day count' in 2009 (Barron, 2009) were aged 10 years or under. Nonetheless, 12 per cent of children/young people resident were aged between 11 and 16 years old, a higher proportion than the 2 per cent of services with a specialist young person's worker.

#### **QUALITATIVE WORK: SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION BASED SERVICES**

- 3.33 As Survey 2 showed, accommodation-based services may provide a combination of shared, self-contained and/or dispersed accommodation. Generally, providers raised few issues about the nature of the physical buildings although acknowledged that some facilities were more modern than others and an ongoing programme of improvements were needed to ensure that refuges were 'fit for purpose'. Service users<sup>24</sup> raised some issues that have been well documented in other reports (e.g. Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2003) including rooms being small, refuges being noisy, inadequate cooking facilities and little storage. However, overall, most services users appeared pleasantly surprised by the standard of accommodation and facilities on offer.
- 3.34 Advantages and disadvantages were reported around sharing provision with other households. The value of peer support, particularly in the first few weeks of a stay in a refuge, was clear. However, tensions also arose between households and there were also reported difficulties around mixing older and younger households who had very different lifestyles and perspectives. Despite this, service users did describe how they supported each other when it counted, for example if someone was threatened.

*I lost my friends because of it [domestic violence], you know, you're not allowed out, they're not allowed to come round, they're not allowed in the house, so coming here, you meet a new group of friends... we've all gone through the same things, we don't judge each other. (Service user)*

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<sup>24</sup> Only women fleeing domestic violence were interviewed in the qualitative work. Most services users were currently staying in, and/or had experience of, refuge provision. See Appendix 1 for further details of sampling.

- 3.35 Service users living in one scheme that offered cluster flat provision on the same site seemed particularly satisfied with the provision. This seemed to give them the opportunity for peer support but also meant that they did not have to share bathrooms or cooking facilities. A couple of providers felt that some women may benefit from a limited period in a traditional shared refuge but overall there was a consensus that cluster flat provision may be preferred by most women. This was seen as especially important in areas with highly constrained housing markets where women may have to spend up to a year in a refuge.

*If I'd had to share a bathroom and a kitchen, to be honest, I'd be back home... (Service user)*

*A lot of women don't want to go into a refuge, not because they are not suffering, it's because they don't want communal living... There will always be a need and a place for refuge, but we can look at other ways of doing this... we have dispersed housing in [local authority] (Service provider)*

*It's not unusual for women to spend up to a year in a refuge in London. And that's not what they were designed for, which was a crisis period which for most women is between 12 -14 weeks. During the crisis phase the design of refuges as they were originally envisaged is perfect. Living in a refuge in a communal fashion provides both the support you need, and acts as a catalytic effect for women to have that contact with other survivors, and speeds up the healing process. It helps to lessen the self blame. However at around 8-9 weeks it starts chafing. (National stakeholder)*

- 3.36 The key feature of a refuge is that it offers safe accommodation to a household fleeing domestic violence. The safety aspect of refuges was highly valued by service users. Most saw this as essential with some having to travel to different regions in order to feel safe. Others were able to stay in the local area but stressed that the provision needed to be away from previous neighbourhoods so no one knew where they (or the refuge) were. For these women, it was clear that a more generic accommodation-based service would not have met their needs.
- 3.37 The majority of providers and service users felt that it was imperative that women only refuges and other specialist provision was available – some services users explained that they would not have accessed mixed accommodation provision. However views on policies around visitors to the refuges were more mixed, sometimes differing by age and cultural background. Some usually younger non-black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee women would have liked male visitors to be allowed, particularly family relatives, and a few a new partner, although most seemed to support a



women only environment. Overall, however people appeared to understand why a women only policy was in place.

*R1: When they say no men allowed, I understand that, some people are still frightened, but we live on a main high street, you go outside you know we see men, when we leave, you're going to have a next door neighbour that's a man, no matter what, there're always be a man.... I understand new boyfriends shouldn't be in, but a family member, like my dad....my dad's got to travel all the way here, and we have to go out...*

*R2: I think at first you need some time to cool down, we are all here for different reasons...you know some women, their men have put guns to their heads, when you're here with other women and children you feel a bit safer.(Service users)*

- 3.38 Figure 3.1 showed that a wide range of types of support were being provided by most specialist accommodation based services. Providers and service users confirmed that the role of refuges was to provide far more than just a roof over people's heads. Some of the support was clearly housing related support, including helping with arranging benefits and accessing move-on accommodation.
- 3.39 However, much of the support was seen to go beyond this. Some women needed specialist counselling or therapy (service providers reported that some people would literally not come out of their rooms when they arrived at a refuge) as well as assistance with accessing GPs and other health services. Women from black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities often needed even more specialist types of services, for example help in accessing a counsellor who spoke the person's first language (this had been possible in one refuge but women in another refuge explained that there was a long waiting list for these services), as well as considerable assistance with immigration issues. Households also explained they often needed legal advice and support around criminal justice interventions and/or the complexities of leaving a relationship including the implications for any children.
- 3.40 Service users spoke about the value of a good key worker in helping them settle into the accommodation:

*It's not their job to counsel you here...my first key worker, she was like a counsellor, she spent time with me, she made me feel comfortable, she settled me in. My key worker now, she's good, but she ain't got no sense of talking to people, which made me feel uncomfortable again. I tried to explain the situation, she goes on like she's bored, she yawns....and it makes me feel like... cut off.  
(Service user)*

- 3.41 Services for children were seen as very important in accommodation based provision, including providing opportunities for play, child-care whilst a woman needed to attend appointments as well as more therapeutic interventions. Whilst some services for children were in place in the refuges people were staying in, it also appeared that support was rationed in some provision, for example users in one refuge explained that there was a playroom but the play worker was not there very often so it was under-utilised. A couple of woman also remarked on the need for support for older children as this was not offered in the refuges that they were living in.

*R1: They don't really do much for older children...my child, there's nothing to entertain her, and it's the only problem I have with it.*

*R2: All children understand, but as a teenager it must be really hard, you would think they would help more with the teenagers...*

(Service users)

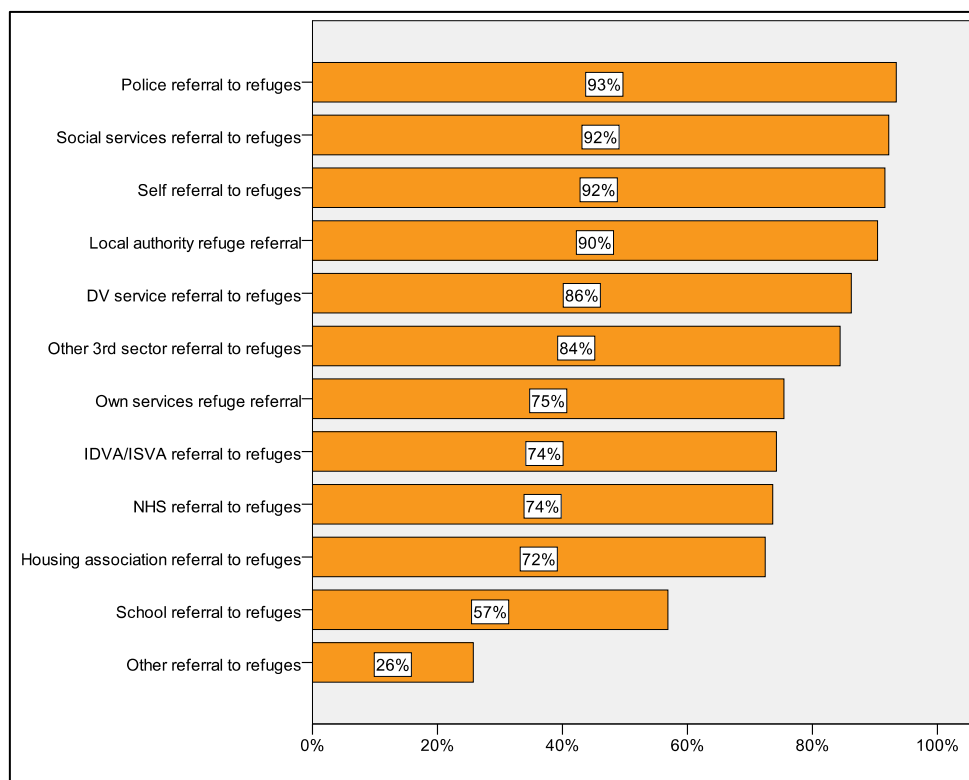
*There is a need for services that offer women an holistic package, not just focusing on crisis, but on resettlement. That includes getting help for children, which is always a priority for women. Therefore the provision of children's services is an important element of refuges, especially because communal living with lots of families can be so chaotic. That point has never really got through to policymakers and politicians – how essential the children's services are. (National stakeholder)*

### **Service accessibility**

#### **REFERRAL SOURCES**

- 3.42 Service providers (Survey 2) were asked to report the sources of referrals for their specialist accommodation based service. Figure 3.4 shows that referrals were being received from a wide range of agencies. The vast majority of service providers reported referrals from the police, social services departments and self-referral (all above 90%). Referrals were also commonly taken from local authorities, (other) domestic violence services and (other) third sector providers. Referrals from schools were less common, although a majority of services took referrals from this source (57%).

**Figure 3.4: Sources of referral to specifically designed accommodation services**



Source: Survey 2. Base: 156 service providers reporting on 321 services.

### **THE EXTENT TO WHICH SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION BASED SERVICES PROVIDED A LOCAL SERVICE**

- 3.43 Survey 2 indicated that services tended to take a high proportion of referrals from outside the administrative areas in which they were based. Providers were asked to provide figures for the proportion of households accommodated in the last year (April 2008 to March 2009) that came from the local authority area where the scheme was located. On average, 30 per cent of referrals came from the same local authority in which a service was situated, meaning that over two-thirds (70%) of referrals, across all providers, were from other local authority areas. No significant differences were reported between different types of service provider.
- 3.44 Survey 2 did not record the geographical distance of referrals from outside the local authority. This could, at least sometimes, mean geographically distant areas, but at least some of these service providers would have been referring to district councils within a county council area, or to neighbouring London or metropolitan boroughs that were very close to their services. Nevertheless, these figures indicated that these services were not highly localised and also that they may have often had quite a wide operational area.
- 3.45 The fact that women and women with children will often need to travel outside the area in which they usually live, or sometimes need to go some distance,

makes it problematic to view this aspect of service provision as existing for 'local' need. Need assessment becomes more complex in this situation, and there are arguments for considering this aspect of service provision at regional, or even national level.

## **SERVICES FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS OF HOUSEHOLDS AT RISK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

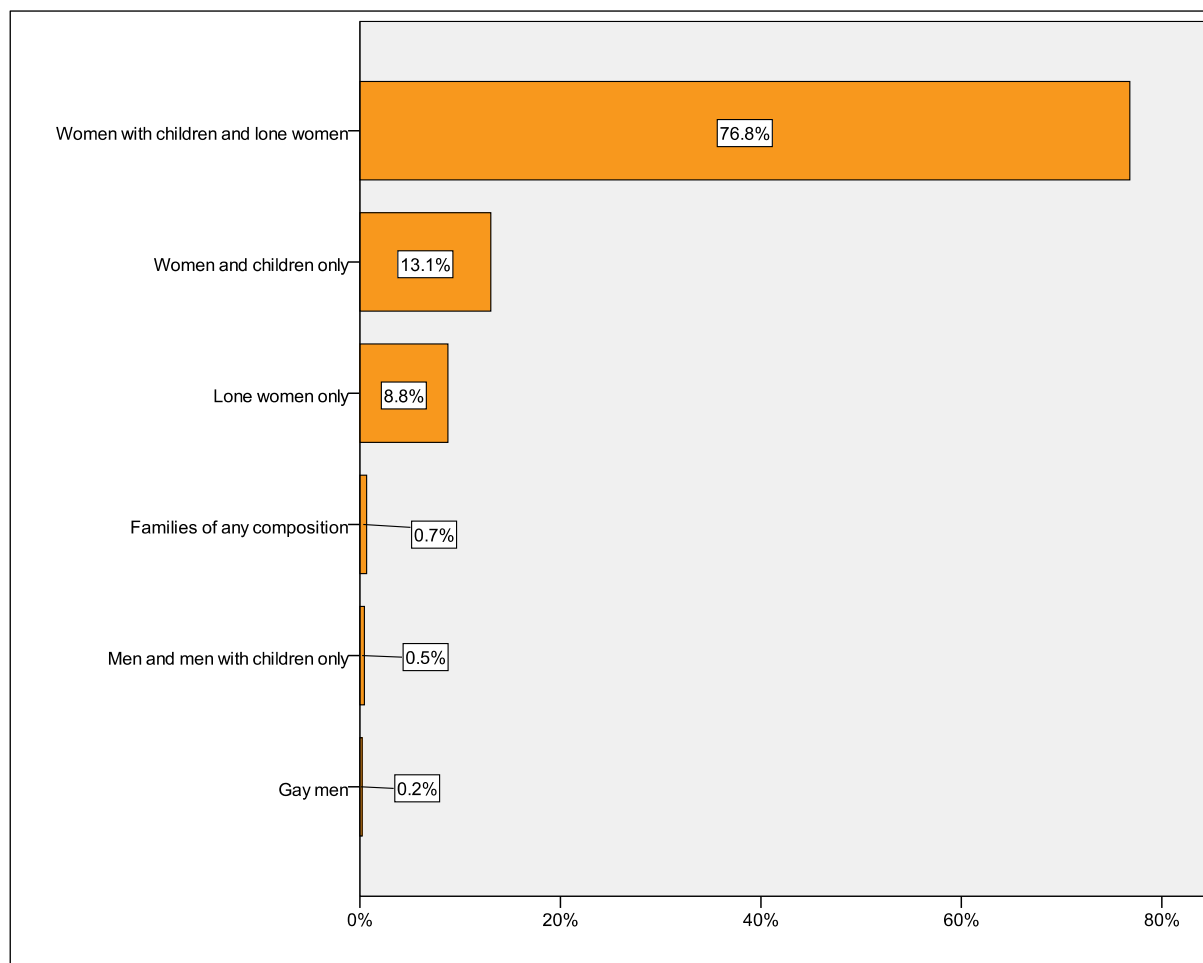
### ***Household type***

- 3.46 The mapping exercise drew upon all sources of available information (including Supporting People databases and Survey 1 and Survey 2; see Appendix 1) to identify specialist services for households at risk of domestic violence. Each of these sources of information collected information on the main target client group of households experiencing domestic violence. Figure 3.5 shows that the vast majority of services were identified as being specifically provided for women and women with children. Most specialist accommodation based services were able to work with women with children and lone women (77%, Figure 3.5), although data on this was not always available<sup>25</sup>. A smaller proportion worked only with women and children (13%) or with lone women only (9%). As described below, services for lone women were more common among those services focusing on black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups.
- 3.47 Services focusing on men alone were unusual (less than 1% including specialist provision for gay men). A very small number of specialist projects worked with families of any composition (i.e. including male parents, less than 1%, Figure 3.5).

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<sup>25</sup> Based on client group descriptions in administrative data and responses from Survey 1 and Survey 2. However, services were quite often identified as for "women at risk of domestic violence" without any further details being available other than the presence of places for children.

**Figure 3.5: Specialisations among specialist accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence**



Source: Mapping exercise Base: 445 services.

### ***Services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups***

- 3.48 One in six (16%) of accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence were specifically provided for one or more black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities. It should also be noted that black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups should also be able to access other specialist services for those at risk of domestic violence, but that specific services might be preferred by some households and/or designed to meet specific cultural or language needs of people (Imkaan, 2010). Table 3.4 shows the regional distribution of these services. Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services were most common in London, the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside, but were uncommon in the East of England and apparently absent from the South West.
- 3.49 Service providers were asked to state the black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee client group in their own words. Just over one half of the services

were reported as being for women of Asian origin (55%), the next largest group being for black and minority ethnic households more generally, which accounted for 39 per cent of services. The remaining 6 per cent were divided between services just for black women (3%) and services specific to other cultural and minority ethnic groups, including Latin American and Jewish women (3%). Over nine out of ten black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services (93%) were located in local authority areas in which less than 30 per cent of the population was classified as rural using DEFRA measures.

- 3.50 Collectively, the 73 black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services provided 616 household places (15% of total household places). Most services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups were focused on women with children (83% of places) although 17 per cent of places were in schemes intended for lone women. This was a higher figure than that across the sector as a whole (9%). There was no provision for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups open to men or men with children, although schemes that were available to adult men were generally unusual (less than 1%).

**Table 3.4: Distribution of specialist accommodation based services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee women and women with children**

Region	Total services	Of which black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services	Household places	Ethnic minority population (tens of thousands)	Places per ten thousand
North East	20	1	4	11.6	0.3
North West	46	6	37	54.0	0.7
Yorkshire and the Humber	38	7	104	48.9	2.1
East Midlands	59	13	117	39.9	2.9
West Midlands	44	7	54	74.8	0.7
East of England	39	2	4	47.4	0.1
London	93	30	249	234.0	1.1
South East	64	7	47	66.1	0.7
South West	42	0	0	24.4	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>616</b>	600.9	1.0

Source: Mapping exercise and ONS Experimental projections of ethnic population (2007)

### ***Services for households with multiple needs***

- 3.51 Specialist accommodation based services primarily focused on women with multiple needs were very unusual (under 1%, Figure 3.5). However, a higher proportion of services (23%) were recorded as supporting women with

multiple needs (such as substance misuse, mental health problems and a history of offending) as a secondary client group<sup>26</sup>.

3.52 Table 3.5 shows that services that could accommodate households with multiple needs were located in all regions, though the proportion of services available did vary between 16 per cent in the South East and 34 per cent in Yorkshire and Humberside. Services that could provide support to households with multiple needs were also more likely to be in more urbanised areas (60% were in areas with a rural population of under 30%).

**Table 3.5: Distribution of specialist accommodation based services for people with multiple needs groups (as secondary client group)**

Region	Total services	Of Which multiple needs services	%
North East	20	6	30%
North West	46	11	24%
Yorkshire and the Humber	38	13	34%
East Midlands	59	16	27%
West Midlands	44	9	20%
East of England	39	12	31%
London	93	17	18%
South East	64	10	16%
South West	42	8	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>24%</b>

Source: Mapping exercise.

## HOUSEHOLDS WHICH COULD NOT ALWAYS BE ACCOMMODATED IN SPECIALIST SERVICES

### *Households with complex needs*

3.53 Survey 2 asked whether each accommodation based service could 'always', 'usually', 'sometimes', 'occasionally' or 'never' accommodate households with mental health problems, substance misuse issues or exhibiting ant-social behaviour. Only a minority of service providers in Survey 2 reported that they were always able to accommodate households with these needs:

- Just under one-quarter (24%) of 321 services described that they were always able to accommodate households containing someone with mental health problems.
- One-third (33%) of services were always able to accommodate a household including someone with substance misuse problems.

<sup>26</sup> Secondary client groups are recorded in the Supporting People Local System database; Survey also 2 asked service providers whether any of the accommodation based services were intended for a specific group of people within the population of households at risk of domestic violence.

- Only 13 per cent of services were reported as being always able to accommodate a household exhibiting anti-social behaviour.

3.54 Survey 2 also asked providers to identify whether there were any (other) groups of people which they were usually or always unable to accommodate in any of their accommodation schemes. Table 3.6 shows that 39 per cent of service providers had blanket policies that did not admit households with a history of arson, represented a high risk (to others), had high support needs or had previously been evicted or removed from their services. Smaller numbers of service providers reported that particular subgroups within these categories could usually, or always, not be accommodated.

3.55 However, it was also found that 35 per cent of service providers did not have any form of blanket exclusion policy, but rather, assessed households on a case-by-case basis. These services were, at least in terms of stated policy, potentially open to any household at risk of domestic violence.

**Table 3.6: Details from service providers on why it was always or usually not possible to accommodate some households**

Nature of any exclusion	Number of service providers	Percentage
Arson, high risk, high support needs, previous eviction/removal	58	39%
Case-by-case assessment – no blanket exclusions	51	35%
High risk only	13	9%
Previous eviction/removal only	10	7%
Arsonists only	11	7%
High support needs only	5	3%
Total	148	100%

Source: Survey 2. Base: 148 service providers reporting on 269 services (four service providers did not answer this question).

3.56 It is important to set these findings in context. First, as described above, there was provision available that could accommodate households with multiple needs, which accounted for almost one-quarter of all services (24%). Second, a large scale survey in 2005 of families owed the main homelessness duty reported that while severe mental illness, substance misuse and issues like anti-social behaviour existed among families with experience of domestic violence, these needs did *not* arise at a greater rate than that found among the general population<sup>27</sup>. Whilst residents in specialist accommodation based schemes are not the same client group as families with experience of domestic violence owed the main homelessness duty, it is likely that there will be overlap between the two groups.

<sup>27</sup> Pleace, N.; Fitzpatrick, S., Johnsen, S., Quilgars, D., Sanderson, D. (2008) *Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds*, London: DCLG. Survey of 2,035 statutorily homeless households including 800 female headed households with experience of domestic violence.



### ***Households with no recourse to public funds***

- 3.57 A minority (17%) of specialist accommodation based services reported that they were able to support households with no recourse to public funds<sup>28</sup>. Households with no recourse to public funds status are not able to claim housing benefit. A Domestic Violence Rule/Immigration Concession<sup>29</sup> exists that means that people can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK if they have had to leave a relationship due to domestic violence. However, until recently households had to wait for the outcome of their application before they could access public funds which could potentially take some time. At the time of this research, refuges would have been limited in the extent to which they could support these households unless they could identify an alternative funding source<sup>30</sup>.

### ***Access for transsexual people***

- 3.58 A very small number of service providers reported that they had been unable to accommodate transsexual people at risk of domestic violence on one or more occasions (3%) because they were unable to provide suitable accommodation. The reason given in each case was that the person concerned was (at the time) a pre-operative male and their service was only available to women.

### ***Access for male children***

- 3.59 Age limits on male children have long been identified as a barrier to specialist accommodation based services, such as refuges, that are designed for women. The results from Survey 2 indicate that this remains an issue, with 36 per cent of services that accommodated children not allowing male children over the age of 12 and 44 per cent not allowing male young people aged over 15 (Figure 3.6). One in five services that accommodated children were described as not having a set limit on the age of male children (this implied that decisions were taken on a case-by-case basis rather than according to a set age and is not necessarily the same as allowing male children of any age).

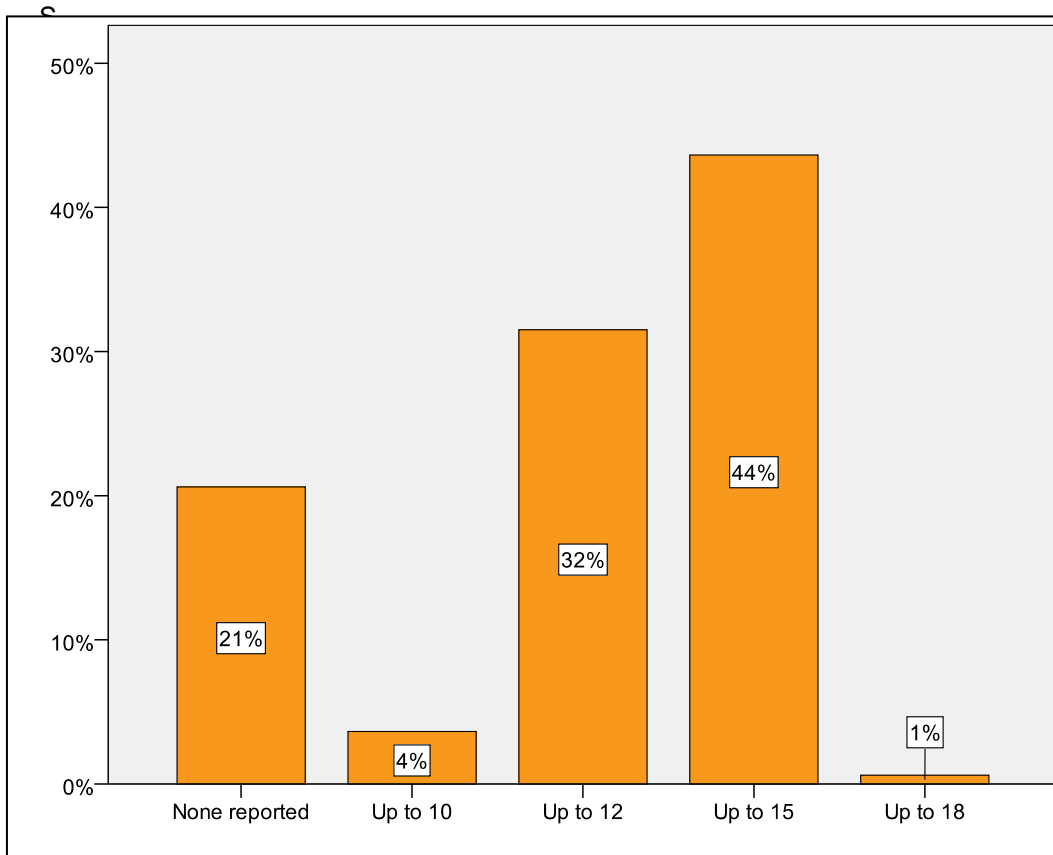
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<sup>28</sup> These households may be asylum seekers (awaiting a decision or with a negative decision), people who entered the country as a spouse or 'overstayers' on student visas etcetera.

<sup>29</sup> Under the rule a woman who is a spouse or long-term partner of a British national/someone settled in UK can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain when a relationship has broken down because of domestic violence.

<sup>30</sup> In November 2009, the Home Office introduced a new pilot scheme (running until end of March 2010) whereby accommodation and subsistence costs can be paid for up to eight weeks while an indefinite leave to remain application is processed. This scheme will be formally evaluated.

**Figure 3.6: Age limits for boys reported among specifically designed accommodation services for specific groups (based on median age limits across all services)**



Service providers reporting on 319 services (two lone women only services were excluded).

***Provision for households with a disabled person***

3.60 Survey 2 showed that a small number of specialist accommodation based services were fully wheelchair accessible (9% of services), though 36 per cent of service provision was described as partially accessible to wheelchair users. Provision of ground floor units for people with mobility problems was considerably more extensive, with 43 per cent of the services described in Survey 2 having this facility. However, this question was essentially confined to asking about the presence of a ground floor unit that could potentially be accessed, whether that unit would have necessary and sufficient adaptations for a specific disabled person to live in it would vary on a case-by-case basis. One fifth of services were described as having facilities for people with hearing impairments (21%) and a slightly lower number for people with visual impairment or blindness (18%).

**QUALITATIVE WORK: ACCESSIBILITY**

3.61 The service providers and national players highlighted potential accessibility issues for a number of sub-groups of households at risk of domestic violence. Firstly, many providers were concerned that, in their experience (and as confirmed by the Survey findings), most specialist accommodation based

services did not accommodate people with complex or multiple needs, for example those with substance misuse issues and/or severe mental health problems. It was thought that some services ‘cherry-picked’ residents although many also limited access for reasons of risk management as accommodation was not staffed 24 hours a day; there might also be concerns about the risks that some households may pose to other residents and children in particular. One provider explained that they had to refer people with multiple needs onto specialist services but this was not really sufficient as services such as substance misuse services, however good, could not offer safe accommodation neither could they accommodate children.

- 3.62 Secondly, many providers highlighted the problems experienced by households with no recourse to public funds<sup>31</sup>, confirmed by the Survey findings above, in accessing provision. The new Home Office pilot scheme (see above) was welcomed by providers although some remained concerned as to whether applications would be processed within the time limit given the difficulties that some households may face in producing the required documents. The London consultation group also suggested that the ‘rolling shelter’ model for homeless people (which rough sleepers are able to access for a limited time without claiming benefits) could also usefully be developed for households with no recourse to public funds, pointing out that they were not aware that any of the existing shelters were women only or were able to take children.
- 3.63 Thirdly, the unsuitability of much of the specialist accommodation based service provision for disabled people was also raised as an issue by service providers. Despite the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, it was felt that, for example, adaptations to existing buildings had often been minor, and few refuges offered facilities for people using wheelchairs, or provision for people who had a live-in carer. A particular problem in arranging for care packages to be transferred across local authority boundaries was also highlighted. An example was given where a woman had to be reassessed by social services and had been told that they would not be able to guarantee a woman only carer. These difficulties meant that even if refuge provision was available it might be difficult for disabled women to access it effectively.
- 3.64 Fourthly, both service providers and service users highlighted the problem of accommodating families with teenage boys. The results of Survey 2 reflected this finding (see Figure 3.6).
- 3.65 Service providers also raised issues around the access of a number of other sub-groups of households experiencing domestic violence that were not explored in the Survey. Firstly, providers highlighted problems for services in

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<sup>31</sup> These households may be asylum seekers (awaiting a decision or with a negative decision), people who entered the country as a spouse or overstayers on student visas etcetera.

accommodating large families. This issue (as well as the exclusion of older children) was felt to disproportionately impact on some households, particularly black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee households and traveller households.

- 3.66 Secondly, specialist black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee service providers also highlighted a problem of the lack of specialist accommodation based services for male and female couples fleeing family violence, including in cases of honour based violence. Providers mentioned that there was one project (Gemini project, Somerset) that would accept couples in these situations.
- 3.67 Thirdly, providers also felt that young people aged 16 and 17 often struggled to access specialist accommodation based services as most providers appeared to work with households aged 18 or over. It was considered that young people were in a vulnerable situation potentially being too young for refuges and probably not ready to live independently. It was thought that young people’s services might be more appropriate for many people but there was concern as to whether domestic violence issues were able to be adequately addressed within these settings. At the other end of the age spectrum, a couple of providers raised the question as to whether services adequately met the needs of older households.
- 3.68 Finally, providers also highlighted a potential difficulty regarding access to refuges and other specialist accommodation based provision for working households on low incomes. They thought that households might not be able to afford the accommodation costs.

### Service effectiveness

- 3.69 Service providers’ assessments of their own effectiveness tended to be quite positive, with 58 per cent reporting that their services met the needs of women and children ‘very well’. However, 31 per cent reported that their services met services ‘quite well’ and a minority (11%) reported that they had ‘mixed success’ (Table 3.7). No service providers reported that their services did not meet needs very well, or not at all well.

**Table 3.7: Providers’ assessment of how well their services met the needs of resident women and children**

Assessment of how well needs met	Number of service providers	Percentage
Very well	86	58%
Quite well	47	31%
Mixed success	17	11%
Base	150	100%

Source: Survey 2. Base: 150 service providers reporting on 268 services (6 service providers did answer this question). Percentages are rounded.

- 3.70 When service provision was viewed as meeting needs very well, this tended to be linked to a belief that services were comprehensive and, where applicable, well coordinated. There was also an emphasis on service delivery and planning that gave households at risk of domestic violence input into the planning and delivery of support services in responses to Survey 2. Positive service user feedback was also sometimes mentioned when services were assessed as meeting need very well.

*We offer 24 hour support and all women are allocated a key worker within 5 days of admission. Each woman has her own Independent Living Plan, which is worked on in partnership between the woman and her key worker. Where we are unable to provide specialist advice and support, we refer to other agencies. We have a good percentage of positive outcomes due to the level of support provided and a committed staff group... (Written response to Survey 2)*

*Staff are experienced and whatever issues we cannot help with we can refer to other agencies we work with. Also, from client feedback we know we met the needs of our clients. (Written response to Survey 2)*

- 3.71 When services were assessed as meeting need 'quite well' or as having 'mixed success' the reasons reported in response to Survey 2, this tended to be linked to reports of resource limitations. There were also some reports of a limited capacity to cope with the support needs of some households (see Table 3.6), which meant that service outcomes were not always ideal. Sometimes a combined problem, in which resource limitations were impeding capacity to meet the needs of some households was reported.

*Limited resources in the local area, no funding and no specialist workers on site (Written response to Survey 2).*

*We do aim to have an 'open door policy' and accept women with drug/alcohol and mental health issues. However, the support needs of some individuals can be high, support from specialist agencies in the local area is waiting list dependant and refuge staffing levels have been reduced due to a 'value for money' exercise to suit the local Supporting People Team who were looking at cost cutting. We would like to be able to support the needs of these women better through our own in-house services but current funding/staffing does not allow for that level of support. Other refuges in the local area will not take women with this type of support need, there is a need for more refuges that will (Written response to Survey 2).*

#### **QUALITATIVE WORK: SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS**

- 3.72 Some of the key strengths and weaknesses of accommodation based services were discussed in the 'nature of services' section above, particularly

around sharing accommodation and peer support. There are also obvious disadvantages associated with leaving your own home and area for households including children. Specialist support was seen as a key benefit of accommodation based support, although a disadvantage voiced by some service providers and service users was that staff members were not always available in the evenings or weekends.

- 3.73 Service users felt that the specialist accommodation based services they had used (in all cases these were refuges) had made a very significant difference to their lives. Most explained that the provision had enabled them to escape extremely difficult situations where they were suffering domestic violence which often included controlling behaviour, emotional and financial abuse as well physical violence. People spoke about feeling more positive about their lives, having better mental health, better relationships with children and others, a greater feeling of independence, empowerment and self-efficacy. A few people explained that they felt that they were changing from a victim to having their life back. Crucially, some people literally considered that they would be dead if they had not left the situation.

*R1: I am happy. When I came I was very depressed, I was stressed out, you know you have lost your self-regard, my key worker was very good, very good, she got my counselling, for three or four months.... I am calm, because when I left my husband, I was chaotic, now I've calmed down, I can think straight...I can't believe I've been here almost a year. For me, I really feel happy, I feel calm...*

*R2: I am very grateful to be honest, we are regaining our identity here. I have been here nearly a year and I am happy, and I feel safe.*

*R3: I'm grateful, I'm a little bit more happy, I not so stressed as what I was, and my relationship with my kids is more better than what it has been...I am grateful because if I wasn't here, I might not be here now...(Service users)*

- 3.74 Most of the service users were still living in refuges at the time of interview so they could not comment on longer-term outcomes. Whilst one provider also pointed out that refuges can also be used as a breathing space for women and that it was not appropriate to expect all women to leave their partner permanently, women in the focus groups were looking towards a future without their ex-partner (or wider family in cases of family abuse). Many spoke of the desire to start a new life, for some living independently for the first time, to access education, training or employment and the benefits of some of the activities they were already involved in. For example, a woman in one of the refuges was currently doing an exhibition of her art. A few women expressly asked for more support with training and education from the refuge and allied services as this was central to establishing their future.

*They don't do enough education wise, opportunities for working, like you can go out there and work, you can go out there and find yourself an education... It's about finding who you are – not that person that he made you. (Service user)*

### **The adequacy of specialist accommodation based services**

3.75 It is difficult to measure the adequacy of the level of any services accurately as the level of demand for services will be influenced by many factors including whether potential service users have adequate information on services and believe that a service is likely to be able to help them. Six related areas were considered in this analysis:

- the extent to which services have to 'turn away' people
- the level of vacancies in accommodation schemes
- waiting lists
- turnover of households using services, that is how quickly people move through services
- local authority and service providers' assessment of adequacy of service provision (quantitative surveys), and
- the views of respondents taking part in the qualitative work

### **TURNING HOUSEHOLDS AWAY FROM SERVICES**

3.76 Service providers in Survey 2 were asked whether they had, frequently or occasionally, turned away households from specialist accommodation schemes because they did not have the capacity to accommodate them. Table 3.8 shows that service providers reported that 57 per cent of services 'frequently' turned away households for this reason and that 40 per cent of services 'occasionally' turned away households. Overall, 97 per cent of all services were described as at least occasionally turning away households because there was not sufficient capacity.

**Table 3.8: Number of services that reported frequently or occasionally turning away households at risk of domestic violence because there was no capacity to accommodate them**

Ever turned away households	Number of services	As percentage of all services
Frequently	183	57%
Occasionally	133	40%
Never	11	3%
Total	321	100%

Source: Survey 2. Base: 321 services being reported on by 156 service providers. Percentages are rounded.

- 3.77 Service providers reported that their services had turned away 15,225 households during the period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009 (Survey 2). The average per service was 91 households, but there was considerable variation (the median was 34 households). Data sources on households turned away appeared to be relatively robust according to the responses to Survey 2. Seventy per cent of services were described by their providers as keeping 'detailed internal records' or 'detailed records as part of contract conditions' (67%). However, 7 per cent of services based their figures on staff estimates, rather than formal records and 24 per cent did not report keeping formal records. Overall, a total of 12,128 cases (of the 15,225 households) being turned were recorded using detailed internal records or detailed records that were kept as part of their contract conditions.
- 3.78 When assessing this information, it should be noted that responses to Survey 2 covered 72 per cent of the services recorded in the mapping exercise<sup>32</sup>. The number of households turned away from services is therefore likely to be one-quarter to one-third greater than recorded.
- 3.79 However, it is also important to note that service providers were not able to give any information on the next or final accommodation destination of the households turned away. It is likely that the total figure will include at least some, and possibly considerable, double-counting as service users (or agencies on their behalf) might approach several providers before finding a vacancy for each household.

#### **LEVEL OF VACANCIES**

- 3.80 Turning households away is also an indication that many refuges were often operating to full capacity. Figures from UKrefugesonline (UKROL)<sup>33</sup>, the specialist on-line resource for domestic violence professionals detailing accommodation schemes and vacancies, showed that on 13 August 2009 (at the same time as Survey 2 went into the field), 257 of the total recorded

<sup>32</sup> Response rates did not always include all the services for all the questions asked in Survey 2, please see notes under tables for details.

<sup>33</sup> Figures supplied by Women's Aid (unpublished).



number of bedspaces on the system (3707) were vacant, that is refuges were operating with a 7 per cent void rate. At this point, there were 23 spaces available for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee households, eight spaces for wheelchair users and 16 for people with no recourse to public funds. However, two weeks later (31 August, a bank holiday which may not have been representative) the void rate was only 1 per cent with no spaces available for wheelchair users or no recourse to public funds households and only two spaces for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee households. The UKROL data showed that any one unitary or county council authority area had between 1 and 17 places available in refuges locally on 13 August 2009.

### **WAITING LISTS**

- 3.81 Survey 2 also provided evidence of the use of waiting lists, with 27 per cent of services being reported as having a waiting list. These lists were generally reported to be updated regularly (84% of services with waiting lists were reported as updating them at least fortnightly). Numbers here were relatively low, though this must be set in the context of services that have a primary function to provide secure *emergency* housing, that is, they are not primarily a referral based scheme where households might put their names down and wait for a place to become available. In total 114 households were reportedly on waiting lists at the point at which Survey 2 was conducted.

### **TURNOVER OF SERVICES**

- 3.82 Table 3.9 summarises the findings on household places from Survey 2, turnover of households (total households staying as a percentage of households that could be accommodated) and households turned away. The households at risk of domestic violence accommodated by these services were equivalent to 457 per cent of the household places these services had available in 2008-09. In other words, for each single household place offered by these services, the equivalent of 4.57 households stayed in one of these services during 2008-09. The final column of Table 3.9 also shows that the households turned away represented 142 per cent of the total household places in 2008-09, in respect of those services described in Survey 2.
- 3.83 Survey 2 indicated that the rate at which services were used<sup>34</sup> appeared to vary markedly by region. In the North East, which the mapping exercise suggested had a lower level of service provision (see Table 3.1), Survey 2 responses showed services that appeared to be very active (turnover was equivalent to 880 per cent of capacity, or the equivalent of 8.8 households stayed in these services for each household place available during 2008-09,

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<sup>34</sup> Again, while the results of Survey 2 and the mapping exercise appear to reconcile with one another, it must be noted that the responses to Survey 2 covered 72% of the services recorded in the mapping exercise. Response rates did not always include all the services for all the questions asked in Survey 2, please see notes under tables for details.

Table 3.9). In London, which the mapping exercise suggested had more extensive service provision (see Table 3.1) than elsewhere in England, Survey 2 responses showed relatively lower activity (turnover was equivalent to 315 per cent of capacity, or the equivalent of 3.1 households stayed in these services for each household place available during 2008-09). However, part of the possible explanation of these differences is likely to include differences in the availability of move-on accommodation. Securing suitable and affordable housing to allow move on from all forms of supported housing in London has been a policy problem for two decades or more (Pleace *et al*, 2008 and see Chapter 5).

**Table 3.9: Reported maximum capacity of services and households staying in 2008/9 compared to households reportedly turned away by region**

<b>Government office of the regions based on 1st service</b>	<b>Maximum households that can be accommodated in all specialist accommodation schemes</b>	<b>Total households staying in schemes between 1st April 2008 and 31st March 2009</b>	<b>Total staying as percentage of maximum households that could be accommodated</b>	<b>Total number of households turned away from schemes between 1st April 2008 and 31st March 2009</b>	<b>As percentage of total households staying 2008/9</b>
North East	91	801	880%	1,098	137%
North West	204	1,210	593%	3,317	274%
Yorkshire and The Humber	238	956	402%	2,853	298%
East Midlands	225	1,177	523%	1,435	122%
West Midlands	299	1,731	579%	2,500	144%
East of England	203	893	440%	846	95%
London	462	1,454	315%	1,070	74%
South East	407	1,629	400%	1,456	89%
South West	220	891	405%	6,50	73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,349</b>	<b>10,742</b>	<b>457%</b>	<b>15,225</b>	<b>142%</b>

Source: Survey 2. Base: 320 services being reported on by 156 service providers. Percentages are rounded.

## LOCAL AUTHORITY AND SERVICE PROVIDERS' ASSESSMENTS OF ADEQUACY OF SERVICE PROVISION

- 3.84 Table 3.10 summarises the views of the local authorities that responded to Survey 1 on the level of provision of specialist accommodation based services. The largest single group (39%) reported that no change was required. However, the next largest group reported a need to expand services (33%), while a smaller number reported that services should either be contracted or were not provided (see Map 3.1).

**Table 3.10: Local authority views on whether any change in specialist accommodation based services was required in their area (Survey 1)**

View on level of service provision	Number of authorities <sup>1</sup>	Percentage
No change required	76	39%
Expand	63	33%
Reduce	29	15%
Not provided	15	8%
Do not know	10	5%
Total	193	100%

Source: Survey 1. Base: 193 responding local authorities. Percentages are rounded.

<sup>1</sup> Please see Chapter 1 and Appendix 1 for an explanation of the sample for Survey 1.

- 3.85 There was no statistical evidence to indicate that authorities with particular characteristics (for example, rural or urban, in different regions, with differing levels of socioeconomic deprivation or with higher or lower levels of existing provision) were more or less likely to report a need to expand this form of service. This suggests that the processes by which each local authority interpreted need for these services was locally determined, rather than being influenced by the relative level of provision elsewhere.
- 3.86 In contrast to local authorities, service providers tended to be more in favour of the expansion of specialist accommodation based services, with 68 per cent of organisations responding to Survey 2 stating that provision should be 'expanded'. This view was held equally by those service providers that delivered specialist accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence (67%) and by those service providers not involved in this form of service provision (69%)<sup>35</sup>.

### QUALITATIVE WORK: ADEQUACY OF PROVISION

- 3.87 Most service providers and national stakeholders who took part in the qualitative work considered that the provision of refuges and other specialist accommodation based services needed expanding. Service providers explained that they frequently had to turn households away.

<sup>35</sup> 155 service providers involved in refuge or other specialist accommodation based service delivery and 90 service providers not involved.

- 3.88 Service users reported differing experiences in terms of the ease of finding a refuge or other specialist accommodation place. Some explained that they had not been able to access provision immediately, for example, one woman said that she had tried to leave a violent situation previously but was unable to as she could not access a refuge place to stay. Some women had also travelled further than they had hoped to access a refuge, for example one woman had wanted to find somewhere that was close to her sister but this had not proved possible. In contrast, a number of women explained that they had been given a choice over which refuge to access. This was particularly the case when people were looking to move quite a distance from their home and they used the national helpline to identify refuges with vacancies.

### **Accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function**

#### **DEFINITION**

- 3.89 This second section explores the provision of accommodation based services that are primarily focused on other user groups, but which describe themselves as supporting households at risk of domestic violence as a 'secondary' client group. This means that the accommodation based services are not exclusively designed or provided for households at risk of domestic violence, but the service is able to cater for some households with these needs alongside their main client group. The mapping exercise showed that the most common models were accommodation based services that were primarily designed for (usually statutorily homeless) homeless families with support needs, teenage parents or women with multiple needs. Within the Supporting People Local System (see Appendix 1) services are able to identify a 'secondary' client group. In addition, Survey 1 and Survey 2 also asked authorities/ providers to identify any services that were routinely/ frequently used for households at risk of domestic violence but also used to accommodate other groups.

#### **MAPPING ACCOMMODATION BASED SERVICES WITH A SECONDARY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FUNCTION**

- 3.90 The mapping exercise identified 71 accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function in England at the end of 2009, providing a total of 826 household spaces (Table 3.11). Provision was not, therefore, particularly extensive, either in terms of specific regions or nationally. Thirteen services were mapped in Yorkshire and Humberside region and London, and 12 in the North West. The Yorkshire and Humberside region constituted 31 per cent of this provision as services had a higher average number of household spaces (31% of household spaces) and within London (18% of spaces). Less than 10 services were identified in the other regions in the mapping exercise, with only two services in the South West.

**Table 3.11: The extent of accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function by region**

ONS Government Office of the Regions	Number of mapped services	Total mapped spaces	Percentage of national spaces where households at risk of DV are secondary client group
Yorkshire and The Humber	13	258	31%
London	13	148	18%
North West	12	101	12%
South East	8	85	10%
North East	9	74	9%
East Midlands	5	60	7%
East of England	5	58	7%
West Midlands	4	23	3%
South West	2	19	2%
Total	71	826	100%

Source: Mapping exercise. Percentages are rounded.

- 3.91 Further, it is important to note that the spaces in these services were not primarily intended for households at risk of domestic violence or an exclusive 'domestic violence' service. All of the services were primarily delivering services to a different primary client group, with most focused on homeless families with support needs, mainly those that had been accepted as being owed the main homelessness duty<sup>36</sup> by a local authority housing department (49% of services), with the next largest group being services aimed at lone homeless people with support needs (14% of services). The only other distinct group of services were for young people at risk (11% of services). The remaining 27 per cent of services focused on subgroups within the population characterised by a high degree of social and economic marginalisation (including people with multiple needs, mental health and/or substance misuse problems and households with anti-social behaviour issues).
- 3.92 Survey 2 indicated that these services were delivered mainly by housing associations and local authorities, with relatively little provision from the voluntary sector or agencies specialising in domestic violence services. This pattern is probably explained by the high proportion of homelessness services that were within this group, as accommodation based services for homeless families and lone homeless people tended to be managed by housing associations and local authorities.

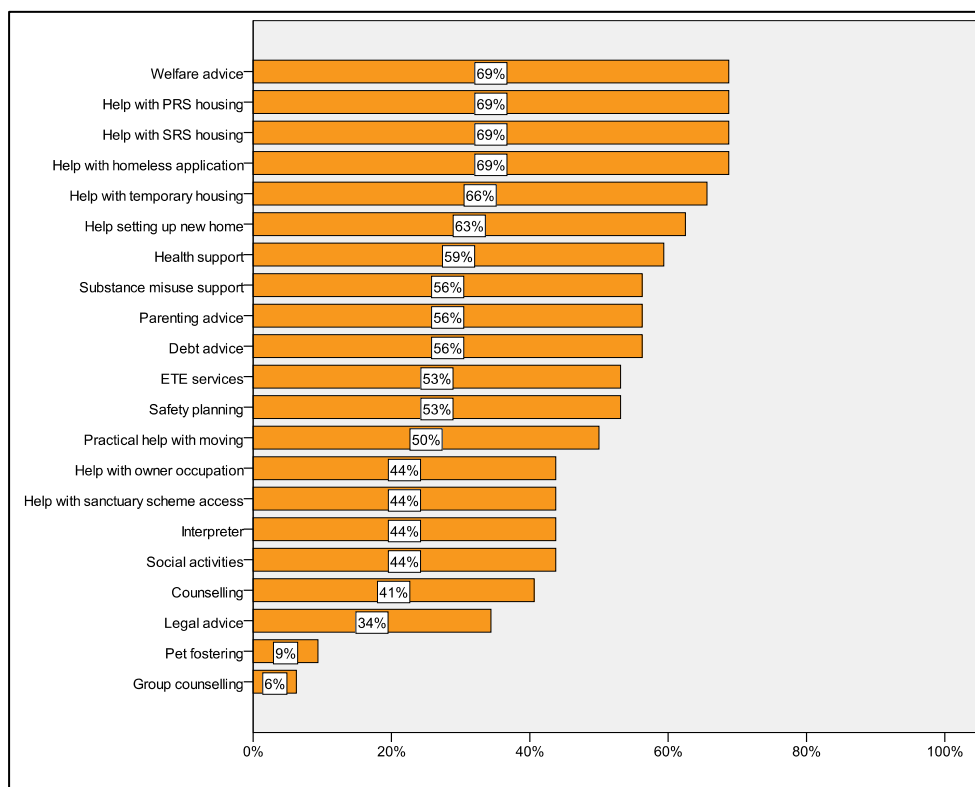
<sup>36</sup> Please see Chapter 1 for an overview of the role of the statutory homelessness system. Supporting People Local System provides information on whether the client group was statutorily homeless or not. Survey 2 simply asked whether the main client group was homeless families or lone homeless people without detailing their homelessness status.

## **SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ACCOMMODATION BASED SERVICES WITH A SECONDARY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FUNCTION**

- 3.93 Figure 3.7 shows the range of support provided by non-specialist accommodation services, based on the results of Survey 2. In total, 32 services were described by 32 providers. This was equivalent to 45 per cent of the 71 accommodation services with a secondary domestic violence function that were mapped. These services were all hostel and supported housing services for homeless families and for lone homeless women.
- 3.94 A number of similarities and a number of contrasts with the range of support provided by specialist accommodation can be noted (see Figure 3.1). As was the case for specialist accommodation services, welfare advice and help with homelessness applications were prominent forms of support (both 69%). However, these services were provided at a lower rate than among specialist accommodation services (96% of which were described as providing both forms of support). A similar pattern existed in respect of support in accessing temporary accommodation or the private rented sector (66% and 69% respectively, compared to 91% and 94% of specialist accommodation services).
- 3.95 Help with accessing sanctuary schemes was at a lower rate than that found among specialist accommodation services (44% compared to 78%, see figures 3.1 and 3.7). Accommodation services with a secondary domestic violence function were likely to report lower provision of safety planning support (53%, compared to 94% of specialist services, see figures 3.1 and 3.7), and also quite less likely to offer parenting advice (56% compared to 93%), or to offer education, training or employment services (53% compared to 81%). Group counselling was much less common in accommodation services with a secondary domestic violence function (6% compared to 58% of specialist accommodation services) as was pet fostering (9% compared to 44%).
- 3.96 These findings suggest that accommodation services with a secondary function had less extensive provision than specialist services in some respects. This finding is unsurprising in that they had additional functions alongside their secondary role in providing support to households at risk of domestic violence. It is important to note that some of these non-specialist services were able to offer specific support for households at risk of domestic violence, alongside safety planning (53%), 41 per cent were able to offer counselling, and 34 per cent were able to offer legal advice. However, while accommodation services with a secondary domestic violence function were usually able to offer some support, many specific supports were less extensively available in this sector than in the specialist accommodation services.

3.97 In addition, Survey 2 suggested that services for children and young people in services with a secondary domestic violence function were confined entirely to provision where the primary client group was homeless families. These services tended to be highly restricted and were not always present as part of the on-site support service.

**Figure 3.7: Services provided by accommodation services with a secondary domestic violence function**



Source: Survey 2. Base: 32 service providers reporting on the range of services offered by 32 services.

### SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY

3.98 Survey 2 indicated that the most common source of referral to accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function was local housing options teams, closely followed by social services departments and self referral. This appeared to reflect both the role of many of these services in respect of statutory and non-statutory homelessness and the role of others as providers of supported housing to groups with multiple needs.

3.99 The extent of accessibility of these services is difficult to assess for households at risk of domestic violence, mainly because their primary focus is on another, albeit related, client group. Survey 2 provided some evidence of what the primary focus of these accommodation based services on other user



groups might mean in practice. Service providers reported that, on average, only 10 per cent of the places in these services were occupied by households at risk of domestic violence. Caution needs to be exercised as the number of services reported on was restricted. However, if this picture were representative<sup>37</sup> then only 83 of the places shown in Table 3.12 would have typically been occupied by a household at risk of domestic violence.

- 3.100 However, Survey 2 may provide some limited evidence to suggest that these services could provide an alternative resource to specialist accommodation based services where the latter are unavailable, particularly for some groups of households at risk of domestic violence. For example, half of the service providers with a secondary domestic violence function reported that their services were used for households at risk of domestic violence with multiple needs or with older male children (both could be a barrier to specialist accommodation based services, see Table 3.7 and Figure 3.6).

### **THE EFFECTIVENESS AND ADEQUACY OF SERVICES**

- 3.101 There is an inherent difficulty in reporting on the effectiveness of services that were at least partially, and more often mainly, focused on social issues other than domestic violence. The qualitative work (see below) reported that many service providers considered that an accommodation based service that can provide specialist support with domestic violence, to meet a specific set of needs, is likely to provide more targeted support and ultimately a better outcome for that household. It was not possible to assess this hypothesis fully in this research. It may be that there are cases where households that have experienced domestic violence might need specialist support with a particular issue, for example with substance abuse issues and households will access a service which has this as its primary purpose. Equally it could be argued that a specialist service could be provided which could address both domestic violence and substance misuse issues. Ultimately, the decision on the most appropriate service is a matter for detailed assessment, and household preferences within the context of the relative availability of different forms of provision.
- 3.102 The research results indicate that only a minority of places within provision designed for other primary client groups are utilised by households at risk of domestic violence. It is possible that this provision complements specialist accommodation based provision at a local level in some areas and for a minority of households at risk of domestic violence (see above). However, the size of the sector suggests that its impact is likely to be limited in its current form. The limited qualitative work presented below did not suggest that there

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<sup>37</sup> The service providers responding to Survey 2 collectively operated 30 accommodation based services where households at risk of domestic violence were a secondary client group (42% of all mapped services with a secondary client group for households at risk of domestic violence)

was an imperative to expand provision with a 'secondary client group' of households at risk of domestic violence.

### **QUALITATIVE WORK: ACCOMMODATION BASED SERVICES WITH A SECONDARY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FUNCTION**

- 3.103 The value of services that had a secondary domestic violence function was not discussed at length in the qualitative work. However, service providers and service users did express quite firm views on the potential issues related to the use of more generic accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence.
- 3.104 Service providers had significant concerns about households at risk of domestic violence being placed in generic homelessness provision. Here, they were mainly referring to provision which did not have either a primary or secondary client group of households at risk of domestic violence. There were particular concerns around safety in this type of provision where locations were unlikely to be confidential. Some provision may also be mixed gender which might be unsuitable for some women. There was also a concern that non-specialist provision was more likely to cater for people with multiple and complex needs which might be problematic for other residents who have just escaped traumatic situations.

*My experience of having worked in young people's hostels, and rough sleeping services, homelessness services generically, is that domestic violence, although it is an incredibly common housing experience, is massively under serviced and the support simply isn't there and I would have real concerns around, you know, young women going into 50:50 gender split accommodation because of their inability to access domestic violence services...(Service provider)*

- 3.105 A few providers however did support the provision of women only homeless hostels, as well as in some cases secure women only floors. The provision of temporary women only emergency accommodation more generally was seen as something that may be useful, particularly as compared to mixed gender bed and breakfasts and hostels (see Chapter 5).
- 3.106 Chiming with the views of agencies, services users utilising specialist accommodation based provision often explained that they were relieved that the service was different to other hostels that they had either stayed in previously or had heard about via friends and the media. Service users were particularly worried that, in a hostel for homeless people, they would have been sharing with people who had complex issues such as drug or alcohol misuse. A few explained that they would have left their violent home situation sooner if they had known that refuge provision was much better than general homelessness provision.

*If I'd known it was like this...I thought it was like the hostels, they're like junkie ones, and you think I ain't going in one of those...(Service user)*

## **Conclusion**

- 3.107 The mapping exercise showed that there were 445 accommodation based services specifically designed for households at risk of domestic violence in 2009. This represented an average of 0.8 household places in specialist accommodation based provision nationally per 10,000 people in the population, slightly short of the often cited standard of one household place per 10,000 households. Provision differed by type of authority with London having the highest rate of provision and rural areas significantly less provision. The majority of referrals to all services, however, tended to come from households outside the local authority area in which the service was based.
- 3.108 Specialist accommodation based services provided a wide range of support to residents, and nearly eight in ten (78%) of services provided follow-on support to residents leaving their accommodation. Services also provided an extensive range of specialist support for children, although specialist workers for young people were rarely employed.
- 3.109 One in six services were specifically provided for women and women with children from black, Asian and minority ethnic or refugee communities. Services which specialised in supporting people with multiple needs were rare. The research suggested there might be accessibility issues for some households as only one-quarter (24%) of services stated they were always able to accommodate people with mental health problems, and one-third (33%) were always able to accommodate people with substance misuse problems. In addition, the research found that only a small proportion of specialist accommodation based services were fully wheelchair accessible (9% of services).
- 3.110 Overall, service users were satisfied with their experience of specialist accommodation based services, particularly valuing self-contained units and the safety features of refuges. Views on the need to expand this provision differed between local authorities and service providers with only a third of the former, but two-thirds of the latter, reporting a need to expand specialist accommodation services.
- 3.111 The research mapped 71 accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function in England, with a maximum of 826 household spaces (if all spaces were occupied by households at risk of domestic violence). The primary client group for these services were usually homeless families, single homeless people or young people. These services offered a similar range of support but often at lower levels than specialist provision.

There was also fairly limited support amongst local authorities and service providers for an expansion of this type of provision.

## 4 Floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence

### Key points

- Floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence were operating in 79 per cent of the county councils and unitary authorities in England. A total of 301 administratively distinct services were mapped, providing over 7,750 places. This represented an average of 1.7 places in specialist floating support services nationally per 10,000 people in the population.
- Services were most numerous in the East Midlands, London, the North West and South East. However, relative service provision, measured as places provided per 10,000 population, showed that the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the Midlands had higher rates of provision than elsewhere.
- While provision was generally extensive, rural areas tended to have proportionately more services, although this effect was not universal. Almost all county councils had services (93%).
- The range of services on offer from floating support had close parallels with specialist accommodation based services. Support with safety planning (96% of services), welfare advice (91%) and counselling (85%) were prominent, as were services centred on accessing and sustaining settled housing and securing employment or training.
- Floating support services were viewed as accessible to households who might not be able to use some shared specialist accommodation based services, for example those with older male children.
- Specialist floating support services for specific groups of households at risk of domestic violence, such as lone women, men and black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups, were quite unusual. Most services (85%) were directed at women and women with children at risk of domestic violence.
- Overall, 47 per cent of service providers reported that their floating support services met the needs of service users 'very well', with another 43 per cent reporting service users' needs were 'quite well' met.
- Sixty-four per cent of service providers reported they were sometimes unable to meet the need for services for resource reasons. However, only 20 per cent reported they were frequently unable to meet need due to a lack of resources.

## **Introduction**

- 4.1 This chapter explores and maps the range of floating support services (including those known as ‘outreach’ services) for households at risk of domestic violence. The chapter begins by defining the range of services that were mapped as floating support services. The next part of this chapter reports the results of the mapping exercise, which looks at the distribution of floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence and also explores the level of provision relative to population.
- 4.2 The chapter then moves on to explore the range of support provided by floating support services, drawing specifically on the results of the national survey of service providers (Survey 2). This section also explores the routes by which people at risk of domestic violence accessed floating support services, specialisation within services and the capacity of floating support services for people at risk of domestic violence to meet particular individual and household needs. A discussion of evidence on service effectiveness and the adequacy of provision then follows. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of the role of floating support services with a secondary domestic violence function.

## **Provision of services**

### **DEFINITION**

- 4.3 Floating support services employ mobile support workers to provide services to an individual or household. These services are distinct from accommodation based services because they are not tied to specific accommodation, but can instead be delivered in a variety of settings. Importantly, a floating support service can follow a household as it moves between locations.
- 4.4 Floating support services are accommodation related in the sense that they are designed to facilitate the successful, safe retention of existing housing, where owner-occupation or renting arrangements are under direct or indirect threat as a result of domestic violence. In addition, when it has not been possible to prevent accommodation loss, floating support services work to prevent homelessness by enabling the process of resettlement to new housing. Many services are quite wide ranging in the support they provide, but it can involve safety planning, help with maximising income, and practical help with sustaining tenancies (see Figure 4.1 below).
- 4.5 In this report, the term ‘floating support services’ is also used to encompass ‘outreach’ services for households at risk of domestic violence. Outreach services are also delivered in a range of settings including in non-housing settings, such as community centres, but also to households in temporary accommodation, and to people in their own homes (or alternative premises if

a risk of violence is present). Outreach services can offer help with accessing housing and temporary accommodation as well as a range of support, including emotional support or help accessing services. Some providers involved in this research defined 'Outreach' as a crisis intervention that was more flexible in its delivery pattern than floating support (for example, a service would support as many people as possible rather than a fixed number of households as in floating support). However, it was clear that definitions were fluid between floating support and outreach services:

*When you talk about resettlement, floating support and outreach, I think those terms are interpreted and defined in different ways in different places – so almost at a local level, you kind of work out your definition of what they are. For me, outreach is a crisis intervention that floating support isn't... (Service provider)*

- 4.6 This report defines floating support services as services that go to wherever an individual or household at risk of domestic violence is living, or can be safely reached, if they are still living at home. These floating support services can be accessed directly by people at risk of domestic violence from their own homes, temporary accommodation or via other services like daycentres via a variety of referral routes. There is no requirement that a household has to experience a stay in a refuge or supported housing before they can use floating support services.
- 4.7 Follow-on support provided by a refuge or other specialist accommodation based service solely for the use of those who have been resident within it is not classified as floating support. These services follow people out of specialist accommodation services when they are rehoused, providing resettlement support. The follow-on support provided by specialist accommodation services is described in Chapter 3.

#### **MAPPING SERVICES**

- 4.8 The mapping exercise, which involved cross checking databases, resource lists and web searches with the results of Survey 1 and Survey 2, showed there were 301 floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence in England at the end of 2009 (Table 4.1). The East Midlands and London had the highest numbers of services, with lower numbers being mapped in the South West and North East.
- 4.9 Survey 2 showed that most floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence were run by voluntary and charitable organisations (79%)<sup>38</sup>. Housing association and local authority service run services were less common (15% and 6% of service providers respectively).

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<sup>38</sup> Excluding housing associations which were recorded separately.

**Table 4.1: The extent of floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence by region**

Region	Services reported	Percentage of national services
East Midlands	49	16%
London	44	15%
North West	39	13%
South East	39	13%
Yorkshire and The Humber	33	11%
West Midlands	31	10%
East of England	25	8%
South West	23	8%
North East	18	6%
Total	301	100%

Source: Mapping exercise

- 4.10 The mapping exercise counted each administratively distinct service as discrete. If a service had its own dedicated management and staffing, it was counted separately. This included locally managed services that were part of an ‘umbrella’ organisation at either regional or national level (see Appendix 1).
- 4.11 Overall, 79 per cent of the unitary and county councils in England had one or more floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence operating in their administrative area. Three-quarters of London boroughs and unitary authorities were mapped as having one or more floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence operating within their administrative area. The figure for the more rural county councils was rather higher, at 93 per cent. The 32 authorities without floating support services were mainly unitary councils located outside London (68%). There was no association between the region a local authority was situated in and whether a floating support services was present.
- 4.12 Table 4.2 shows the rate of floating support service provision per 10,000 population by region. The highest rates of provision were in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, the Midlands and the South East and South West. London had approximately half of the rate of provision found in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside (approximately 1.2 places per 10,000 population compared to 2.5 and 2.3 places respectively, Table 4.2). The lowest level of provision relative to population was found in the North West and the East of England (one place per 10,000 people, Table 4.2).



**Table 4.2: The extent of floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence relative to household numbers in each region**

Region	Household places <sup>1</sup>	Places per 10,000 population
North East	658	2.5
Yorkshire and The Humber	1,162	2.3
East Midlands	1,108	2.3
West Midlands	1,132	2.1
South East	1,059	1.9
South West	664	1.9
London	823	1.2
North West	679	1.1
East of England	484	1.0
Total	7,769	1.7

Source: Mapping exercise and ONS household projections. Percentages are rounded. <sup>1</sup> Total household spaces mapped for services as data were not available for 50 floating support services the base for this column is 251 services.

- 4.13 Table 4.3 shows the mapped places in floating support services for people at risk of domestic violence relative to the projected female population of each region of England aged 15 and older. Rates of provision were highest in the West Midlands and the North East. As was also the case in respect of specialist accommodation based services, the lowest rates relative to the female population was in the East of England (see Chapter 3). The North East and West Midlands had three times the level of relative provision mapped in the East of England. London, which had higher rates of specialist accommodation based services relative to other regions (with the exception of the West Midlands), had a relatively low rate of floating support service provision on this measure.

**Table 4.3: Mapped places in floating support services for people at risk of domestic violence in comparison with the projected female population aged 15 and over**

Region	Mid 2008 projection of female population aged 15 and older	Female population aged 15 and older in tens of thousands	Floating support service places mapped	Number of floating support service places per 10,000 women aged 15 and older
North East	1,103,200	110.3	658	6
North West	2,924,800	292.5	679	2.3
Yorkshire & Humber	2,206,600	220.7	1,162	5.3
East Midlands	1,877,800	187.8	742	4
West Midlands	2,269,600	227	1,498	6.6
East of England	2,412,200	241.2	484	2
London	3,168,100	316.8	823	2.6
South East	3,550,000	355	1,059	3
South West	2,242,200	224.2	664	3
All	20,651,300	2065.1	7,769	3.8

**Source:** ONS Regional population projections for 2008 and mapping exercise.

- 4.14 Levels of floating support service provision were not found to be significantly associated with particular local authority administrative types or with levels of relative area deprivation. Levels of floating support service provision were also not associated with levels of refuge and other specialist accommodation based service provision<sup>39</sup>.
- 4.15 Floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence were quite often provided at a higher rate in rural areas than was the case for most cities. However, the relationship was not an entirely consistent one, as is illustrated in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Floating support services in local authorities relative to population by extent of rurality**

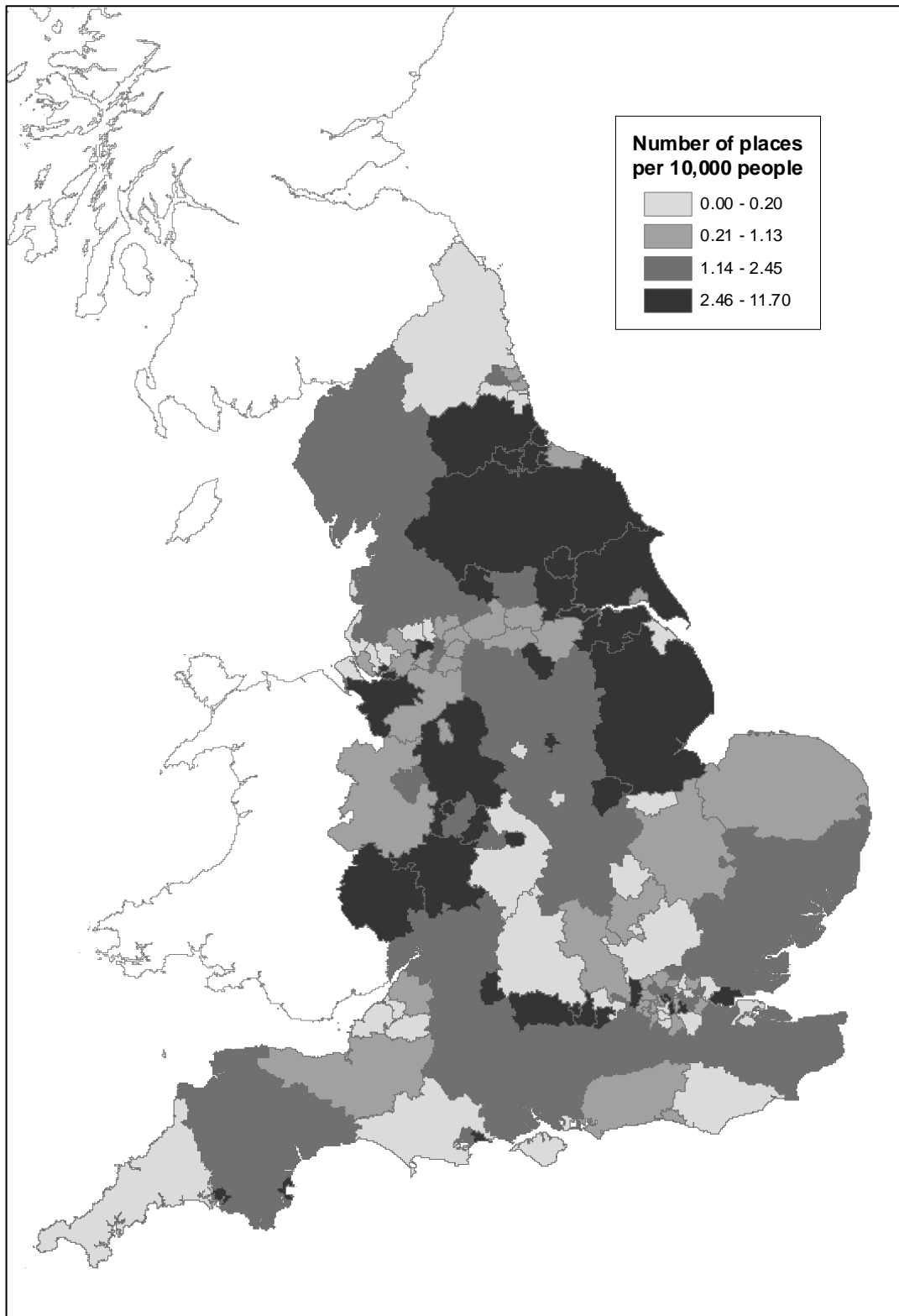
Area type	Average level of places per 10,000 households	Median level of places per 10,000 households	Total places	Total population (tens of thousands)	No. of authorities
Mainly rural areas (50%+ rural population)	2	1.3	2,604	1359.9	24
Significant rural populations	2.1	1.7	1,704	1020.4	26
Urban	1.5	0.83	3,461	2155.3	100
All	1.5	1.1	7,769	4435.7	151

Source: Mapping exercise Percentages are rounded. Data were unavailable for one authority.

<sup>39</sup> Tests were run at county council, London borough or unitary authority level (152 authorities)

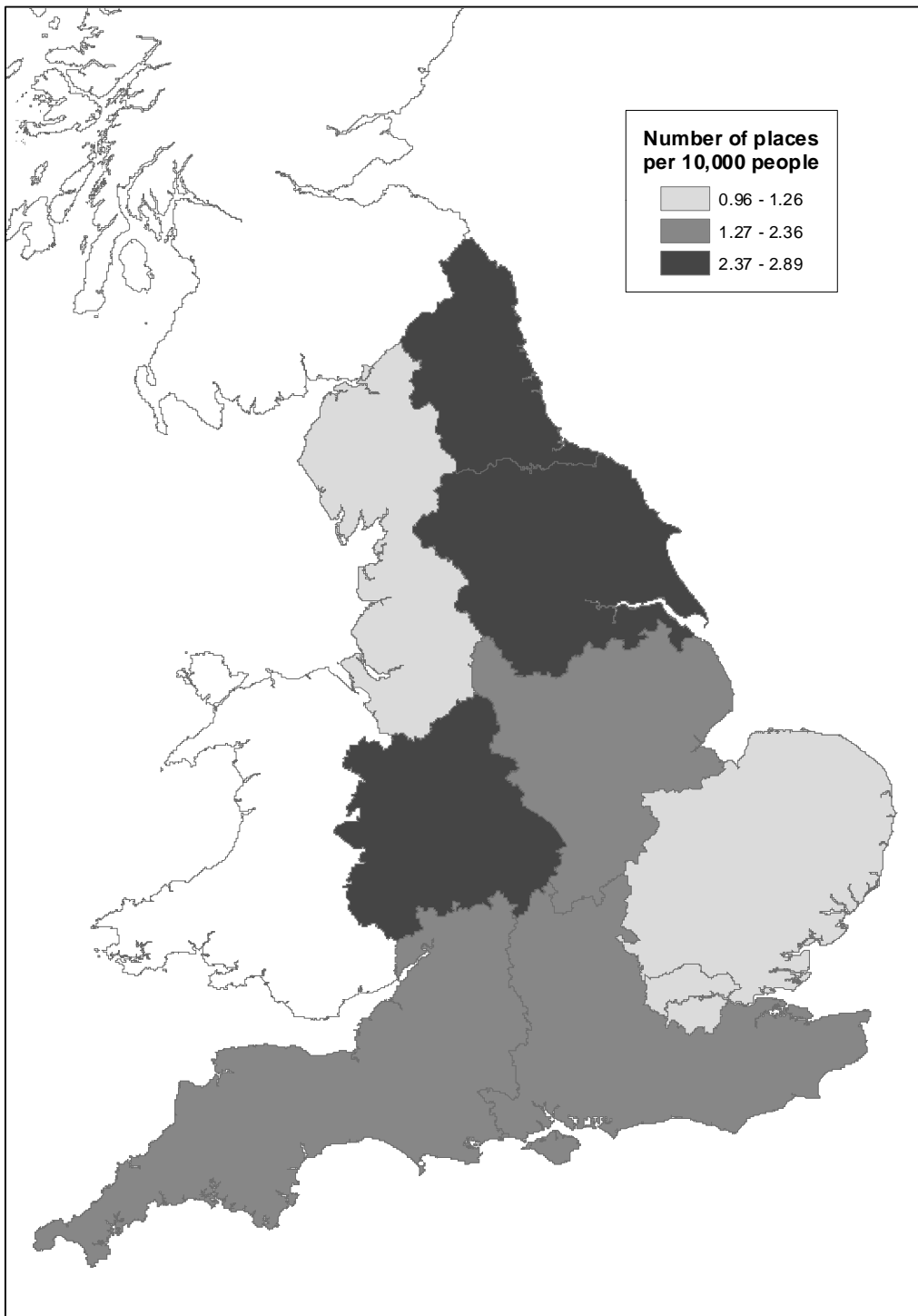
- 4.16 As Table 4.4 shows, while rural provision of floating support services was on average higher, there was quite marked variation (note that the median measure was always lower than the average). Overall, 33 per cent of urban areas had above average relative floating support service provision (1.5 places per 10,000 population), compared to 50 per cent of areas with a significant rural population and 32 per cent of mainly rural areas.
- 4.17 Floating support services can be attractive to service commissioners in more rural areas. This is because they can travel to households who may be geographically dispersed, and who may thus find the cost and effort involved in travelling to reach a fixed site service difficult.
- 4.18 With the exception of the small number of services that were designated as for lone women only (see below), floating support services were generally able to engage with households at risk of violence which contained children. As floating support services do not provide accommodation as part of their service, but instead travel to the accommodation where a household is living, they are usually unconstrained by issues such as the number of children in a household, or whether or not the household contains a male child above a certain age.
- 4.19 Map 4.1 summarises the rate of floating support service provision per 10,000 households at county and unitary authority level (Map 4.2 summarises the findings at regional level). The patterns evident in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 are shown in more detail. The higher levels of provision in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber are shown, as are the higher rates of provision in many more rural areas, although as also suggested by Table 4.2, this is not universally true, as evidenced by Cornwall and Dorset.

**Map 4.1: Places provided by floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence per 10,000 population.**



Source: Mapping exercise

**Map 4.2: Places provided by floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence per 10,000 population by region.**



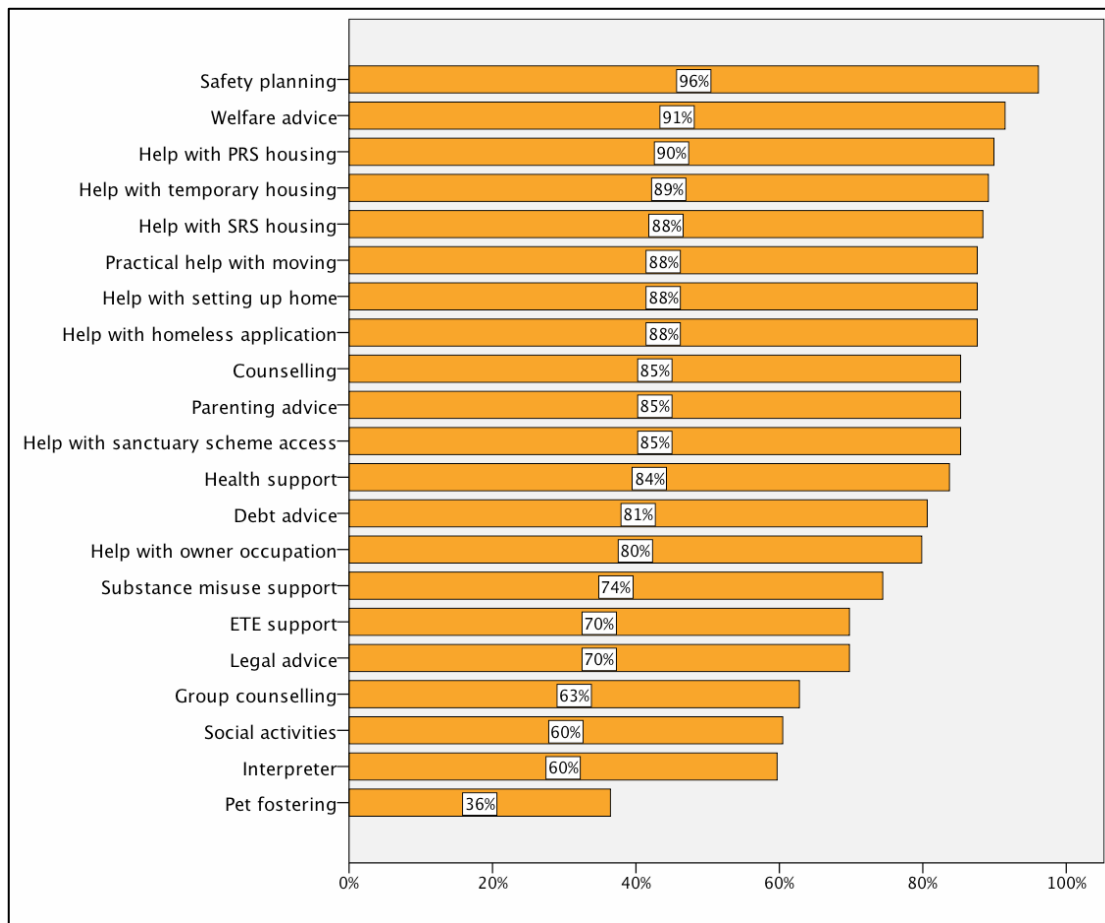
Source: Mapping exercise

## Support provided by floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence

### TYPES OF SERVICE PROVISION

4.20 Figure 4.1 summarises the range of support provided by floating support services, drawing on the results of Survey 2. Service provision tended to be comprehensive, resembling the pattern of service delivery found in specialist accommodation based services (Figure 3.1). Safety planning, as would be expected, was very extensively offered, as was welfare advice and extensive help with maintaining existing housing and securing new housing when necessary. Pet fostering was the only service not provided by a majority of service providers.

**Figure 4.1: Support services provided by floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence**



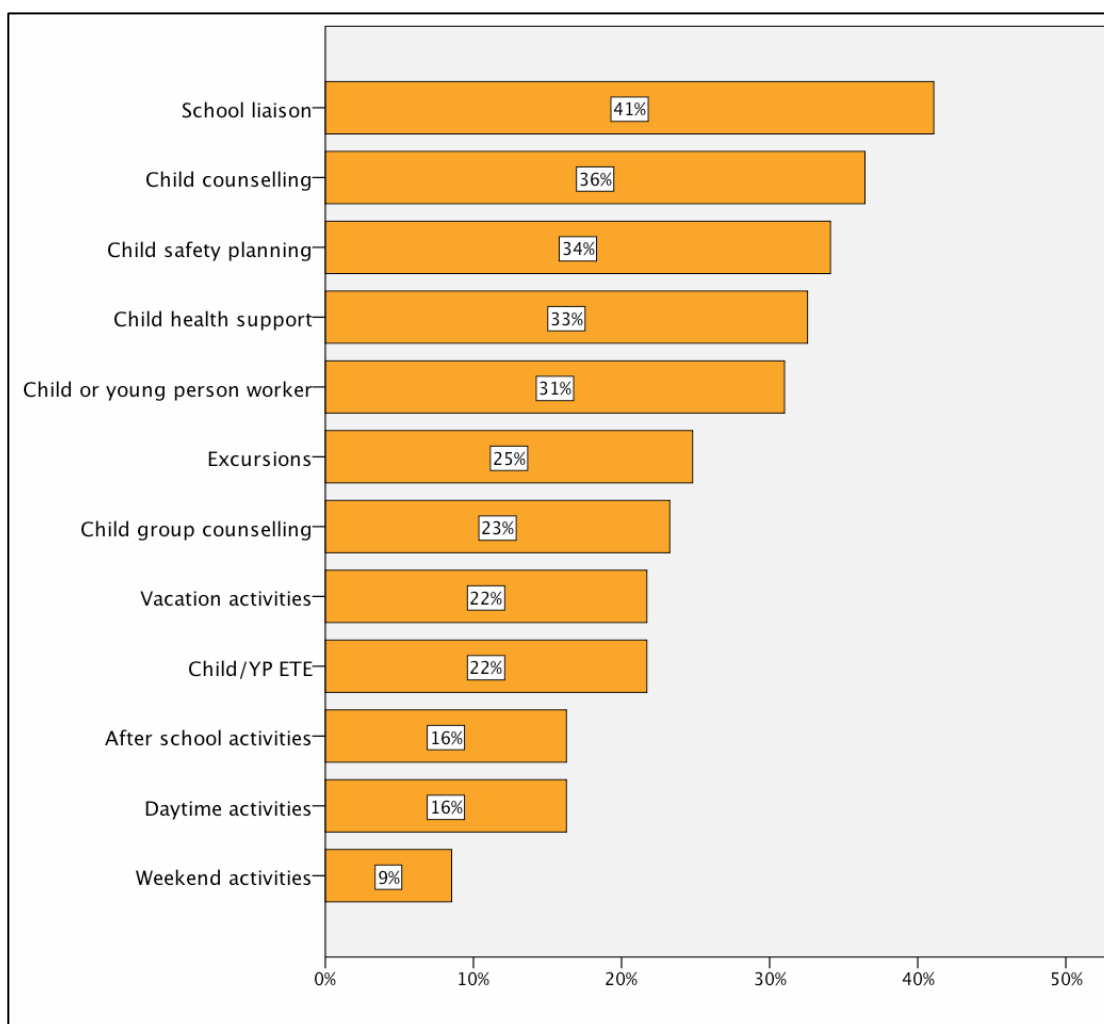
Source: Survey 2 Base: 129 service providers reporting on 226 floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence.

### *Services for children and young people*

4.21 Provision of services for young people and children was less extensive in floating support services than for specialist accommodation based services (see Figure 3.1). Under 50 per cent of service providers reported that their

services had any functions specifically related to children. The most commonly provided service was school liaison reported by 41 per cent of service providers responding to Survey 2 (Figure 4.2). One-third of service providers reported that their service or services had a child or young person's worker (33%, Figure 4.2), this contrasted with 75 per cent of specialist accommodation based services (see Figure 3.1).

**Figure 4.2: Support services provided by floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence**



Source: Survey 2 Base: 129 service providers reporting on 226 floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence.

### **QUALITATIVE WORK: SERVICES PROVIDED BY FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICES**

4.22 Service providers stressed the importance of floating support services for households who could not or did not want to access refuge or other specialist accommodation based provision. These services were also seen as crucial in terms of early preventative work including providing assistance into accommodation services, and helping households to live independently

following a stay in a refuge and a move to new housing. In short, if they worked well, they could be flexible to households' needs.

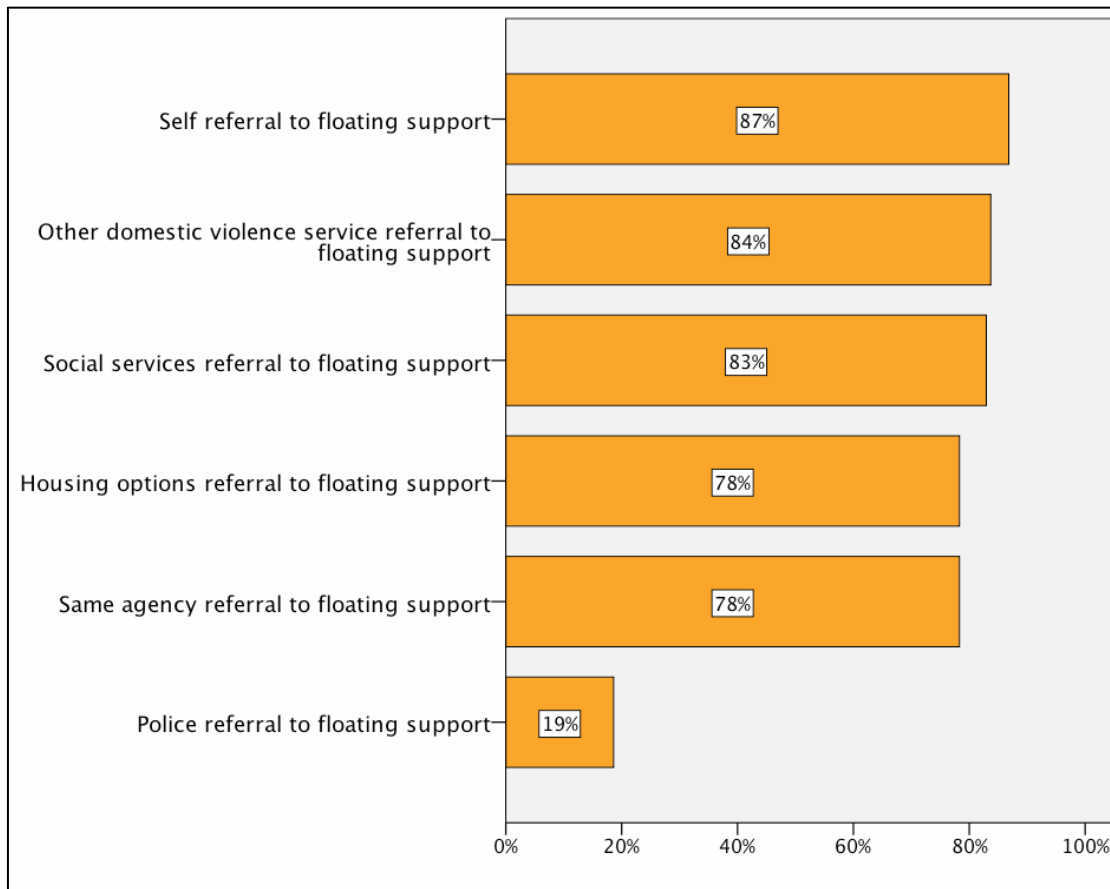
- 4.23 Providers highlighted the varying needs of women in terms of how long they needed support following experiencing domestic violence. Whilst some women required quite limited support, it was clear that others required ongoing support for a considerable period of time. For them this was often the beginning of a long process of feeling confident and safe living in their (often new) home and (often new) community. One provider explained that they provided up to two years floating support to people leaving their specialist accommodation as well as to people in the community. Importantly, the availability of long-term support was seen as crucial in terms of reducing any future risk of experiencing domestic violence, whether via reconciliation with a former partner, or within the context of a new relationship.
- 4.24 As highlighted in Chapter 3, it was stressed that floating support needed to provide a comprehensive range of support to both women and children. Some providers felt that the nature of support needed was much broader than that specified under existing contracts (before the Supporting People ringfence was removed), i.e. that a service had to be very flexible in the range of activities it undertook, sometimes extending well beyond 'housing related' support.

#### **Service accessibility**

- 4.25 Figure 4.3 shows the referral sources for floating support services for households at risk at domestic violence. Self referral was the most common (87% of services), followed very closely by referrals from other domestic violence services (84%; including help lines and independent domestic violence advisor services where present) and referral from social services departments (83%). Housing options referrals (from local authority homeless prevention teams) were also very common (78%). In contrast, only 19 per cent of services reported receiving referrals from the police.
- 4.26 'Same agency' referrals were also common (78%), this meant that another service run by the same provider had made the referral to floating support. Thus a refuge, help line, or other service run by the same organisation was often a source of referral to floating support services.



**Figure 4.3: Referral sources for floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence**



Source: Survey 2 Base: 129 service providers reporting on 226 floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence.

#### **FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE AT RISK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THAT WORKED WITH SPECIFIC GROUPS OF HOUSEHOLDS**

- 4.27 Most floating support services were described as working with women and/or women with children (86%) and as not accessible to men. However, a few services worked with both men and women (3%) with the same proportion of services being focused solely on lone women (3%). A small number of services were focused on supporting women with children only (8%)<sup>40</sup>.
- 4.28 Table 4.5 shows the distribution of floating support services for specific groups. Twenty-six specialist floating support services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups were mapped. Most of these black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services operated in the West Midlands (seven services) and London (nine services). Three regions did not appear to have specialist services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups (North East, East of England and South West). Specialist provision for black, Asian,

<sup>40</sup> This seems to have been linked to services having been developed with an initial, or ongoing, focus on children in households at risk of domestic violence.

minority ethnic and refugee groups was very heavily concentrated in more urban areas<sup>41</sup> (93% of services).

- 4.29 A number of services were mapped as having a secondary function that focused on client groups other than households at risk of domestic violence. This was most commonly homeless families with support needs (10% of services nationally, at the highest level in the East of England at 20 per cent, Table 4.5). A smaller number of services had a secondary function to support households with multiple needs (9% of services nationally).

**Table 4.5: The extent of specialisation in floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence in each region**

Region	Total services	Of which black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services	Of which had secondary function for homeless families with support needs	Of which had secondary function for households with multiple needs
North East	18	0	1	1
North West	39	3	0	5
Yorkshire and The Humber	33	3	6	2
East Midlands	49	2	6	6
West Midlands	31	7	2	4
East of England	25	0	5	1
London	44	9	7	4
South East	39	2	0	3
South West	23	0	2	2
Total	301	26	29	28

Source: Mapping exercise. Percentages are rounded.

#### **HOUSEHOLDS WHICH SOMETIMES COULD NOT BE ASSISTED**

- 4.30 Floating support services can potentially be quite flexible in who they work with. For example, the presence of male children over a certain age in a household, while it may be a practical barrier to some specialist accommodation services, may not be as much of an issue for floating support services. Some aspects of risk management can become easier in this context, for example the potential for different households not to get along in a shared space is not an issue in the way it might be in a refuge (see Chapter 3). For example, someone with a history of mental health problems or anti-social behaviour might be easier to manage and support in their own home than in the shared environment of some specialist accommodation. However, more specialist accommodation services use self contained units on a shared

<sup>41</sup> i.e. areas in which less than 30% of the population was rural according to DEFRA Rural Measure.

site, rather than shared accommodation, than was once the case (see Chapter 3). There is also an argument that some high risk households and individuals are better managed in specialist accommodation services which have on-site, 24 hour staffing.

- 4.31 Table 4.6 shows the range of needs that floating support services were usually able and not usually able to support, according to Survey 2. Only a minority of services were usually able to support people at risk of domestic violence who were exhibiting anti-social behaviour (27%), while most were not usually able to do so (73%, Table 4.5). People at risk of domestic violence with mental health problems or substance misuse problems were also only reported as groups that could ‘usually’ be supported by a minority of service providers (37% and 41%, Table 4.5).

**Table 4.6: Households with specific needs that floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence were able to support**

Type of support needs	Proportion of floating support services usually able to support this group	Proportion of floating support services not usually able to support this group
People with mental health problems	37%	63%
People with substance misuse issues	41%	59%
People exhibiting anti-social behaviour	27%	73%

Source: Survey 2 Base: 129 service providers reporting on 226 floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence.

- 4.32 Floating support services were much less likely than specialist accommodation services to exclude households on the basis of their being assessed as ‘high risk’<sup>42</sup> (see Chapter 3). Only 4 per cent of floating support services described in Survey 2 had a ‘blanket’ policy meaning they never worked with any potentially ‘high risk’ households. This was in marked contrast to specialist accommodation based services, only 35 per cent of which assessed risk on a case by case basis, with a majority reporting they would not work with high risk households (Table 3.7). However, as was the case for specialist accommodation based services, case by case risk assessment of households would often still have occurred in floating support services to try to ensure worker safety.
- 4.33 As was noted in Chapter 3, the overall characteristics of households at risk of domestic violence need to be considered when assessing these findings. There is evidence, from surveys of households in the statutory homelessness system indicating that many households at risk of domestic violence may not necessarily have high support needs (Pleace *et al*, 2008). Work in Scotland

<sup>42</sup> There is no set definition of ‘high risk’, this is because different service providers have different risk assessment mechanisms. In general terms, ‘high risk’ households includes those where a domestic violence perpetrator is still present or proximate and actively causing harm or a household that represents a high risk of harm to itself and/or to others.

with refuge providers has indicated a more mixed picture, with some evidence of high support needs, particularly in respect of substance misuse and mental health problems, but still reported that high support needs were far from universal (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2003).

- 4.34 As was the case with specialist accommodation based services, only a minority of floating support services were reported as usually able to assist households with no recourse to public funds (27%).

#### **QUALITATIVE WORK: SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY**

- 4.35 Service providers and national stakeholders who were interviewed for the research took the view that floating support services had fewer barriers to access than specialist accommodation services. Floating support services were viewed as able to work with people at risk of violence, who, because of a number of reasons ranging from household size, the presence of male children over a certain age or a specific support need, might be difficult to support in shared specialist accommodation.
- 4.36 Some concerns were expressed that the range of support specified in contracts, which were within the Supporting People framework, was too narrow. Service providers and national stakeholders involved in floating support services delivery wanted more flexibility in the scope and extent of support they could offer. However, this finding has to be seen in the light of the planned removal of the Supporting People ringfence. Since Supporting People was introduced in 2003, funding arrangements have become increasingly flexible in terms of the range of services that can be funded and with the removal of the ringfence around the Supporting People budget, this flexibility will increase still further<sup>43</sup>. These changes to funding meant that groups like 16-17 year-olds, larger families and people without recourse to public funds at risk of domestic violence could potentially be supported in future.
- 4.37 Although subject to the provision of suitably adapted and equipped housing, floating support services were also regarded as potentially more suitable for disabled people at risk of domestic violence. This was because they did not require a disabled person to move to a specialist accommodation service that might not be suitably adapted for their specific needs.
- 4.38 Providers did however raise a possible barrier to access (or at least use of services) for many households who were working. Most services typically operated on a 9 to 5 basis and this meant it might be difficult for working people at risk of domestic violence to engage with floating support services.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/supportingpeoplefunding.pdf>

## Service effectiveness

### MEETING SERVICE USERS' NEEDS

- 4.39 Overall, 47 per cent of service providers reported that their floating support services met service users' needs 'very well'. Just over two-fifths of providers (43%) reported that their floating support services met needs 'quite well' and only one tenth reported 'mixed success' (10%, Table 4.7). No service providers reported that services did not meet needs 'very well' or 'not at all well'.

**Table 4.7: Service providers' assessment of how well their floating support services met the needs of households at risk of domestic violence**

Assessment of how well the needs of service users were met	Number of service providers	Percentage
Very well	58	47%
Quite well	53	43%
Mixed success	12	10%
Total	123	100%

Source: Survey 2. Base: 123 service providers reporting on 218 services (six service providers did answer this question). Percentages are rounded.

- 4.40 Where floating support services were viewed as meeting needs very well, this was linked to respondents to Survey 2 expressing the view that they could provide a wide ranging and flexible service that was individually assessed. In addition, good coordination with other services was widely viewed as important to achieving positive outcomes.

*The service operates a support planning system to enable women to identify and receive the support best suited to their needs. The service is responsive to the emotional needs alongside the practical needs and provides ongoing activities to enable women to access other women who have suffered with abuse. [We use] comments cards and feedback is very positive (Written response to Survey 2).*

*Experienced, trained team, established 15 years, working in close partnership with other DA agencies and groups, e.g. Women's Aid, MARAC, Social Care, Health (Written response to Survey 2).*

- 4.41 Written responses from service providers to Survey 2 drew attention to two factors that limited floating support service effectiveness. The first was the capacity of the services to respond to risk. There were times when floating support services had to stop support because risks became unacceptable for workers, mainly due to the presence of a domestic violence perpetrator. The second factor identified as sometimes compromising service effectiveness was the effect of financial constraints.

*While we endeavour to support the family throughout the time that they wish us to be involved, we still have to look and monitor the risk to us if we are supporting victims that wish to remain with the abuser.*

*There will be times that it is not deemed safe for us to continue our role and, if after the situation has been assessed, it is felt that there is a real danger to ourselves and other support agencies we would with regret have to pull our support out, stressing that if situations change we will always be there to try and help in any way that is safe to do so (Written response to Survey 2).*

*Resources are limited which means we are not always able to support our users adequately (Written response to Survey 2).*

#### **QUALITATIVE WORK: SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS**

- 4.42 Service providers measured the effectiveness of floating support services in terms of how well they could support households with a wide range of effects of the domestic violence, not only of physical violence but also of other types of abuse, for example financial abuse which means that a household may have debts that have been accrued by the perpetrator. There is also a huge need to build up people's self confidence which hopefully then means they are less likely to return to an abusive relationship.

*There is a need for a holistic approach. So not enough to offer accommodation, also need to help furnish the place, and to show people where to start to look for help, tackling low self esteem, self worth and so on. When we see women going back to abusive relationships, part of that is agencies thinking their role ends by providing somewhere else to live. I would argue that that is just where we start.... It's no good saying there's your new flat you're out of your abusive relationship. Good luck. This is about long term recovery (Service provider).*

#### **The adequacy of floating support service provision for households at risk of domestic violence**

##### **THE NEED FOR SERVICES**

- 4.43 Survey 2 indicated that some households at risk of domestic violence were being turned away from services because floating support services lacked capacity to accommodate them. One in five service providers responding to Survey 2 reported that their floating support services were 'frequently' unable to support households at risk of domestic violence for resource reasons (20%). Another 44 per cent reported that their services were 'occasionally' unable to support households for resource reasons. Overall, three out of five service providers reported being at least occasionally unable to support households at risk of domestic violence for resource reasons (64%).
- 4.44 No specific effects were associated with particular regions. It was no more likely that floating support services in London or the North East, for example, would report turning households away for resource reasons.

- 4.45 Service providers had mixed views on the extent to which their floating support services were able to meet need from households at risk of domestic violence. Overall, under one-third of service providers reported that the need for floating support services was met ‘very well’ (30%, Table 4.8), with another 46 per cent reporting that need was met ‘quite well’.

**Table 4.8: Service providers’ assessment of how well their floating support services met demand**

Assessment of how well needs met	Number of service providers	Percentage
Very well	37	30%
Quite well	56	46%
Mixed success	24	20%
Not very well	5	4%
Not at all well	1	1%
Total	123	100%

Source: Survey 2. Base: 123 service providers reporting on 218 services (6 service providers did answer this question). Percentages are rounded.

- 4.46 When service providers reported that they were able to meet demands very well, this was linked to a capacity to respond rapidly when households at risk of domestic violence were referred. In essence, those service providers that reported demand was most effectively met by their services reported either being adequately or well resourced.

*We have to refer to other agencies only on very rare occasions and when this happened previously we recorded dates and used it to secure a further contract for two more staff members, we normally achieve seeing all user within 48 hrs (Written response to Survey 2).*

*We are able to accept the majority of referrals to the services (Written response to Survey 2).*

- 4.47 Reports of more limited success in meeting need were, equally, associated with resource levels. Service providers reporting demand was not being very well met, or not being met, all tended to report that they could not support all the households that were referred to them.

*We are always full to capacity and have a waiting list (Written response to Survey 2).*

*Demand for service is more than currently funded to provide (Written response to Survey 2).*

- 4.48 Just under one-half of local authorities that responded to Survey 1 reported a need to expand the level of floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence (47%, Table 4.9). A further 40 per cent reported no change to existing provision being required. It was unusual for authorities to report a need to reduce existing service provision. One in ten authorities reported that

they ‘did not know’ whether there was a need to change provision (10%, Table 4.9).

**Table 4.9: Local authority views on whether any change in floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence was required in their area (Survey 1)**

View on level of service provision	Number of authorities <sup>1</sup>	Percentage
Expand	74	47%
No change required	62	40%
Reduce	4	3%
Do not know	16	10%
Total	156	100%

Source: Survey 1. Base: 156 responding local authorities (36 authorities did not answer this question). Percentages are rounded.

<sup>1</sup> Please see Chapter 1 and Appendix 1 for an explanation of the sample for Survey 1.

- 4.49 There was no significant association with the extent of the rural population in authorities or the region in which they were located and reported need to expand floating support services. There was however some association with local authority type, with London boroughs being more likely to report a need to increase provision (77% of boroughs, compared to 47% of authorities overall). Statistical tests did not indicate a significant relationship between rates of provision (places per ten thousand population, see Map 4.1) and a reported need to expand floating support services.
- 4.50 Local authorities, who reported that local needs for floating support services were not well met in Survey 1, were also more likely to report a need for additional floating support (60% compared to 45% of other authorities). While this finding, that authorities that perceived a shortfall in service provision wanted to commission more services, might not be regarded as surprising, it did contrast with the findings of Survey 1 on specialist accommodation services. Local authorities’ perception on whether more specialist accommodation services should be commissioned was not significantly related to a perception that need for those services was not well met (see Chapter 3).
- 4.51 Overall, 68 per cent of service providers responding to Survey 2 reported a need to expand floating support service provision. There was no statistically significant difference between service providers that were active in floating support service provision and those which were not active. Seventy-one per cent of service providers delivering floating support services reported a need for expansion, compared to 65 per cent of service providers that were not active in this area.



## **QUALITATIVE WORK: ADEQUACY OF SERVICE PROVISION**

- 4.52 Concerns about the adequacy of floating support service provision among service providers and national stakeholders interviewed for the research were linked to resource levels. Issues were felt to exist both in respect of the range and extent of services that could be provided and also in respect of general access to floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence. This was consistent with the results of Survey 2.

*... the lack of outreach is a problem. The vast majority of women don't get to a refuge, or access any kind of support. Where services are reconfigured from outreach to floating support what gets offered is practical support around housing issues, but often agencies have lost funding for outreach. This is damaging for the kind of work they were doing to get women to engage with services in the first place. And also important to make sure they are not returning back to violence.... what is missing is a holistic and long term approach, making sure a woman can access support all along the way (Service provider).*

### **Floating support services with a secondary domestic violence function**

- 4.53 The mapping exercise did not show that there was extensive provision of floating support services which had households at risk of domestic violence as a secondary user group. A total of 47 such services were mapped, almost all of which were targeted primarily at homeless families with support needs (98%). Collectively, these services had the capacity to support 818 households at any one time, an average of 17 households per service.
- 4.54 Provision of these services was similar to the number of floating support services with a primary domestic violence function that also supported other households as a secondary client group. These services were not found to be concentrated in specific regions, nor was provision associated with the extent to which an authority was rural, relative deprivation or other demographic factors. The presence or absence of these services did not appear to influence the presence or absence of dedicated floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence, suggesting a limited relationship between this form of provision and dedicated support.
- 4.55 As a result of the low numbers of these services being identified via the mapping exercise, service providers responding to Survey 2 were very unlikely to be providing a floating support service where households at risk of domestic violence were the secondary client group. As only very few service providers surveyed were active in this area of service provision, there was not sufficient data to report any findings that had any statistical validity. This

appears to have reflected the focus of Survey 2 on service providers actively involved in domestic violence service provision<sup>44</sup>.

- 4.56 A high proportion of homeless families have experience of domestic violence, and research on support services for homeless families with support needs has shown these services routinely dealing with domestic violence issues (Jones *et al*, 2002). However, these services are also dealing with issues such as substance misuse and anti-social behaviour. This means they are designed in part to deal with challenges to homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment that come from the needs and behaviour of families that are not necessarily related to domestic violence. Again, the extent to which services that, while dealing in part with the consequences of domestic violence, are also dealing with other needs and issues, can meet the needs of households at risk of domestic violence may be variable.

### **Conclusions**

- 4.57 Floating support services were widely available in England. While floating support services were, with some exceptions, relatively more extensive in rural areas, provision in urban areas was still widespread. There was evidence that the range and extent of support provided by these services had close parallels with the support offered by specialist housing support services (see Chapter 3). The greater accessibility of these services, to households who might not be well suited to a shared living situation in a specialist housing services was widely noted. However, this needs to be considered alongside the capacity of floating support to manage some forms of risk. Views on service effectiveness were fairly positive, but it was quite widely reported that service provision needed to be more extensive and that resource limitations were an issue.

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<sup>44</sup> Only service providers that were listed as providing any form of accommodation related service for households at risk of domestic violence were asked to complete Survey 2. See Chapter 1 and Appendix 1 for details of sampling methodology.

## 5 Access to settled housing

### Key points

- Housing advice is available for households at risk of domestic violence from a number of sources, including local authority housing option teams, specialist domestic violence centres and national and local domestic violence helplines.
- Twenty-eight per cent of service providers directly employed one or more independent domestic violence advisors, and a further 25 per cent stated they received support from one or more independent domestic violence advisors. Twenty-one per cent of all service providers had access to an independent domestic violence advisor that provided assistance with accommodation issues as one of a number of main roles.
- Just over half of local authorities (53%) reported that information provision was 'very good' or 'quite good' in their area. A similar proportion (47%) reported that information provision was 'not very good', 'quite poor' or 'very poor'.
- The majority (78%) of local authority respondents to Survey 1 reported that they had a published directory of domestic violence services in place.
- Service users explained that they typically had very little information about services available to them and many felt quite strongly that better information should be made available to households at risk of domestic violence.
- The majority of London boroughs and unitary councils had specific policies in place for households at risk of domestic violence on their housing registers and in their transfer policies; however this was the case for only a minority of district councils.
- Modifications to choice based lettings systems for households at risk of domestic violence were in place in 40-50 per cent of local authorities.
- Most local authorities (65%) reported that they were 'usually' able to meet the main duty to households at risk of domestic violence within six months of accepting them as homeless and in priority need.
- Eighty-two per cent of local authorities reported that they were usually able to place households at risk of domestic violence owed the main homelessness duty in 'suitable' settled housing, and 71 per cent that these households were usually placed in 'affordable' housing.
- A wide range of temporary accommodation was employed by local authorities to accommodate households until settled housing was found, in particular 64 per cent of authorities reported that they 'frequently' made use of refuges as temporary accommodation.
- As would be expected, authorities in areas facing the biggest pressures on affordable housing supply were the most likely to report there was insufficient

appropriate settled housing for households at risk of domestic violence in their area. Overall, service providers and service users felt that the lack of suitable settled housing for households at risk of domestic violence was a major problem in England.

## **Introduction**

- 5.1 This chapter describes the results of the research in respect of access to settled housing particularly for those households who have to leave accommodation where they are at risk of domestic violence. The provision of safe and settled housing is fundamental to the effective operation of all services for households at risk of domestic violence. Suitable housing needs to be available for people who need to move on from refuge and other accommodation based services. Floating support and outreach services can only effectively help people to maintain their accommodation if that housing is safe and appropriate to people's needs. The operation of sanctuary schemes also require the household to be living in appropriate housing, or even in some cases, to move to new housing.
- 5.2 This chapter begins by outlining the different sources of housing advice available to households at risk of domestic violence. This section also considers the availability of information more generally at a local authority level on services for households at risk of domestic violence.
- 5.3 A second section focuses on the options that may be available to households via general needs allocations procedures, transfer and letting schemes. A third section outlines the specific role of the homelessness legislation in securing accommodation for households who are homeless as a result of escaping domestic violence.
- 5.4 The final section considers housing supply issues more generally. Whilst the first three sections of the chapter focus mainly on local authority responses to assist households at risk of domestic violence to access settled housing, this final section looks more broadly across different housing tenures and options.

## **Housing advice services and related information for households at risk of domestic violence**

### **HOUSING ADVICE**

- 5.5 This section explores housing advice services and related information sources that enable households at risk of domestic violence to access appropriate accommodation and housing related services to meet their needs. Any effective housing advice service should have the capacity to inform households about the full range of available housing options, including accommodation based support, floating support services and sanctuary schemes.
- 5.6 Most local authorities now operate a 'housing options' service which aim to assist any household with a housing issue through sign-posting to other

appropriate agencies (for example, specialist domestic violence accommodation and support providers; private rented lettings agencies) as well as direct assistance in accessing social housing or with making a homelessness application. One of the key roles of housing options is to prevent homelessness, including through specialist services such as sanctuary schemes.

- 5.7 All housing authorities must ensure that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is available free to everyone in their district. Housing authorities can either directly operate or actively support one or more general housing advice services in their area. These services will try and provide assistance to anyone with a housing issue. Whilst they may not have any specialist workers for domestic violence, they should be accessible to households at risk of domestic violence.
- 5.8 Government guidance acknowledges that households at risk of domestic violence may value a 'one-stop' service which provides assistance with the full range of issues that they may be facing (including advocacy, ongoing support and negotiation with other agencies) (ODPM, 2002). Specialist domestic violence advice centres are provided in many areas, often as a result of a consortium arrangement between statutory agencies and specialist domestic violence and women's sector services. These centres will normally be able to offer housing advice to households at risk of domestic violence as part of a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the household.
- 5.9 It is also important to note that national domestic violence help-lines on domestic violence can also provide a key role in providing information on housing alongside a wide range of support issues for households at risk of domestic violence. Specialist helplines include:
- The 24 hour freephone National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Refuge and Women's Aid. This has received over 600,000 calls since it was set up in December 2003, with about 50,000 women being referred or self referred into refuge and other emergency safe accommodation over this period ((HM Government, 2009a).
  - The Broken Rainbow helpline set up in 2002 for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people affected by domestic violence.
  - In April 2008, with funding from the Forced Marriage Unit, an Honour Network helpline was set up by Karma Nirvana for survivors of 'honour' based violence and forced marriage. Between 11 April 2008 and 31 March, the helpline received almost 4,000 calls.  
(<http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk/>).
  - A Men's Advice Line for men experiencing domestic violence has recently been set up by Respect, as well as a separate helpline (called Respect) for men who are perpetrators.
- 5.10 The mapping exercise (see Chapter 1 and Appendix 1) did not attempt to map the full range of housing advice services or specialist domestic violence

services, nor assess the extent to which they were able to meet the housing needs of households at risk of domestic violence. Similarly, it was not possible to collate information on all services that had both an expertise in housing advice and domestic violence<sup>45</sup>. However, Survey 2 asked service providers about their access to independent domestic violence advisors and the extent to which this specialist service was able to provide specific housing advice or other help with accommodation issues. Twenty-eight per cent of service providers directly employed one or more independent domestic violence advisor, whilst 25 per cent stated that they received support from one or more independent domestic violence advisors. Nearly half (47%) stated that they did not have access to an independent domestic violence advisor service. Table 5.1 shows that 21 per cent of all service providers in Survey 2 had access to an independent domestic violence advisor that provided ‘assistance with accommodation issues as one of a number of main roles’. A further 12 per cent of providers stated that an independent domestic violence advisor provided accommodation assistance as ‘a minor part of their role’.

**Table 5.1: Service provider’s views on the extent to which IDVAs<sup>1</sup> that supported them were able to provide housing advice or other help with accommodation issues**

Extent of assistance with accommodation issues	Number of service providers	Percentage
Assistance with accommodation one of a number of main roles	52	21%
Assistance with accommodation is a minor part of the role	29	12%
Assistance with accommodation is not provided	13	5%
Varies between different IDVAs	18	7%
No data on IDVA housing role	17	7%
No IDVA service	115	47%
Total	244	100%

**Source:** Survey 2. Percentages are rounded. <sup>1</sup> Independent Domestic Violence Advisor, includes directly employed IDVAs and access to IDVAs employed elsewhere

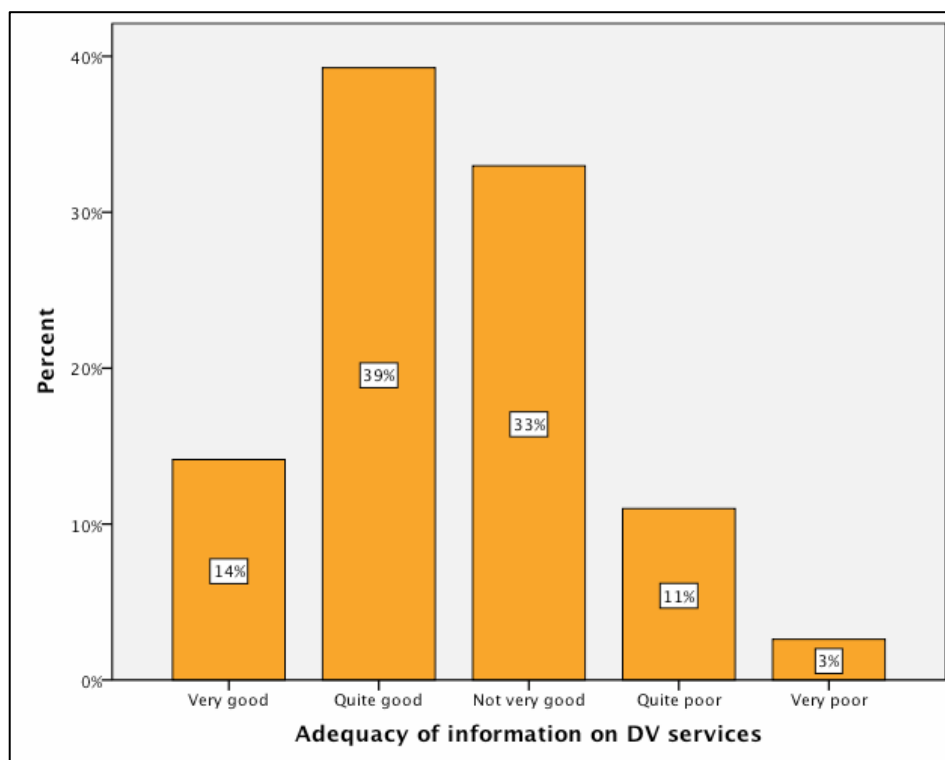
## THE ADEQUACY OF ACCOMMODATION RELATED INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- 5.11 Information on housing and support options for households at risk of domestic violence can be delivered via specialist housing or domestic violence advice services, as well as via other routes for example ensuring that appropriate information is accessible in GP surgeries and other community facilities. Local authorities (Survey 1) were asked to rate the extent to which ‘adequate information was available for people at risk of domestic violence on their accommodation and support options’ in their area. Just over half of responding authorities (53%) reported that information provision was ‘very

<sup>45</sup> This would have required a separate specialist survey as housing advice centres are likely to have varying degrees of expertise in domestic violence; similarly domestic violence providers will have varying degrees of expertise in housing advice and it would therefore be difficult to define a ‘domestic violence housing advice service’.

good' or 'quite good'. A similar proportion (47%) reported that information provision was 'not very good', 'quite poor' or 'very poor' (Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1: Local authority ratings of the quality of information available on accommodation and support options for people at risk of domestic violence in their area.**



Source: Survey 1. Base=191 authorities.

- 5.12 Local authorities that reported that overall service provision for households at risk of domestic violence was 'very good' or 'quite good' in their area (see Chapter 6) were more likely to state that the information available in the area was good than authorities which did not rate overall service provision very highly. Among the authorities rating overall provision of accommodation related domestic violence services as 'good or quite good', 68 per cent also rated information provision highly. By contrast, only 40 per cent of authorities reporting lower quality service provision rated information provision highly. This association is perhaps not surprising, it would be expected that information and advice provision would be stronger in areas where overall service provision was more highly rated.
- 5.13 Rural authorities were less likely to report that information provision was good<sup>46</sup> than urban authorities (39% compared to 68%). There was also evidence that more deprived areas were also less likely to report good quality information provision (50% of the 40 responding authorities in the most deprived quartile, compared to 30% of other authorities).

<sup>46</sup> i.e. not very good, quite poor or very poor (Figure 5.1)

- 5.14 In recognition of the importance of the availability of good quality information on services at the local level, until recently, the Government’s best value performance indicator 225 on domestic violence collected information on whether a local authority had produced a directory of local services for households at risk of domestic violence<sup>47</sup>. The majority (78%) of local authority respondents to Survey 1 reported that they had a published directory of domestic violence services in place. A small percentage reported that a directory was in preparation (10%) (Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2: Whether a local authority area had a published directory of domestic violence services**

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	143	78%
No	21	12%
Being prepared	19	10%
Base	183	100%

Source: Survey 1. Seven local authorities did not respond to this question. Percentages are rounded.

- 5.15 Whilst London boroughs (90%) and unitary authorities (96%) were overall the most likely to report that there was a published directory of services for their area, no statistically significant associations were found between the availability of a directory of services and type of local authority (by level of rurality, population size, deprivation etc). There was also no statistical relationship found between the overall levels of accommodation related service provision for households at risk of domestic violence within a local authority area (see Chapter 6) and the presence of a published directory. These findings, alongside those on the overall adequacy of information above, suggests that the presence of a local directory of services alone is not sufficient to ensure that good information is available for households at risk of domestic violence in an area.
- 5.16 Service providers (Survey 2) were asked whether a lack of proper ‘housing advice’ represented a problem in meeting the needs of households at risk of domestic violence in their area. The service providers were quite unlikely to identify this as a ‘frequent’ problem, but they were quite likely to report that it was ‘sometimes’ a problem (Table 5.3). It was not possible to cross-compare the views of service providers with local authorities in respect of information provision, as service providers often worked across a larger area than a single local authority (see below, chapter 3 and chapter 4).

<sup>47</sup> In 2008, BVPIs (and all other existing sets of indicators) were replaced by the national indicator set.



**Table 5.3: Whether a lack of housing advice services created operational problems for service providers**

Response	Number	Percentage
Frequently	33	16%
Sometimes	72	35%
Rarely	103	50%
Base	208	100%

Source: Survey 2. Forty-eight service providers reported they 'did not know' the answer to this question or omitted to answer it. Percentages are rounded.

### QUALITATIVE WORK: INFORMATION PROVISION

- 5.17 Service providers were concerned that information was not easily accessible to households at risk of domestic violence. Their experience was that often women were passed from agency to agency (or to different departments in statutory agencies) before finding their way to a specialist domestic violence service.

*A lot of women who access our refuges they tell us the most horrendous stories of their first port of call of the local housing office, they have to go round so many different departments or were referred to an inappropriate agency before they accessed refuge help, and some women go through months and months of further abuse before they finally are given a simple domestic violence helpline number....(Service provider)*

- 5.18 Research has indicated that women on average contact 11 agencies before they get the help they need (and this rises to 17 agencies for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee women) (Walby and Allen, 2004). Service users interviewed described quite complex and varied routes into services. Many approached the local council for assistance in the first instance (explaining that was the only place they could think of to approach) and appeared to have received mixed responses. In most cases, people were referred onto other specialist domestic violence and/or specialist community groups by the local authority. A number of people explained that they had confided in health professionals or children's services (including health visitors, SureStart and GPs), whilst others had contacted the police initially receiving very varying responses. Others relied on more informal resources including friends who had experienced similar situations. Some were referred to the national domestic violence helpline (see earlier in this chapter), others directly to refuges. A number of these themes were also documented by service users in the recent research for the *Violence against Women and Girls* strategy (Women's National Commission, 2009).
- 5.19 Service users explained that they typically had very little information about services available to them and many felt quite strongly that better information should be made available to households at risk of domestic violence, so that other women did not have to cope with violence for longer than was

necessary. They explained that they needed clear information which included contact points/helplines as well as some information on the nature of services. Some service users explained that they had been unsure about the nature of the assistance they might receive and this had made them hesitate or delay approaching services until a crisis situation. For example, some women did not know whether they were likely to be referred to women only provision and many were very apprehensive about the possibility of sharing with men or other homeless people who may themselves be facing a range of difficulties.

*...You really imagine the worst, you don't know what they [refugees] are like. (Service user)*

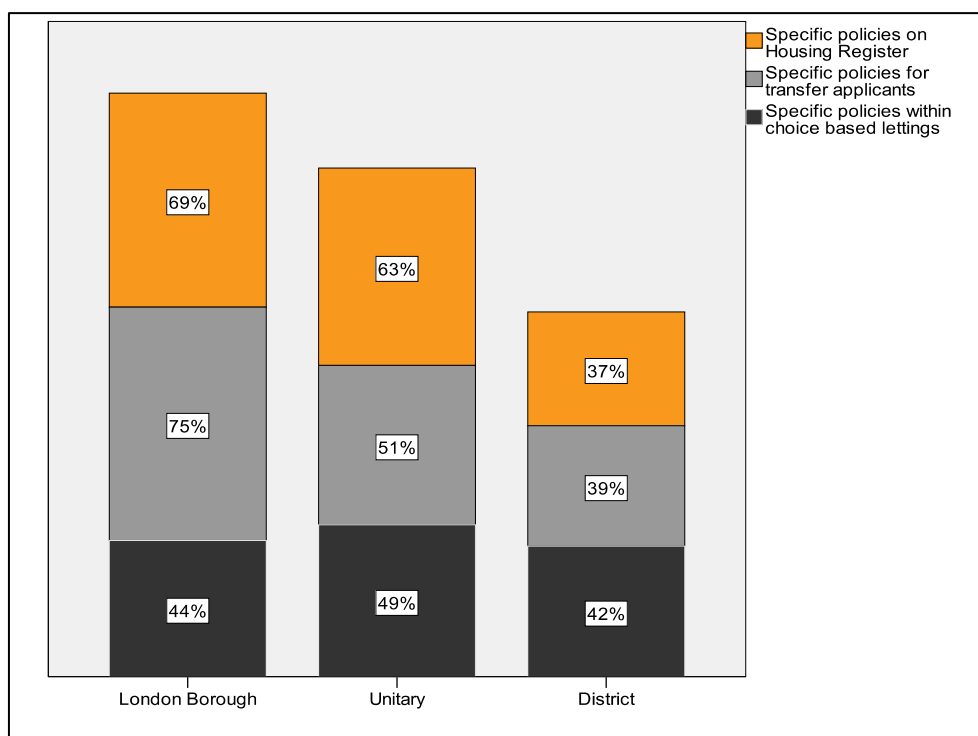
- 5.20 It was particularly important that information was provided to people on how to access support outside of their local authority (or at least geographically distant from their present home). Some women had to move to a different part of the country to be safe. This was particularly the case for a number of the black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee respondents who explained that they were escaping their family and community networks as well as their partner as these wider networks wanted the couple to stay together irrespective of the violence being experienced by the women, or in some cases, violence was also experienced from people other than the partner.
- 5.21 Language proved a significant barrier for some black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee women in accessing adequate information. People with no recourse to public funds were particularly vulnerable and felt reliant on informal sources of help. This could result in people moving from one abusive situation to another. For example, one woman was invited to stay with a friend but in return she was expected to be an unpaid carer for the friend's disabled son. This woman was later expected to marry the son, only at this point did she manage to escape this situation.
- 5.22 Echoing the conclusion reached by the Violence against Women and Girls review (HM Government, 2009b), some women spoke about the stigma and shame that can be associated with domestic violence and suggested that wider information was needed on seeking assistance for this reason:
- R1: Domestic violence is something to be ashamed of in public.*
- R2: ...it's like, how did you end up with him, well I didn't meet him and he punched me in the face...*
- R3: ...it's a taboo, it should be advertised, expressed more...(Service users)*
- 5.23 Service users needed information on accommodation or housing related options alongside a wide range of other issues, including access to benefits/ money, advice concerning access to children, immigration or other legal issues. Service providers felt quite strongly that better training was required for front-line staff (including any temporary staff employed) to ensure that women received appropriate information from housing advice and other

advice agencies that they approached. It was suggested that it would be really helpful to have specialist domestic violence workers within the local authority housing option teams, as also suggested as a possible element of appropriate practice in previous Government research (Levison and Kenny, 2002).

### **Modification of local authority lettings and allocations systems**

- 5.24 Survey 1 asked local housing authorities whether they had any specific policies in place for households at risk of domestic violence on local housing registers, transfer lists and/or choice-based letting schemes. These three policies are all key elements of local housing authority allocation systems which attempt to ensure that households can access appropriate housing quickly and fairly.
- 5.25 Most local authorities will operate a housing register for people who wish to become social tenants. Often a 'common housing register' is used which allows households to register their interest in all types of social housing locally (covering both housing association and council housing). Figure 5.2 shows that the majority of London boroughs (69% of boroughs) and unitary councils (63%) had specific policies in place for households at risk of domestic violence on their registers, although only a minority of district councils (37%) had these in place.
- 5.26 Again, local authority housing allocation policies will include a policy on how households may be able to transfer from one property to another. London authorities were also more likely to have specific policies to transfer applicants who were at risk of domestic violence (75% of boroughs, compared to 51% of unitary authorities and 39% of district councils).
- 5.27 Choice based lettings are a relatively new way of allocating social housing where social rented is advertised allowing customers to 'bid' or 'register an interest' in those homes. Not all local authorities have choice based lettings systems in place. One-fifth of unitary and district councils responding to Survey 1 did not possess choice based lettings systems (17% of the London boroughs). Modifications to choice based lettings systems for households at risk of domestic violence were quite widespread but not universal, with between 40-50 per cent of local authorities, irrespective of type, having these systems in place. However, 29 per cent of districts, 14 per cent of unitary councils and 18 per cent of London boroughs with choice based lettings had not modified those systems in respect of households at risk of domestic violence.

**Figure 5.2: Specific allocation and transfer policies in place for households at risk of domestic violence by local authority type.**



Source: Survey 1 Base: 21 London boroughs, 51 unitary and 116 district authorities.

5.28 Modifications to the systems shown in Figure 5.2 all tended to centre on giving an enhanced rating to households at risk of domestic violence. Most commonly, this involved additional ‘points’ on the housing register or within a choice based lettings system, the former giving greater waiting list priority, the latter greater ‘bidding’ power to households at risk of domestic violence. Similarly, the relative priority given to households in transfer arrangements was higher if they were at risk of domestic violence, in those instances where transfer policies had been altered.

### **QUALITATIVE WORK: MODIFICATIONS TO ALLOCATION SYSTEMS**

5.29 Service providers and other key stakeholders at the consultation events were asked about current allocations procedures and the extent to which they met the needs of households at risk of domestic violence. A number of participants felt that local authority transfer policies were not sufficiently developed or utilised to meet the needs of households. The point was made that it should be possible to more easily transfer households from their existing home to another property in the area and ensure that the new tenancy is in the name of the household alone (where it may have been in that of the perpetrator, or joint, previously). Participants also stated that such a policy should exist alongside strengthened policies to evict perpetrators (see Chapter 2) enabling households to either evict the perpetrator or move property, whichever was the best approach for their particular situation.

5.30 Difficulties around gaining sufficient housing priority were also raised in relation to choice based lettings scheme. Service providers felt that

households experiencing domestic violence should be awarded the highest banding in the system (as a matter of policy), with preference over almost any other category of applicant. However, they explained that in reality, a household's priority might change over time which could be very unhelpful. An example was given of a household who had high priority due to the severe nature of the abuse experienced, but when the perpetrator received a custodial sentence, the temporary reduced risk meant that the person was no longer a priority for re-housing and faced the prospect of waiting until the perpetrator was released from prison before regaining priority. This practice was seen as totally inappropriate and left the woman unable to get on with her life effectively.

- 5.31 In contrast, one provider explained how choice based letting appeared to have improved housing options, as had the local authority's proactive procurement of new housing from the private sector:

*In terms of houses for people who move on its really good... a good choice... a couple of years ago it changed to the bidding system, it has made it a lot quicker, a lot more choice and a lot quicker, before we just had to sit and wait for a house but now residents are more active in bidding and offers are coming up a lot quicker for them...[Name] Council have been buying up a lot of new housing that has been built, they have been purchasing large chunks of new housing estates... so a lot of people are getting those.(Service provider)*

### **The role of the statutory homelessness system in meeting the needs of households at risk of domestic violence**

- 5.32 Chapter 1 outlined the role of the statutory homelessness system in providing settled housing for households who are assessed as homeless, in priority need and who are homeless through no fault of their own under the homelessness legislation. This legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) is a safety net for households at risk of domestic violence in England. Several thousand households that have lost their settled housing due to domestic violence are assisted under the terms of the legislation every year. However, Chapter 1 also outlined how levels of statutory homelessness have fallen markedly in recent years. Fewer and fewer households are now accepted as owed the main duty under the legislation following the significant change in emphasis towards homelessness prevention (see Chapter 1 and 2).

### **MEETING THE MAIN HOMELESSNESS DUTY**

- 5.33 Under the present homelessness legislation, local authorities have a 'main homelessness duty' to secure that suitable accommodation is available for occupation by those assessed as homeless, eligible for assistance, in 'priority need' and who are homeless through no fault of their own (this is known as the 'main homelessness duty', see Glossary). In practice, the local authority

must secure suitable temporary accommodation until an offer of ‘settled’ accommodation brings the duty to an end (or some other circumstance ends the duty) (see Chapter 1 for more details).

- 5.34 Local authorities in Survey 1 were asked the extent to which their authority was able to discharge their duty to households as homeless as a result of domestic violence on three measures: within six months of application, in suitable housing, and in affordable housing.
- 5.35 Most local authorities that responded to Survey 1 (65%) reported that they were ‘usually’ able to meet the main duty to households at risk of domestic violence within six months of accepting them as homeless and in priority need. Just over one in five authorities reported they were ‘sometimes’ able to do this (21%), with a smaller number (14%) reporting they were ‘rarely or never’ able to meet the main duty within six months.
- 5.36 Table 5.2 summarises the extent to which authorities responding to Survey 1 were able to meet the main duty to homeless households by the measure of housing affordability. Local authority capacity to meet this measure was reduced in areas of higher housing stress.

**Table 5.4 Local authority self reported capacity to meet the main duty to homeless households by average and median affordability of owner occupation in 2008<sup>1</sup> (Survey 1)**

Able to meet duty within 6 months	Number of authorities <sup>2</sup>	Average affordability	Median affordability
Rarely or never	25	8.9	9.2
Sometimes	38	9.4	9.3
Usually	118	7.7	7.7
Total	181	8.2	8.3

Source: Survey 1 and Wilcox 2008. Base: 181 responding local authorities. Percentages are rounded.

<sup>1</sup> How much the cheapest 25% of owner occupied housing is expressed in terms of the gross incomes of the lowest 25% of earners in an area. For example, if a household earned £20,000 before tax and the lowest house prices in an area started at £120,000, this ratio would be 6 (£120,000 is six times the household’s gross salary). Where this ratio is highest, pressure on the social rented stock and on the affordable submarket in the private rented sector also tends to be highest (see Bramley *et al*, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Please see Chapter 1 and Appendix 1 for an explanation of the sample for Survey 1.

- 5.37 London boroughs, which face the highest levels of housing stress, reported that they were ‘rarely or never’ able to meet their duty within six months at twice the rate of authorities overall (33% compared to 14%). Another 50 per cent of London boroughs reported that they were ‘sometimes’ able to meet their duty (83% of responding London authorities reported that they were not ‘usually’ able to meet their duty within six months<sup>48</sup>).
- 5.38 Multivariate analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between the ability to meet the duty within six months and demographic

<sup>48</sup> Base: 21 London boroughs (63% of London authorities).

factors, local authority type, the extent to which an authority was rural or relative deprivation. The only significant association was with relative housing supply. These findings are in line with those of previous research and recent housing needs projection estimates produced for DCLG (Bramley *et al*, forthcoming).

- 5.39 Overall, 60 per cent of authorities responding to Survey 1 reported that there was not sufficient suitable permanent housing available for homeless households at risk of domestic violence in their area<sup>49</sup>. London authorities were the least likely to report sufficient permanent housing supply (89% reported insufficient housing supply)<sup>50</sup>.
- 5.40 Eighty-two per cent of local authorities responding to Survey 1 reported that they were usually able to place statutorily homeless households at risk of domestic violence in 'suitable' settled housing, and 71 per cent that these households were usually placed in 'affordable' housing<sup>51</sup>. London boroughs were less likely to report these successful outcomes (61% reported being able to usually place households in 'suitable' housing, 42% in 'affordable' housing<sup>52</sup>).

#### **USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR STATUTORILY HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS AT RISK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

- 5.41 Local authorities in Survey 1 were asked whether they considered there was a sufficient amount of appropriate temporary accommodation in their area for households at risk of domestic violence. Just over half of authorities (53%) reported there was sufficient suitable temporary accommodation<sup>53</sup>. Problems with securing temporary accommodation were not found to be associated with issues of overall housing supply, local authority type, relative deprivation levels or the extent to which a local authority was rural. London, for example, was less likely to report problems in securing sufficient temporary accommodation than other authorities<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Base: 177 responding authorities. Please note that the response rate for the North East was low (see Appendix 1).

<sup>50</sup> Base: 21 London boroughs (63% of London authorities).

<sup>51</sup> Bases: 181 and 180 responding authorities respectively. Please note that the response rate for the North East was low (see Appendix 1).

<sup>52</sup> Base: 21 London boroughs (63% of London authorities).

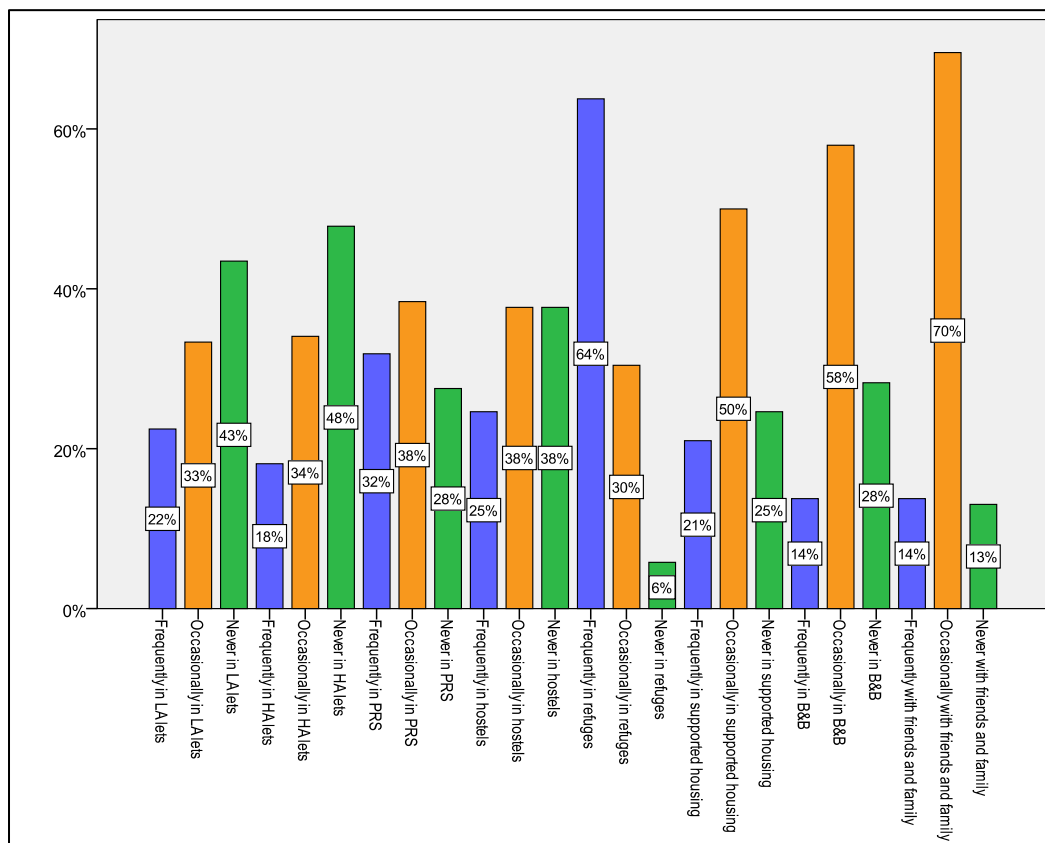
<sup>53</sup> Base: 186 responding authorities

<sup>54</sup> There is some evidence that authorities in London are geared towards an expectation that temporary accommodation will almost always have to be provided for statutorily homeless households, see for example: Pleace, N et al (2007) Tackling homelessness - Housing associations and local authorities working in partnership, London: The Housing Corporation

- 5.42 As is illustrated in Figure 5.3, a wide range of temporary accommodation was employed by local authorities to accommodate households until settled housing was found. Use of refuges was common, with 64 per cent of responding authorities reporting they ‘frequently’ made use of refuges as temporary accommodation. The recent Women’s Aid snapshot survey (Barron, 2009) showed that 35 per cent of refuge residents had approached the local authority before entering the refuge, and a further third of residents were subsequently assessed under the homelessness legislation once resident in the refuge.
- 5.43 In addition, supported housing was described as ‘frequently’ used as temporary accommodation by 21 per cent of responding authorities.
- 5.44 Use of their own housing stock (shown as ‘LA lets’) and private rented sector housing as temporary accommodation (shown as ‘PRS lets’) was reported as ‘frequently’ used by 22 per cent and 32 per cent of responding authorities respectively.
- 5.45 Use of B&B hotels and arrangements with friends were least commonly reported as ‘frequently’ used for temporary accommodation.



**Figure 5.3: Frequency with which different types of temporary accommodation was secured by local authorities for households at risk of domestic violence owed the main homelessness duty**



Source: Survey 1 Base: 188 authorities. (1) There is a legislative prohibition on using bed and breakfast hotels as temporary accommodation for families for more than six weeks, this figure refers largely to short term stays by homeless families, but it will also refer to longer stays by a few households without children.

### QUALITATIVE WORK: OPERATION OF THE HOMELESSNESS LEGISLATION

- 5.46 There was some concern amongst service providers and national stakeholders that the current prevention agenda and emphasis on ‘housing options’ meant that some women were being ‘brushed-off’ when they approached a local authority for homelessness assistance, and that local authorities were in effect avoiding their homelessness duty. It was stressed that it is often a very long process before a woman is able to consider leaving a violent relationship, and that services need to respond quickly and effectively to this.
- 5.47 Many service providers in the qualitative work also raised concerns that local authorities were now making more use of the private rented sector to house households and were worried that this could be more expensive for households which may mean that they find themselves in rent arrears later on and may end up (potentially intentionally) homeless again. Many providers

thought that women might prefer social housing in terms of offering secure tenancies, and more generally that households were not really being offered a range of real options.

*We are very supportive of women having choices and making their own decisions but our experience is that women are not given the information to make those choices, they are actually shoved down that route, and I think that is very different to women making informed choices... (Service provider)*

- 5.48 Experiences with making applications to local authorities as homeless differed in practice. Some service providers explained that they had very good links with homelessness services and they felt that households were treated appropriately and sympathetically by housing officers. However others reported that households were not treated sympathetically and in fact received quite poor treatment:

*R1: Sadly the people who have the power to make a decision [on housing] their lack of awareness around domestic violence, it's about ticking that box, we've made that offer, we've exercised our duty, we cannot give her like for like.*

*R2: You'd be surprised how many people are what they describe as being threatened by the homeless persons unit, 'if you don't accept what we've got, you could end up in Wales or Newcastle...'(Service providers)*

- 5.49 Women in one focus group spoke about the difficulties that they had faced in approaching the housing department:

*R1: It's very upsetting...*

*R2: When I spoke to the women in the council, it felt like, oh what another one...*

*R1: They make you want to give up...*

*R3: To me, it feels like if they make it difficult, they'll go home...(Service users)*

- 5.50 Advocacy appeared important in making a homelessness application, with service users valuing the role of a key worker in helping them make an application.

- 5.51 Service providers raised a number of issues around the interpretation of the homelessness legislation in practice. Firstly, providers attending the London consultation explained that, in their experience, there were considerable issues around local connection. It was reported that some boroughs would simply not accept someone from outside the borough. Service providers pointed out the gulf of difference between policy directives and how boroughs actually work on a day to day basis.

- 5.52 Secondly, service providers explained that in the past some local authorities assessed that a woman was 'housed' whilst in a refuge and therefore did not qualify for assistance under the homelessness legislation. It was pointed out that this practice will now have changed following the *Moran Case*<sup>55</sup>.
- 5.53 Thirdly, they were concerned that local authorities did not always take into account the particular circumstances that a household may face as a result of domestic violence – for example, a woman could be found intentionally homeless where they had debts even where these had been run up by the abuser. Some local authorities reportedly also only give one offer of accommodation but they felt that this may not be adequate (for example, if the location was near to family or friends of abuser).
- 5.54 Respondents felt that domestic violence training should be mandatory within housing authorities, particularly for front-line staff. They felt that this training should not only cover basic awareness issues but also the complexities surrounding the impact of domestic violence including around finance, debt, children, mental health and so on.

#### ***Temporary accommodation***

- 5.55 Despite significant improvement in the quality of temporary accommodation use in the last decade, service providers remained concerned about households at risk of domestic violence being placed in inappropriate temporary accommodation provision whilst awaiting settled housing, including bed and breakfast provision, mixed gender hostels, but also women only hostels which did not have a confidential address.
- 5.56 Few households at risk of domestic violence interviewed for this study had experience of local authority temporary accommodation. The vast majority, where they did apply to the local authority as homeless, said that they applied once they were already living in refuge accommodation. Their views on refuge accommodation were mainly positive, as reported in Chapter 3.

#### **General housing supply issues**

- 5.57 Problems with the adequacy and affordability of housing supply across much of England have been identified as a policy concern across government (Bramley *et al*, forthcoming). The results of Survey 1 and Survey 2 indicated that both local authorities and service providers often regarded constricted

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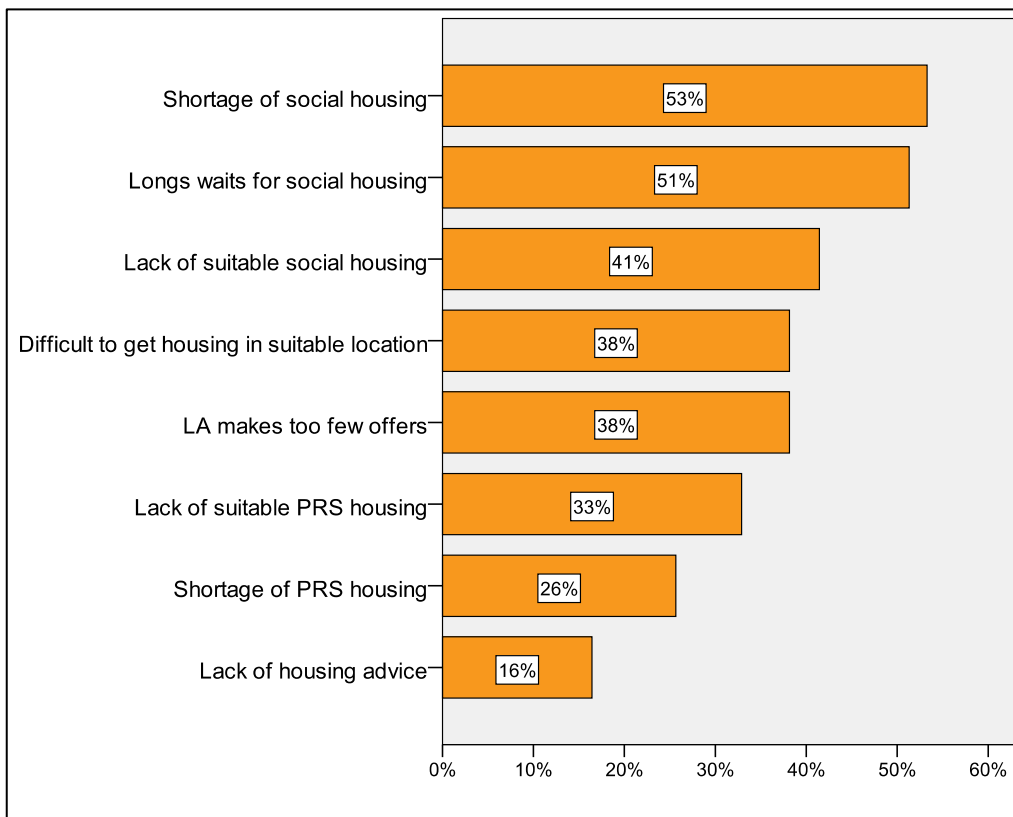
<sup>55</sup> *Moran v Manchester City Council* [2009]: Ms Moran fled domestic violence in 2006, seeking sanctuary in a women's refuge. She was required to vacate the refuge because of her behaviour. She applied to Manchester Council for accommodation. It found her to be intentionally homeless by reason of her conduct at the refuge. The Court of Appeal upheld this decision, accepting that Manchester was entitled to conclude that the refuge was accommodation which it was reasonable for her to continue to occupy. However this ruling was overturned in 2009 when the Lords ruled that it had not been reasonable for Ms Moran to continue to occupy the refuge indefinitely. This case established that in most cases a woman who has left her home because of domestic (or other) violence within it remains homeless even if she has found a temporary haven in a women's refuge.

supply of affordable and suitable housing in their areas of operation as a problem.

5.58 As would be expected, authorities in areas facing the biggest pressures on affordable housing supply were the most likely to report there was insufficient appropriate settled housing for households at risk of domestic violence in their area. Thus 90 per cent of the London boroughs and 70 per cent of the authorities in the South East and South West reported this. In areas where there was less pressure on affordable stock, the figures fell (only 37% of authorities in the North West and 54% of those in Yorkshire and Humberside reported the same problem)<sup>56</sup>.

5.59 Figure 5.4 summarises the frequency with which housing supply and related issues were encountered by the service providers responding to Survey 2. Shortages and long waits for social housing, alongside local authorities making ‘too few’ housing offers, were quite frequently reported. Issues in housing suitability and securing housing in the right location were also quite common. Some issues with the supply and suitability of private rented sector were also reported.

**Figure 5.4: Housing supply and related issues frequently encountered by service providers**



Source: Survey 2 Base: 207 service providers.

<sup>56</sup> Responses to Survey 1 were limited in the respect of the North East, which means a table showing regional breakdown would not be representative (see Appendix 1).

- 5.60 These results again varied by region, with clear links to overall issues of housing supply in some areas compared to others. For example, 92 per cent of service providers working in London reported that long waits for social housing were frequently an issue and 78 per cent reported that a shortage of social housing was frequently an issue. In the North West, by comparison, 33 per cent reported that long waits for social housing and 48 per cent reported shortages of social housing as being an issue.

#### **EVIDENCE FROM THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE OUTCOMES DATA**

- 5.61 It is possible to examine the housing pathways of people leaving housing support services for households at risk of domestic violence using the (Supporting People) Outcomes Data (see Appendix 1). Table 5.5 shows the housing pathways reported for women at risk of domestic violence at the point at which they exited from housing support services in 2008-09. Note that these data were on intended housing pathways collected at point of service exit. They do not constitute an actual record of where women relocated to once exiting a service. Floating support services are mainly delivered to women in settled housing, in some instances this is their existing home, in others it is settled housing to which they have recently moved. An 'exit' from a floating support service therefore often does not involve a move of accommodation, unlike the process of exiting from a refuge or supported housing.
- 5.62 Most women were reported as within, or en route to, settled housing<sup>57</sup> at the point at which they exited from services (61% overall were within or about to enter a tenancy or owner occupation). As can be seen, not all women exiting floating support were already housed within, or en route to, a settled home, although this was the case for a clear majority (81%). Among women exiting refuges and supported housing, 46 per cent exited to settled housing. The most common housing pathway was a local authority tenancy (24% of women exiting a refuge or other supported housing, Table 5.5), the next most common was a private rented sector tenancy (12% of women exiting refuges or other supported housing). Fourteen per cent of women exiting from floating support services and 38 per cent of those leaving refuges or other supported housing entered temporary accommodation arrangements. This included staying with family or friends and short or medium stay refuges and supported housing (24% overall).

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<sup>57</sup> Including private rented sector tenancies.

**Table 5.5: Expected housing pathways for women at risk of domestic violence exiting from housing support services in 2008/9<sup>1</sup>**

Expected housing pathway	Floating support (includes women already housed on first receipt of service)	Refuge and supported housing	All services
Local authority tenancy	36%	24%	29%
Housing association tenancy	17%	8%	12%
Private rented tenancy	16%	12%	14%
Owner occupation	12%	2%	6%
All settled housing	81%	46%	61%
Temporary accommodation	3%	5%	4%
Supported housing	2%	5%	4%
Refuge	4%	13%	9%
Family or friends	5%	15%	11%
All temporary arrangements	14%	38%	24%
Returned to partner	1%	5%	3%
Unknown	2%	6%	4%
Homeless	>1%	>1%	>1%
Other	3%	6%	4%
All	100%	100%	100%
Base	2,475	3,672	6,147

**Source:** (Supporting People) Outcomes Data for 2008/9. CHP analysis. Excludes direct access services. Floating support is defined as including “floating support” services, “outreach” and “resettlement” services. <sup>1</sup>The 2008/9 Outcomes Data records information on women at risk of domestic violence only, there is no category for men at risk of domestic violence. Note: these data are exit interviews with people leaving services and are not a census of individuals or households. Percentages are rounded.

5.63 Small numbers of women moved from either floating support into a refuge or from one refuge to another (11% overall, Table 5.5). Women were recorded as generally quite unlikely to return to a partner who had been abusive or violent (3% overall, Table 5.5). Recorded rates of homelessness were low

(under 1%). However, the eventual housing pathways of 2 per cent of exits from floating support services and 6 per cent of exits from refuges and supported housing were unknown.

- 5.64 Women leaving refuges and other forms of supported housing were statistically no more likely to be reported as entering settled housing in one region than any other. However, women exiting from floating support services in London and the South East were less likely than women in other areas to be reported as in, or en route to, settled housing (73% compared to 80% for England as a whole). The reason for this is unclear, it may be linked to affordable housing supply levels in these regions, but the Outcomes Data does not record why specific housing outcomes are not achieved.

#### **QUALITATIVE WORK: HOUSING SUPPLY ISSUES**

- 5.65 Overall, service providers and service users all agreed that the lack of suitable settled housing for households at risk of domestic violence was a major problem in England. There was a great fear amongst providers – and articulated by a couple of service users – that the lack of move-on accommodation meant that some people may not leave an abusive situation in the first place or, alternatively, may lose heart that they would be provided with settled housing, and as a result, return to situations where they may be at risk of abuse.

*I have a lifetime tenancy, but I now have to give that up which I don't think is good, I've just going to have to give up a lifetime tenancy to go private, I'm just going to be (facing) upheaval, up and down, up and down, that is something that should be stressed... to give up a tenancy, that's my security, that's my security and I've had to give that up, because of him, I've had to give that up, so I'm in limbo...(Service user)*

*I thought what am I doing here, I don't know London, I don't know anyone, the kids, they start playing up, they're not used to it, you think, I'll just go home, and they say they'll sort you out with housing and nothing, you just hitting a brick wall, you just feel like going home...(Service user)*

- 5.66 As noted above, housing stress was more acute in some places than others, which could be quite frustrating for service users. For example, a couple of service users who had moved to London refuges had been advised to seek housing elsewhere due to the capital's acute housing shortage; the women however were reluctant to do this as they wanted the ongoing support of the present project, and also the new social contacts made.
- 5.67 In terms of the speed of availability and appropriateness of settled housing, experiences differed considerably at the local level. For example, one refuge provider operating in the North explained that residents would usually secure good quality accommodation within six months; other providers were less

optimistic. Further, both service providers and service users stressed how important it was to be provided with settled housing in a reasonable neighbourhood/location. Service users said that they would be prepared to wait for something in a nice area rather than move out of a refuge more quickly to an unsatisfactory living situation.

*Not a lot of people want to live on the council estates, where they have been offered via the homeless route, they are bidding for properties but only in certain areas, so the housing provision is not coming up that they want so it will be private landlords to be in the area that they want.*(Service provider)

- 5.68 Affordability of housing was also raised as an issue, particularly for private rented housing which appeared to be encouraged as a housing option in many areas. There were also concerns about the safety of the private rented sector both in terms of the risk of unscrupulous male landlords sexually exploiting female tenants, as well as potentially passing on information about someone's whereabouts in the local community. It was felt that it was therefore essential that only fully vetted and accredited landlord schemes were used for households at risk of domestic violence.
- 5.69 There were particular concerns for the availability of suitable properties for people from black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities, including large enough properties and locations with adequate access to community resources. In addition, some young people appeared to face particular barriers in accessing appropriate settled accommodation. One young person (aged 22) was bidding for properties but explained that she was only likely to get into a young person's hostel because of her age as she believed this was the current policy in her local authority.

### **Conclusion**

- 5.70 Housing advice services are available for households at risk of domestic violence from a number of sources, including local authority housing option teams, specialist domestic violence centres and national and local domestic violence helplines. However, just over half of local authorities reported that information provision was 'very good' or 'quite good' in their area. Service users explained that they typically had very little information about services available to them and many felt quite strongly that better information should be made available to households at risk of domestic violence.
- 5.71 The majority of London boroughs and unitary councils had specific policies in place for households at risk of domestic violence on their housing registers and in their transfer policies, however service providers argued that there was room for further improvements in this area to assist households at risk of domestic violence. Modifications to choice based lettings systems for households at risk of domestic violence were in place in 40-50 per cent of local authorities.



5.72 Most local authorities reported that they were 'usually' able to offer settled accommodation to bring the main duty to an end for households at risk of domestic violence within six months of accepting them as homeless and in priority need. Authorities in areas facing the biggest pressures on affordable housing supply were the most likely to report there was insufficient appropriate settled housing for households at risk of domestic violence in their area. Overall, service providers and service users felt that the lack of suitable settled housing for households at risk of domestic violence was a major problem in England.

## 6 Developing accommodation related services for households at risk of domestic violence

### Key points

- There is evidence of a shift towards a relatively increased provision of floating support services and a relative decrease in the provision of specialist accommodation services such as refuges. The Supporting People Client Record shows a relative increase in floating support service activity from 26 per cent of all service provision in 2006-07 to 34 per cent of all service provision in 2008-09.
- A quarter of local authorities were planning to commission new services or to re-commission services over the next two years. A similar proportion of service providers were planning new services, with a higher number also planning modest additions to services, for example an extra worker.
- Joint working between service commissioners and service providers was widespread throughout England. Most areas had multi-agency domestic violence strategies.
- Supporting People was a major source of revenue funding for accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence, but it was very often not the sole source of revenue funding.
- Service providers tended to report a higher need to expand services than local authorities, especially in the case of specialist accommodation based services (31% of local authorities compared to 65% of service providers). Both local authorities and service providers were least likely to report a need to expand sanctuary scheme services (20% and 41%, respectively).
- A high proportion of local authorities and service providers were likely to report the need for more services that could address the needs of particular sub-groups amongst households at risk of domestic violence. This included provision for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups, for people with no recourse to public funds, people with specific support needs associated with mental health or substance misuse, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and young people. There was least agreement between local authorities and service providers about the need for more services for men at risk of domestic violence.
- Flexibility in funding arrangements and joint commissioning were most commonly identified as factors enabling new service development. Short term funding and changes to funding levels were the most frequently identified inhibitors of new service development.
- Service providers were concerned that specialist services were being replaced by generic support services that had lower costs. There was some evidence of this occurring. However, the research also found

evidence to suggest that this trend might be less widespread than some service providers perceived.

- Widespread concerns about the possible future impacts of the removal of the Supporting People budget ringfence and widely anticipated funding cuts were reported.

## **Introduction**

- 6.1 This chapter explores the development of accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence. The chapter has four main sections. The first section briefly examines how the patterns of service provision have changed in recent years. The second section looks at the present funding sources for accommodation related support services for households at risk of domestic violence. The chapter then moves on to report the views of local authorities and service providers on the need for any expansion of services. Finally, the chapter examines the planned commissioning among local authorities and the plans of service providers for developing new services in the next few years. The factors that are perceived as facilitating and inhibiting service development, which draws on the results of Survey 1, Survey 2 and the qualitative fieldwork, are also reported here.
- 6.2 It is important to note the context in which any discussions of service developments are located. As outlined in Chapter 1, a major change in the funding of accommodation and housing related support services occurred in 2003 with the introduction of the Supporting People programme. The programme was designed to enhance the quality of life for vulnerable people through the provision of accommodation based support services, with each unitary local authority and county council being given strategic responsibility for planning and commissioning housing support services. From 2010, local authorities will receive Supporting People funding via the area based grant and will be able to decide how much and which housing support services to fund. The change is planned because it was believed this would increase innovation, flexibility and success within the housing support sector (see Pleace, 2009)<sup>58</sup>. Whilst Supporting People is not the only funding source of services for households at risk of domestic violence (see below), it is the most significant one.

## **Changes in service provision**

- 6.3 This short section reviews the development and/or changes in services for households at risk of domestic violence over the last decade. In particular the

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<sup>58</sup> Whilst some flexibility in Supporting People funding existed (for those authorities graded as excellent), allowing Supporting People funding to be used “for the purposes of providing, or contributing to the provision of, welfare services”. However, this did not allow for accommodation and housing related support services to branch into other areas that might enhance their flexibility and effectiveness, such as education, training or employment related activity<sup>58</sup>.

section reviews sources of information from other surveys examining changes in refuge provision, alongside changes recorded for all types of service provision by the Supporting People Programme monitoring.

#### **COMPARISONS OF KEY SURVEYS OF THE LAST DECADE**

- 6.4 The last major government funded survey of accommodation services for households at risk of domestic violence reported that there were approximately 7,269 refuge bed-spaces in England in 1998 (Levison and Kenny, 2002). This figure was based on a projection of survey responses from 66 per cent of refuge providers in England, which between them offered 4,832 bed-spaces. It was estimated that the 34 per cent of refuge providers that had not responded to the survey, provided something in the order of 2,437 bed-spaces.
- 6.5 The most recent report by Women's Aid drawing on their annual surveys of provision (Barron, 2009) suggested that the levels of refuge provision had risen and then fallen back over the last decade. In 2008-09, Women's Aid extrapolated from survey responses that there was approximately 4,000 'family units'<sup>59</sup> for women and children at risk of domestic violence in England. They also reported that while provision had risen from some 3,530 units in 2005-06 to some 6,000 units in 2007-08, there had recently been a noticeable fall to the 2008-09 figure of 4,000<sup>60</sup>. The same report noted that the estimated numbers of women staying in refuges had risen from 17,094 in 2002-03 to 19,836 in 2004-05, before falling back to 16,750 during 2008-09.
- 6.6 The present study mapped a total of 4,035 household places in specialist accommodation based services which consisted predominately of refuges along with a small number of other specialist accommodation services (see Chapter 3). The Women's Aid figure and that of the present study are very much in line with each other.
- 6.7 The apparent changes in refuge provision between 1998 and 2008-09 are less easy to assess as no survey data were available between 1998 and 2005. In addition, some accommodation based services have been remodelled during this period reflecting a general shift away from the provision of bedrooms with shared living space (measured in 'bed-spaces') towards self-contained bedsits and flats (measured in 'units'). The capacity of units varies with the exact nature of services. For example, a unit in a refuge for lone women without children would contain one person whereas a unit in a refuge that took women with families might contain two or more beds. Whilst Chapter 3 showed that significant amounts of specialist accommodation

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<sup>59</sup> Defined as providing space for one woman and any accompanying children.

<sup>60</sup> Barron, J. (2009) Women's Aid Federation of England: 2008-9 Survey of Domestic Violence Services WAFE: London, p.12.

services still have some shared provision, this is likely to be at a much reduced level compared to 1998.

- 6.8 This means that the 'fall' in refuge provision is less drastic than the simple difference between the 1998 count and estimate of 7,296 'bed spaces' to the 4,000 'units' or household places reported in this survey and by Women's Aid, as these are two different measures of the level of service provision. Rather, reliable comparisons are needed over time via surveys or administrative data such as the Supporting People databases below.

#### **SUPPORTING PEOPLE DATABASES**

- 6.9 Another way to explore changes in service provision is to look at the (Supporting People) Client Record, which records 'service activity', that is the number of stays or periods of support delivered by accommodation based or other types of services, respectively<sup>61</sup>. Levels of refuge provision can also be explored using the Supporting People Local System. This database of Supporting People funded services is completed by local authorities and held centrally by Communities and Local Government. As described in Appendix 1, the Supporting People Local System formed the basis of the mapping exercise for this research.
- 6.10 When reviewing this data, it needs to be remembered that the Supporting People Client Record and Supporting People Local System do not represent all service provision in the sector because Supporting People does not provide all funding for services (see below). It is also possible that a 'decommissioned' service, which has lost Supporting People funding, might continue operation through alternative funding arrangements (see below). Some issues with the accuracy of the Supporting People Local System were also detected by the mapping exercise<sup>62</sup>.

#### ***Service activity recorded under the Supporting People Client Record***

- 6.11 Table 6.1 shows the changes that have occurred in the provision of Supporting People funded services for women at risk of domestic violence over the last three financial years. Total service activity for women at risk of domestic violence has increased from 20,169 to 24,535 periods of support across all types of services.
- 6.12 However, Table 6.1 also shows that the level of refuge activity from 2006-07 to 2008-09 was close to constant. In 2006/7, 11,773 refuge stays were reported with very similar numbers being reported in 2007-08 (11,341) and in

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<sup>61</sup> This is a similar measure to the number of households using a service, but does not record where a household uses a service more than once so it may therefore include some double-counting of households.

<sup>62</sup> See Appendix 1.

2008-09 (11,556). The figure for refuge stays in 2008-09 was 98 per cent of the level reported in 2006-07.

- 6.13 When considering the activity of refuges compared to other services, a proportional decrease in the use of refuge services is also apparent. In 2006-07, 57 per cent of all service provision for women at risk of domestic violence was via refuge services. However, this fell by 5 per cent in 2007-08 and by another 5 per cent in 2008-09, dropping to 47 per cent of all service provision for women at risk of domestic violence in 2008-09. Although there was a proportional fall in refuge activity, i.e. it accounted for a lower proportion of total service delivery to women at risk of domestic violence, refuges remained almost as active in 2008-09 as they had in 2006-07.

**Table 6.1: Changes in Supporting People funded service provision for women at risk of domestic violence<sup>1</sup>**

Year	2006/7 percent	2006/7 number of stays/ periods of support <sup>2</sup>	2007/8 percent	2007/8 Number of stays/ periods of support	2008/9 percent	2008/9 Number of stays/ periods of support
Women's refuge	57%	11,773	52%	11,341	47%	11,556
Floating support	26%	5,423	30%	6,515	34%	8,391
Supported housing	9%	1,773	9%	1,908	8%	1,938
Outreach	3%	680	5%	1,097	7%	1,619
Resettlement service	3%	515	3%	570	3%	638
Direct access	2%	412	2%	461	2%	368
Other	0%	41	0%	88	0%	25
Total	100%	20,619	100%	21,936	100%	24,535

**Source:** Client Record Returns for 2006/7, 2007/8, 2008/9. CHP analysis. <sup>1</sup> The Client Record reports on women at risk of domestic violence (there is no separate category for men) and also uses the term 'Women's refuge' to designate specialist accommodation based services for women at risk of domestic violence. <sup>2</sup> The Client Record is measured in terms of service activity, so for example, it records the number of stays made in refuges. This is very similar to the number of households staying in refuges, but it is not quite the same, because a household might possibly have more than one stay in a refuge, or refuges, in one year. Percentages are rounded.

- 6.14 These findings suggest that specialist accommodation based services have been playing a fairly consistent role in recent years. However, this role has not expanded in line with increases in overall housing support services for women at risk of domestic violence. Instead, increases in service provision have been focused on other services.
- 6.15 Table 6.1 shows that the main increase in service activity has focused on floating support services<sup>63</sup> which delivered 5,423 periods of support in 2006-07 rising to 8,391 in 2008-09. In 2006-07, floating support represented 26 per cent of service provision compared to a significantly higher figure of 34 per

<sup>63</sup> Defined in SPCR as 'delivered in the client's home, for a variable amount of time (per day/ week).

cent in 2008-09, see Table 6.1). Outreach services<sup>64</sup> also expanded from 3 per cent to 7 per cent of service activity (680 to 1,619 periods of support).

***Number of services recorded under Supporting People Local System***

6.16 Table 6.2, which summaries the Supporting People Local System data on refuges, suggests considerable churn in service provision from 2003 to early 2009. There appears, based on the Supporting People Local System, to have been a net increase in refuge places funded between 2003 (3,069 units) and early 2006 (3,714 units). However, according to the Supporting People Local System, the number of places funded by Supporting People fell by 286 from 3,714 units in 2006 to 3,428 units in early 2009, a drop of 8 per cent (Table 6.2). However, the figures suggest an overall net increase in places over the period (3,069 to 3,428 units).

**Table 6.2: Changes in Supporting People funded refuge<sup>1</sup> provision during 2003-2009 according to the Supporting People Local System**

Year	New units commissioned	Units decommissioned	Total units funded
2003	3,071 <sup>2</sup>	3	3,069
2004	284	120	3,233
2005	227	92	3,368
2006	604	258	3,714
2007	586	667	3,633
2008	110	203	3,540
2009	0	112	3,428
Totals	1,811	1,455	-

**Source:** Supporting People Local System as at the first Quarter of 2009. CHP analysis.<sup>1</sup> SPLS uses the designation 'women's refuge' to describe specialist accommodation based services for domestic violence <sup>2</sup> All refuge places were, in effect, 'newly commissioned' in 2003, almost all were already existing places that were transferred from being funded by Housing Benefit to Supporting People budgets.

6.17 The results of previous studies, review of administrative statistics and the mapping exercise described in this report suggest a fairly consistent pattern on service provision development over the last decade. However, levels of specialist accommodation based service provision seem to have reduced to some extent in recent years, firstly as a result of service remodelling (replacing shared living arrangements with self contained units in specialist accommodation based services), and second, as a result of what appears to be an increased use of floating support service models as an alternative form of provision.

<sup>64</sup> Defined in SPCR as 'a housing related support service that engages with people sleeping rough on the street, or who are living in bed and breakfast or other unsuitable temporary accommodation, and aims to get them into suitable accommodation.

## Current funding of services

- 6.18 Survey 2 explored the current funding of services, by asking service providers about all the sources of revenue funding they received. Table 6.3 summarises these findings. It is important to note that Table 6.3 shows how service provider organisations were funded in overall terms. It is not a summary of how different service types were funded. The table shows that 82 per cent of service providers (who might have provided more than one type of service) were funded by the Supporting People Programme. Eighty-six per cent of service providers involved in specialist accommodation based service provision received Supporting People funding, compared to 78 per cent of service providers delivering floating support and 60 per cent of service providers involved in sanctuary schemes.

**Table 6.3: Overall funding of service provider organisations by their involvement in different forms of service provision**

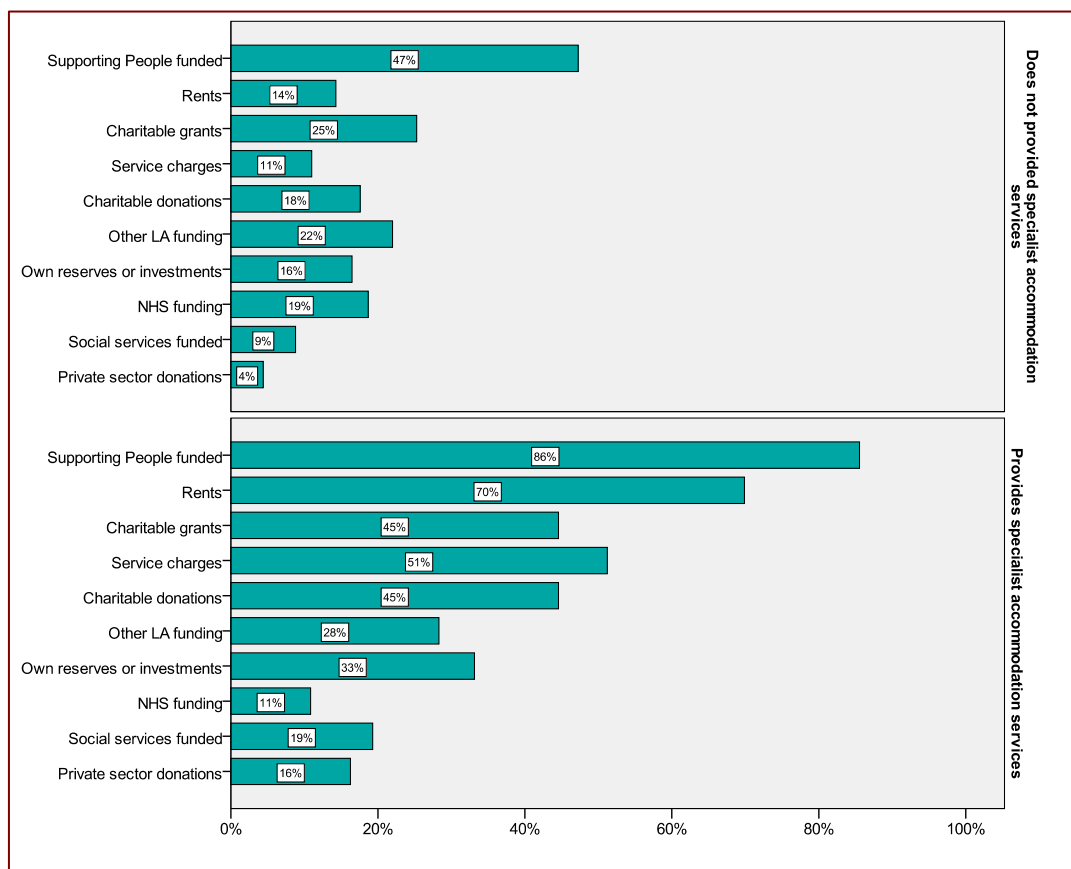
Types of services provided by organisation	Organisation not Supporting People funded	Organisation Supporting People funded	Total	Number of service providers
Specialist accommodation service(s)	15%	86%	100%	149
Floating support service(s)	22%	78%	100%	139
Sanctuary scheme(s)	40%	60%	100%	52
Service(s) with secondary DV function	27%	73%	100%	16
All service providers	18%	82%	100%	225

Source: Survey 2. Service providers could be involved in more than one form of service provision. Base: 225 service providers, 32 service providers did not answer this question.

- 6.19 Figure 6.1 summarises the sources of revenue funding that the service providers responding to Survey 2 reported. The prominence of Supporting People as a source of funding is again immediately evident for service providers delivering specialist accommodation services (86%), but rents and service charges were also quite prominent (70% and 51%, respectively). The role of charitable grants and donations as sources of revenue funding is also evident, more prominently in respect of service providers delivering specialist accommodation services (45% identified both charitable grants and charitable donations as sources of revenue funding). The role of other local authority funding, besides that from Supporting People or from social services departments (shown as 'other LA funding') is also evident. NHS funding was also reported by some service providers (11% of those involved in specialist accommodation provision and 19% of those involved in provision of other services). Some service provider organisations also drew on their own financial reserves or investments.



**Figure 6.1: Sources of revenue funding reported by service providers**



Source: Survey 2. Base: 225 service providers, 32 service providers did not answer this question.

- 6.20 The use of multiple sources of revenue funding was an operational norm across the sector as a whole. Among the 225 service providers that answered the questions on revenue funding in Survey 2, 80 per cent reported more than one source and 52 per cent reported more than four sources of revenue funding. Service providers involved in delivering specialist accommodation services reported an average of 4.8 sources of revenue funding (median 5), while service providers involved in other forms of service provision reported an average of 2.5 sources (median 2).
- 6.21 As is noted in Appendix 1, the extent of non-reliance on Supporting People as a source of funding goes some way to explain the differences in service provision found by the mapping exercise and those reported within the Supporting People Local System database.
- 6.22 Seventy-five per cent of service providers reported that their revenue had remained constant (46%) or increased during the course of the previous year (28%). A quarter of service providers (26%) reported reductions in revenue funding in the last year.

## Perceptions on the adequacy of service provision in England relative to need

- 6.23 This section presents the views of respondents in the study, both those who responded to the two surveys and also those who took part in the qualitative work, on the extent to which they considered that current services were adequate to meet the needs of households at risk of domestic violence nationally. The first section considers the need for specific types of services, whilst the second section examines any need for services for particular sub-groups of households at risk of domestic violence.

### THE NEED FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF SERVICES

#### *Evidence from Survey 1 and Survey 2*

- 6.24 Table 6.4 summarises the need to either expand or develop new services reported by local authorities responding to Survey 1. Local authorities were most likely to identify a need for an expansion of floating support services (39% of responding authorities). This compared to 31 per cent reporting a need to expand specialist accommodation and 20 per cent a need to expand sanctuary provision. Table 6.4 also shows that there was greatest variation between regions in the proportions of local authorities reporting a need to expand floating support services. Seventy-one per cent of authorities in Yorkshire and Humber reported a need to expand floating support compared to only 14 per cent of authorities in the South West. There was much less variation in reports of local authorities on the need to expand specialist accommodation (21% of authorities to 40% of authorities in any one region).

**Table 6.4: Local authority reported need to expand or commission new services by main service types and region**

Region	Expand floating support	Expand specialist accommodation	Expand sanctuary scheme provision	Base
North East	60%	40%	60%	5
North West	48%	40%	24%	25
Yorkshire & Humber	71%	43%	21%	14
East Midlands	26%	21%	16%	19
West Midlands	53%	35%	35%	17
East England	42%	29%	29%	24
London	50%	35%	15%	20
South East	25%	28%	8%	40
South West	14%	23%	14%	22
England	39%	31%	20%	186

Source: Survey 1.

- 6.25 Table 6.5 summarises the differences in the perceived need for additional services reported by local authorities in response to Survey 1 and service providers in response to Survey 2. Service providers were asked to focus on

their perception of the need for services in their main area of operation. There was a general tendency for service providers to report a higher need for additional services than local authorities. Views between local authorities and service providers were most divergent in respect of services for specialist accommodation services (a difference of 34%, Table 6.4). Local authorities and service providers were closer in respect to the need to expand floating support services and sanctuary schemes (differences of 26% and 21% respectively).

**Table 6.5: Differences in the perceived need for additional services from local authorities and service providers by service type**

Service type	LAs	Service providers	Difference
Expand floating support	39%	65%	26%
Expand specialist accommodation	31%	65%	34%
Expand sanctuary scheme provision	20%	41%	21%
Base	186	245	

Source: Survey 1 and Survey 2

- 6.26 It might be assumed that areas with fewer services available per 10,000 population might report a greater need to expand services. However, there was no statistical relationship between the responses of local authorities or service providers and the reported need to expand services. There were also no associations with the extent of rurality of local authorities, or the broad administrative type of local authority.

***Views of service providers, local authorities and key stakeholders***

- 6.27 Respondents at the consultation events<sup>65</sup>, and key stakeholders, tended to take the view that each local area needed to have a range of accommodation based options available to households at risk of domestic violence. They largely agreed that this should include specialist accommodation services, floating support services and sanctuary schemes.
- 6.28 Respondents stressed that in their experience that the needs of people at risk of domestic violence often differ substantially from one another, and that these needs may change over time. In their view, assessment processes and the service mix in an area should be able to respond flexibly in two senses. First, it should be able to cope with a variety of need and second, it should be able to adapt to changing needs. Respondents drew attention to the Women’s Aid Best Practice Model as a basis for thinking about the range of services an area should have<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> These were mainly service providers rather than local authorities, see Appendix 1.

<sup>66</sup> This model states that each local authority area needs services that are available that encompass refuge provision, resettlement support, IDVA services, outreach support, group support, sexual violence services and perpetrator programmes with appropriate support services. See Women’s Aid (2009) *Commissioning domestic violence services: A quick guide* <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

- 6.29 Reflecting service provider perspectives in Survey 2, many respondents who were involved in service provision were of the view that considerable expansion of most types of services was required.

*I don't think there is too much of anything anywhere to be perfectly honest, I just don't think there is, most areas haven't got enough.*

(National stakeholder)

- 6.30 There was a perception among some service providers and stakeholders that the policy of the then government was over-orientated towards the provision of floating support services. Respondents believed that there was a continued need for specialist accommodation services, including refuges, and that this was being neglected. While it needs to be recognised that some of those commenting on this perceived trend in policy were involved in the delivery of specialist accommodation services, mainly refuges, these views were nevertheless widely held. Some respondents reported a concern that the required mix of services in an area was sometimes not being delivered, because there was insufficient provision of specialist accommodation services, alongside other accommodation and housing related support for people at risk of domestic violence.

*...there is a need for safe accommodation and the added value that refuges give, the support that comes from peer support as well as from staff in those kind of settings...(Service provider)*

## **THE NEED FOR SERVICES FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS OF HOUSEHOLDS AT RISK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### ***Evidence from Survey 1 and Survey 2***

- 6.31 Service providers and local authorities were also asked to identify whether services needed expanding for specific sub-groups of households at risk of domestic violence. In contrast to the findings for different types of services, service providers and local authorities were much closer in their reported need for the expansion of these services for most groups. Table 6.6 shows that 41 per cent of local authorities, and 45 per cent of service providers, reported a need to expand services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups in their local area. A very similar proportion of providers reported a perceived need to increase services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. There was a particularly high perceived need for services for people with no recourse to public funding (63% of local authorities; 75% of service providers). Over half of both providers and service providers identified a need for extra services for people with multiple needs, people with substance misuse problems and young people. Overall, Table 6.6 indicates that providers and local authorities tended to perceive a need to increase services for most sub-groups of people with the possible exception of the expansion of services for men affected by domestic violence where only 9 per cent of providers recorded a perceived need in this area.

**Table 6.6: Differences in the perceived need for additional services for specific subgroups from local authorities and service providers by service type**

<b>Expand services for specific subgroup of households at risk of domestic violence:</b>	<b>LAs</b>	<b>Service providers</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Expand services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups	41%	45%	4%
Expand services for men	9%	53%	44%
People with no recourse to public funds	63%	75%	12%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender	43%	45%	2%
Multiple needs	53%	53%	0%
Substance misuse	56%	55%	-1%
Mental health problems	44%	61%	17%
Disabled people	33%	48%	15%
Learning difficulties	29%	46%	17%
Older people	24%	31%	7%
Young people	50%	62%	12%
Perpetrator schemes	44%	56%	12%
Base	186	245	

Source: Survey 1 and Survey 2

- 6.32 Urban authorities reported a need for *some* additional services for specific subgroups shown in Table 6.6 at a higher rate than rural authorities. Urban authorities were significantly more likely to report a need for services for people at risk of domestic violence who had no recourse to public funds (77% of urban authorities compared to 44% of rural authorities). Urban authorities were also more likely to report a need for additional specific services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people at risk of domestic violence (56% compared to 32% of rural authorities). Additional services for young people were also identified as need at a higher rate (59% of urban authorities compared to 41% of rural authorities).

#### **VIEWS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND SERVICE USERS**

- 6.33 Participants in the consultation event, focus groups and interviews stressed the need for the development of services in the following areas:

##### ***Services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities***

- 6.34 Service providers perceived that there had been a contraction of services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities in recent years, drawing attention to research conducted by a leading agency working in the sector (Women's Resource Centre, 2007; Imkaan, 2008). Providers of accommodation and housing related support for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups at risk of domestic violence took the view that there was a severe shortage of specific services.

- 6.35 Providers of black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services often stressed the specific needs of black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities, including how households may be fleeing from complex family and community situations (including the very specific situation of honour based violence). They were also of the view that services that understood specific cultural needs and experiences and which could provide interpreters were important. A general need for cultural sensitivity across all forms of accommodation and housing related support was identified by a few service providers.
- 6.36 Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee service users interviewed in the focus groups often reported that they preferred a culturally specific service. For some of these women culturally specific services seemed particularly important when they did not speak English as a first language. However, some black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee service users said they would have accessed a non-black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee service as long as it was a women only service.
- 6.37 Some service providers also reported that they perceived a need for services that could provide specialist domestic violence support to people fleeing domestic violence from the travelling community. Travellers were seen as a 'hard-to-reach' group but one in which needs were viewed as being likely to be quite high.

***Women with no recourse to public funds***

- 6.38 Participants in the consultation exercise raised what they regarded as a particular concern about the lack of provision for women with no recourse to public funds. Service providers delivering specialist black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee services reported an increase in numbers of referrals from this group, including asylum seekers.
- 6.39 As outlined in Chapter 3, social services have a statutory responsibility to children, but not to adults, in no recourse to public funds households. Service providers involved in the consultation exercise made reference to cases where social services had offered to take children into care, or arrange for children to be placed with the perpetrator where the children were not considered to be at risk of abuse. However, the consultation exercise was not a sufficiently robust research exercise to be confident of how widespread this practice was by social services. This may be an area of policy that warrants further, specific, investigation.
- 6.40 Providers welcomed the new pilot scheme to make it easier for people fleeing domestic violence to access refuge provision whilst they submitted a claim for Indefinite Leave to Remain (see Chapter 3).
- 6.41 Some service users who were interviewed explained that their immigration status had been a major barrier to them in their attempts to leave an abuser. One woman explained that she had been living in a refuge for three years,

with her no recourse to public funds status meaning she could not move onto settled accommodation, nor access most services or employment. She explained that social services had referred her to the refuge saying that they could offer no help except for taking her children into care.

### ***Lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender groups***

- 6.42 The mapping exercise recorded only six accommodation and housing related services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups, all but one of which were primarily homelessness services with a secondary domestic violence function. A few service providers reported their perception that the experience of domestic violence is often likely to be different for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people may be more likely to be at risk from family members who become violent on learning that their relatives have a different sexual orientation.
- 6.43 In the view of some service providers, the relatively close-knit nature of some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities may make it harder to reveal that domestic violence is taking place, and may make it harder to escape safely from a violent ex-partner. A few service providers reported that abuse could take specific forms for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, for example threatening to “out” someone to family members or employers, or withholding hormonal treatments from transsexual persons.
- 6.44 Service providers also sometimes reported that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people might also experience homophobic reactions from other service users if they have to use shared accommodation provision. It was thought that lesbian women would usually require separate provision to gay men. It was thought possible for some specialist accommodation based provision to adequately meet the needs of lesbians (for example, where it is self-contained and has specialist workers) but also that this could not be automatically presumed. Similarly, some services for men (see below) were thought able to meet the needs of gay men if they are individually delivered (for example, floating support).
- 6.45 Other research suggests gay men’s needs are quite different to that of heterosexual men, in particular that they may need longer term support than heterosexual men. Gay men may also have different preferences for service types, including being more likely to accept face-to-face support as well as referrals to housing services than heterosexual men (Robinson, 2006). Some services will also be inaccessible to pre-operative transgender persons, such as some specialist accommodation services (see Chapter 3).

### ***Disabled people/households containing a disabled person***

- 6.46 Service providers generally considered that inadequate attention had been given to the needs of disabled household members who were at risk of domestic violence. The availability of accommodation for households with sensory or mobility impairments was described as 'woeful' by one provider.
- 6.47 As outlined in Chapter 3, a number of service providers highlighted how difficult it was to arrange accommodation based services for disabled people who needed live-in carers. Specialist accommodation services were unlikely to have joining rooms or be able to spare a room for a carer. Some service providers reported that the situation could be particularly difficult where someone was escaping abuse from a carer and/or had to move to another local authority area, as social services could rarely arrange another carer quickly enough to enable someone to move into a refuge.

### ***Households with multiple needs***

- 6.48 Most service providers reported that they had seen an increase in the numbers of households presenting with complex or multiple needs, such as mental health problems, substance misuse issues and experience of working in the sex industry. In particular, it was seen as difficult for accommodation based services to provide a high quality service for households with complex needs within current structures and resource allocations.

### ***Young adults***

- 6.49 There was a general consensus that more provision was needed for young women, possibly around short-term housing options that could give them a safe space from which they could consider their housing options. It was considered that some young people might benefit from specialist services, including specialist accommodation services and floating support services, that could adequately address domestic violence issues.

### ***Children***

- 6.50 Service users who took part in the focus groups reported their experience that assistance with children in services was often quite time-limited. In addition, the majority of service providers and key stakeholders reported the view that services often did not have sufficient specific provision of support for children. One reason for this was reported by service providers and stakeholders as being the inflexibility of some revenue funding sources. Some sources, such as Supporting People, were set up to meet the needs of adults and were not intended to provide support to children. Some providers also mentioned that the skills set required by children's workers were not always recognised, i.e. there was a need for highly skilled workers in this field which had cost implications.



*It's an area of extremely high need, children's service, it's not being met in present provision, it's a huge gap...(Service provider)*

### **Services for men**

- 6.51 Providers and key players generally agreed that there was probably a need for some further development of services for men. However, many respondents were of the view that this needed to be carefully researched at a local level. It was strongly argued by many respondents that male services needed to be distinct, and physically separate from, women's services.
- 6.52 Some research has suggested that men's experiences of domestic violence may be distinctive. Threats to kill, stalking and reports of extreme jealousy and control may be less prominent amongst male compared to female victims (Robinson, 2006). Some of the service providers interviewed for the research and taking part in the consultation exercise drew attention to these differences.

*We have to be careful not to say that services for men are not needed, it's about appropriate services for men, based on identified needs... if there is a need for men that has to be researched, looked at and the demand and all the rest of it explored and then the appropriateness of services developed around that, not just making women's services develop services for men...(Service provider)*

- 6.53 Service providers were found to often have the view that separate services for men and women at risk of domestic violence were needed, particularly accommodation based services. This was both to meet needs adequately but also to ensure safety, as it was acknowledged that some perpetrators presented as victims. The need for gender separation not being recognised, in the context of a perceived trend to replace specialist services with generic housing support services (see Chapter 6 for details) was a concern for some providers. Some reported a concern that some local authorities did not appear to understand their new equality duties, and were incorrectly attempting to extend access to men of women only services<sup>67</sup>.

### **The future development of services**

- 6.54 This section of the report reports the planned development of services as described by local authorities (Survey 1) and service providers (Survey 2), as well as the key factors that support and inhibit the development of services. Views of respondents taking part in the qualitative work are also presented.

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<sup>67</sup> The code of practice for the Gender Equality Duty makes it clear that the duty is not about providing the same or equal service for men and women in all cases. Public authorities should recognise that men and women have different needs and identical treatment may not always be appropriate and can even reinforce disadvantage. In this way the Gender Equality Duty may be used to support initiatives such as women-only refuges or men-only support groups. <http://www.equalities.gov.uk>

## PLANNED SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.55 Service providers in Survey 2 were asked to report whether they had any plans to develop new services in the next two years. Fourteen per cent reported a plan to develop new floating support services and a further 5 per cent had plans to develop specific new support services for children and/or young people. It was very unusual for service providers to report plans to create entirely new specialist accommodation services, such as refuges (3%). However a further 44 per cent stated that they hoped to develop some of their existing services in more modest ways, for example by employing an additional worker.
- 6.56 Survey 1 asked local authority respondents to describe their commissioning plans for domestic violence accommodation and housing related support services over the next two years. In the case of unitary authorities and county councils, these plans were the strategic responsibility of the authority. District councils that responded to Survey 1 were reporting on plans that were predominantly organised at county council level, including under Supporting People arrangements.
- 6.57 Table 6.7 shows that a small number of authorities (9%) reported that the existing housing support services for households at risk of domestic violence in their area were going to be re-commissioned and 16 per cent reported that new services were being commissioned. Six per cent of responding authorities reported that services were being reviewed as part of a comprehensive domestic violence strategy. A majority of areas (69%) did not have specific commissioning plans for accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence in place.

**Table 6.7: Strategic plans for services reported by local authorities**

Specific commissioning plans for new services	All authorities
None reported	69%
Re-commissioning of existing services	9%
Commissioning new services	16%
Services being reviewed within comprehensive DV strategy	6%
All	100%
Base	183

Source: Survey 1. Three authorities did not respond to these questions.

- 6.58 A minority of local authorities (14%) reported there had been decommissioning of one or more accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence during 'the last few years' in their

area<sup>68</sup>. The most common reason given was a lack of efficiency in the service, followed by changes in local strategic priorities and reductions in overall budgets. No pattern was evident in this decommissioning, i.e. services of a particular type were not more likely to be decommissioned than other services.

- 6.59 The research took place at a time in which widespread public expenditure cuts were widely anticipated. It is likely that this exercised at least some influence on how the service providers and local authorities viewed the possibilities for new service development. While plans for new services were modest, they were broadly in line with trends in the sector over recent years (see Table 6.1), i.e. the service providers and local authorities were most frequently engaged with development of new floating support services.

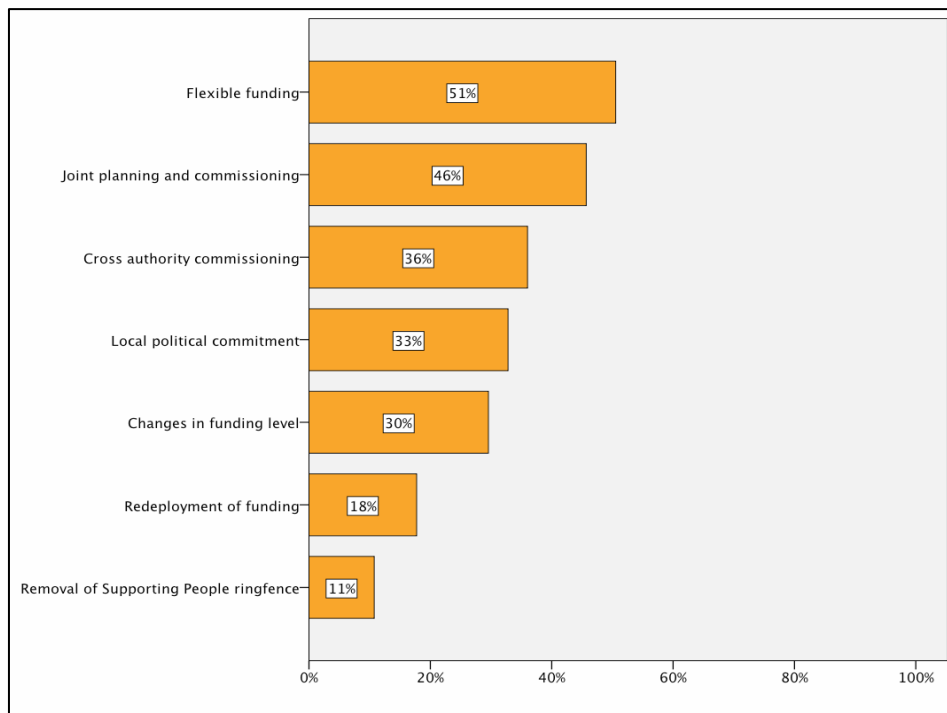
#### **FACTORS ENABLING NEW SERVICE DEVELOPMENT**

- 6.60 Figure 6.2 reports the factors that local authorities responding to Survey 1 identified as enabling the development of new accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence. Flexible funding was most commonly identified (51%) and this was closely followed by joint planning and commissioning arrangements (46%). Just over one-third of authorities (36%) also reported that cross-authority commissioning (i.e. developing services that covered several local authority areas jointly) help develop new services. Local political commitment was also seen as important by one-third of authorities, with smaller groups reporting that changes in or redeployment of funding were important. Only a minority reported that the changes to Supporting People were potentially significant in enabling new service development (11%), but this was prior to those changes being fully implemented.

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<sup>68</sup> Base: 193 local authorities. Note: As Survey 1 respondent authorities included district councils which tended to lack service commissioning powers (unlike county councils, unitary authorities and London boroughs), the question was phrased in terms of any services in their area had been decommissioned.

**Figure 6.2: Factors facilitating new service development reported by local authorities**



Source: Survey 1 Base: 189 authorities.

- 6.61 Local authorities tended to report a high degree of joint working around domestic violence issues. Just over three-quarters (77%) of authorities had a multi-agency domestic violence strategy developed with other agencies with a further one in eight (12%) in the process of developing a multi-agency strategy<sup>69</sup>. London boroughs were the most likely to have a strategy (90%) followed by unitary authorities (83%). District councils were less likely to report the presence of a strategy (66%).
- 6.62 A similarly high proportion of local authorities reported that there was a joint information sharing protocol in place for data sharing between domestic violence services in their area (71%). A further 13 per cent of authorities reported a protocol was in development<sup>70</sup>.
- 6.63 Perceptions of joint working with local authorities were generally positive among service providers (Survey 2). Overall, 77 per cent reported that local agencies worked very or quite well together in tackling domestic violence in their main area of operation. A further 19 per cent described the effectiveness of joint working as 'mixed'. Only a very small number reported that joint working did not function well (4%)<sup>71</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Base: 168 local authorities.

<sup>70</sup> Base: 170 local authorities.

<sup>71</sup> Base: 230 service providers.

- 6.64 Although joint working was perceived as important, there was no statistically significant association with perceptions of joint working and whether a service provider was planning new service development. Similarly, local authorities with a domestic violence strategy in place were no more likely than other authorities to be in the process of commissioning new services.

#### **FACTORS INHIBITING NEW SERVICE DEVELOPMENT**

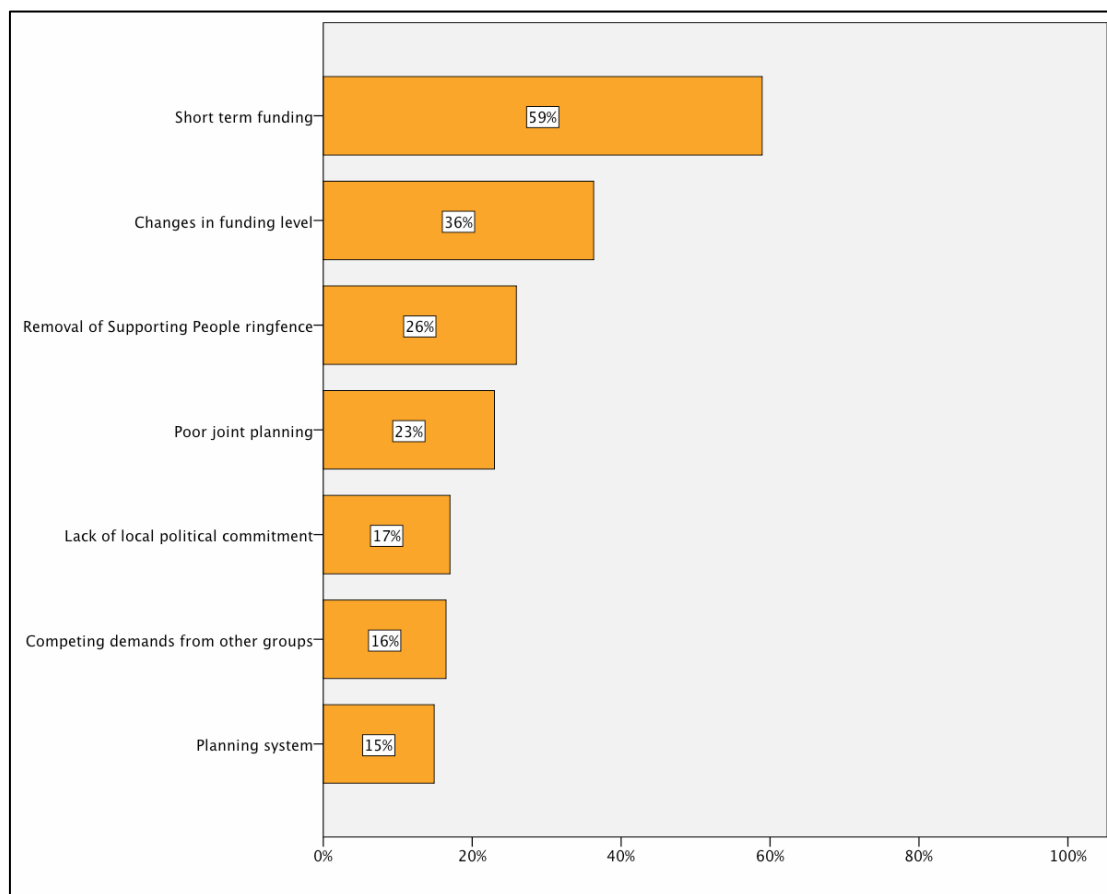
- 6.65 Figure 6.3 summarises the factors that local authorities reported as inhibiting new service development (Survey 1). Short term funding was most commonly identified as an issue (59%), followed by changes in funding (36%). The removal of the Supporting People ringfence was anticipated as having an inhibiting effect by 26 per cent of authorities, but this was of course prior to those changes being fully implemented. Poor joint planning, a lack of local political commitment and competing demands from other groups were reported by a minority of authorities as a potential barrier. The planning system was the factor least likely to be reported as inhibiting new service development (15% of authorities).
- 6.66 Service providers were asked whether they were concerned about the future of any of their services (Survey 2). Seventy-seven per cent of service providers reported concerns about the future of their services<sup>72</sup>. In response to a follow-up question on the reasons for their concerns, service providers reported a range of issues. There were specific concerns that specialist accommodation based services, particularly refuges, were increasingly seen as too 'expensive' relative to floating support by local authorities. The view that specialist accommodation based services were seen as outdated or outmoded by local authority commissioners was also sometimes reported by service providers.

*Current SP contracts end in March 2010, there has been no dialogue about the future of services after this date and the local DV Strategy does not include accommodation based services. Development and service improvement is difficult when funding is short term. The National Indicator relating to DV is broad and prevention based, making it difficult for Refuges to prove their worth (Written response to Survey 2).*

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<sup>72</sup> Base: 215 service providers.

**Figure 6.3: Factors inhibiting new service development reported by local authorities**



Source: Survey 1. Base: 189 authorities.

- 6.67 Some service providers in Survey 2 and the qualitative interviews had related concerns that there were sometimes local policy imperatives to replace specialist domestic violence services with lower cost generalist services.

*Funding is a major issue, up until Sept '08 we ran 3 of the 4 refuges in [city] and floating support which covered most of our central running costs. The refuges are now managed by housing associations and so we are struggling to find other funding to cover core running costs (Written response to Survey 2).*

*... local authorities are commissioning out services which have been run by tried and tested and respected and experienced organisations for thirty years and they are being won by larger generic organisations with no specialist experience because they provide a lower cost per unit but we are seriously concerned about the long-term implications and in fact we might end up setting up a revolving door syndrome...(National stakeholder).*

- 6.68 Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee service providers were particularly worried about the impact of present commissioning patterns on services for the households they supported. One of the providers taking part in the

consultation explained that their local authority was in the process of re-commissioning black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee refuge services so that one provider would be responsible for all groups; this would see the loss of specialist services for Asian women. Research has also documented a reduction in services in this area (Imkaan, 2008).

- 6.69 Only two generic housing support providers took part in the consultation process<sup>73</sup>. It was clear that one of these organisations had experienced a sharp learning curve in delivering services. A high priority had been placed on establishing effective links with specialist services in the community who could deliver additional support services to their service users. For example, one provider could access specialist counselling services and legal services from a specialist domestic violence resource centre in their area. One provider did identify a potential weakness in service provision due to the lack of specialism. It was also notable that both services operated more flexible policies around male visitors than most specialist refuges<sup>74</sup>. However, these generic housing support providers also felt that they could offer some advantages to service users:

*The advantage is that [housing provider] has the good knowledge of housing, providing supported housing, background. Sometimes I think the disadvantage is that they are not specialised in domestic abuse but external training is provided, that can be a bit of a weakness, but it is the sound knowledge of years of being able to provide supported housing services to very many different groups, they have set up so many other services whether it is single homeless or other family units, they know what they are doing, they have the experience, they do set up good services. (Service provider)*

- 6.70 The research did not have any robust evidence on the impact of any shift from specialist to non-specialist accommodation. The results of Survey 1 did not, at the time the data were collected, suggest widespread re-commissioning of services was being planned (Table 6.3). It may have been that a shift towards generic services was less widespread than some service providers anticipated. However, provider concerns were very strongly felt and arguably this area might benefit from further investigation.
- 6.71 At the time of the study, Supporting People had become a key source of funding for the sector, although rarely the sole funder. Some respondents expressed anticipated concerns about the possible impact of changes to the Supporting People programme, in relation to possible reductions in funding

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<sup>73</sup> Other generic providers were invited to attend the consultation process but were unable to attend.

<sup>74</sup> For example, one allowed male visitors by arrangement, the other did not have a specific woman only policy for residents or staffing although in practice they were operating as a women only service.

and possible loss of commissioning expertise for specific domestic violence services (including possible impacts on cross-authority commissioning).

## **Conclusions**

- 6.72 Provision of accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence is undergoing two changes. First, there is a trend towards replacing shared specialist accommodation services with self-contained units. Second, there is evidence of a growing use of floating support services. However, while these trends are both evident, they must be seen in the context of evidence that widespread changes to service provision and service commissioning were not occurring. Most local authorities reported there were no plans to alter service provision in their area.
- 6.73 Supporting People has become a key source of funding for the sector. However, it is more heavily relied on by providers of specialist accommodation based services than providers of other services. In addition, Supporting People is rarely the sole source of funding for services, even if it may often be the most significant.
- 6.74 Service providers tended to report a higher need for additional services than local authorities, especially in the case of specialist accommodation based services. Both local authorities and service providers were least likely to report a need to expand sanctuary scheme services. A high proportion of local authorities and service providers were likely to report the need for more services that could address the needs of particular sub-groups amongst households at risk of domestic violence.



## 7 Overview of service provision and the need for services

### Key points

- The mapping exercise showed no evidence of extensive service 'deserts', i.e. parts of England in which no accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence were available.
- There was significant evidence from the mapping exercise that relative levels of service provision could be variable.
- London had higher relative provision of specialist accommodation services than most regions, but also had lower relative provision of floating support services than most regions. The North East was the opposite of London. Most other regions tended to have similar levels of service provision.
- Service provision was generally not influenced by how rural an authority was. The one exception was London, which tended to have a greater concentration of specialist accommodation services relative to population and a lower concentration of floating support services relative to population.
- When floating support services and specialist accommodation services are examined together, relative rates of provision are higher in the Midlands, North East and Yorkshire and Humberside than elsewhere.
- The North West and the East of England had the lowest relative rates of total provision of floating support and specialist accommodation services.
- There was variation in the level of service provision for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups. Services were, in relative terms, most extensive in the Midlands, London, the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside.
- There is evidence that specialist accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence provide a wider range of services than is the case for accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function.

- Perceptions of the need for services and the extent to which needs were being met varied. Limitations in current data make accurate need projection problematic. There was more consensus on the need for additional provision for particular subgroups at risk of domestic violence than for a general expansion of service provision.

## **Introduction**

- 7.1 This chapter provides an overview of accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence in England. The chapter begins with a brief description of the range of services available, before moving on to explore the extent to which different areas of England are covered by different types of service provision. The chapter then summarises findings on the range of support these services offered. Chapter 7 concludes with a review of the main findings on the adequacy of service provision in England.

## **Service provision in England**

- 7.2 The mapping exercise that formed the core of this research has shown that the three main forms of accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence are specialist accommodation services, predominantly women's refuges (445 services offering 4,035 household places in total, see Chapter 3), floating support services (301 services offering 7,769 household places, see Chapter 4) and sanctuary schemes (covering 77 per cent of district and unitary authorities, see Chapter 2). All three main types of service were used to support the homelessness legislation in both facilitating access to settled housing where needed and, particularly in the case of sanctuary schemes, in helping to prevent homelessness (see chapters 1 and 5).
- 7.3 In addition to these services, there are 71 fixed site services offering, temporary, supported, accommodation to homeless families and other homeless households, which have a secondary domestic violence function (see Chapter 3). Perpetrator schemes also operate, attempting to manage the root cause of the housing loss that can arise as a result of domestic violence (see Chapter 2).

## **THE EXTENT OF SERVICE PROVISION ACROSS ENGLAND**

- 7.4 With the exception of sanctuary schemes, services varied in the extent to which they were a strictly 'local' resource. In the case of both specialist accommodation services and floating support services, it is part of their designed function to offer a service to households outside their area. In particular, 70 per cent of referrals to specialist accommodation services were from outside the local authority area in which they were situated (see Chapter 3). Women, children and, much more unusually, men at risk of domestic

violence, may need to escape a perpetrator by moving to neighbouring, or remote, local authorities.

7.5 Table 7.1 shows service coverage at two levels. As specialist accommodation services and floating support services have a wider catchment area, coverage is shown at county and unitary authority level. Sanctuary provision must, of course, be highly localised because it must be delivered to households at risk of domestic violence in their existing homes. On this basis, the measure employed in Chapter 2 is repeated here, overall sanctuary coverage across all the district councils and unitary authorities in a region.

**Table 7.1: Broad extent of service coverage for the three main service types at regional level**

Regions	Percentage of unitary authorities and counties with specialist accommodation services	Percentage of unitary authorities and counties with floating support services	Percentage of district councils and unitary authorities with sanctuary scheme coverage
East Midlands	100%	100%	65%
East of England	73%	82%	77%
London	97%	76%	88%
North East England	100%	75%	75%
North West England	91%	70%	82%
South East England	89%	74%	70%
South West England	93%	73%	70%
West Midlands	94%	89%	80%
Yorkshire & Humber	93%	93%	95%
Total	93%	79%	77%

Source: Mapping exercise

7.6 Most counties and unitary authorities contained specialist accommodation services (93%). The lowest level of provision was 73 per cent of counties and unitary authorities in the East of England and the highest 100 per cent of these authorities in the East Midlands and North East regions. Floating support services were slightly less widespread (79% of all counties and unitary authorities in England). The lowest level was found among counties and unitary authorities in the North West (70%), the highest in these authorities in the East Midlands (100%).

7.7 Sanctuary provision did not appear, from the results of the mapping exercise, to be available in 23 per cent of the district councils and unitary authorities in England (Table 7.1). The level of provision ranged from 65 per cent of district councils and unitary authorities in the East Midlands to 95 per cent of district

and unitary authorities in Yorkshire and Humberside (Table 7.1 and see Chapter 2).

- 7.8 There were no areas of England which can, with certainty, be characterised as 'service deserts' i.e. as totally lacking access to any form of specific accommodation and floating support services for people at risk of domestic violence. However, there was evidence that the level of service provision was subject to *variation*.

#### **RELATIVE RATES OF SERVICE PROVISION IN ENGLAND**

- 7.9 Table 7.2 summarises the rate of provision of specialist accommodation services and floating support services at regional level. This is measured as the number of household places per 10,000 population. London was mapped as having an average of 1.3 adult places in specialist accommodation services per 10,000 people and 1.1 places for children per 10,000 population. London had a relatively low level of floating support services provision, at an average of 1.2 places per 10,000 population. In all other regions the relative level of floating support services was higher than the relative level of specialist accommodation services.

**Table 7.2: Average (mean) and median places in specialist accommodation services and floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence per 10,000 population at regional level**

Regions	Statistic	Places in specialist accommodation based services per 10,000 population	Places in specialist accommodation based services for children per 10,000 population	Places in floating support per 10,000 population
East Midlands	Mean	0.7	1.0	2.3
	Median	0.7	0.8	2.0
East of England	Mean	0.6	0.7	1.0
	Median	0.7	0.8	1.0
London	Mean	1.3	1.1	1.2
	Median	1.2	1.2	0.7
North East England	Mean	0.7	1.2	2.5
	Median	0.6	1.2	1.5
North West England	Mean	0.7	0.9	1.1
	Median	0.7	0.7	0.8
South East England	Mean	1.0	0.8	1.9
	Median	1.0	0.6	1.2
South West England	Mean	1.0	0.9	1.9
	Median	0.9	1.0	1.3
West Midlands	Mean	1.3	1.2	2.5
	Median	1.0	0.7	2.1
Yorkshire & Humber	Mean	0.8	0.9	2.3
	Median	0.7	1.1	1.9
England	Mean	1.0	1.0	1.7
	Median	0.9	1.0	1.1

Source: Mapping exercise and ONS population projections.

### **RELATIVE OVERALL PROVISION OF FLOATING SUPPORT AND SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION SERVICES**

- 7.10 Table 7.3 shows the rates at which floating support and specialist accommodation services for households at risk of domestic violence were provided on the basis of the total places available, in both sets of services, per 10,000 population. Across England, there was an average of 2.7 places (median 2.1 places) in floating support and specialist accommodation services per 10,000 population.
- 7.11 As can be seen, on this measure, the Midlands, North East England and Yorkshire and Humber had the highest, relative, provision of services. London, which had higher than typical rates of specialist accommodation services, but lower rates of floating support services, is not particularly high up

the table on this measure. The North West and the East of England had the lowest relative rates of overall provision of floating support and specialist accommodation services. Relative levels of combined floating support services and specialist accommodation service places per 10,000 population were not related to how rural an authority was.

**Table 7.3: Average (mean) and median places in both specialist accommodation services and floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence per 10,000 population at regional level**

Regions	Average (mean) places in floating support and specialist accommodation services per 10,000 population	Median places in floating support and specialist accommodation services per 10,000 population
West Midlands	3.7	3.5
North East England	3.3	2.0
East Midlands	3.1	3.1
Yorkshire & Humber	3.0	2.7
South East England	2.9	2.1
South West England	2.9	2.2
Greater London	2.5	2.2
North West England	1.8	1.5
East of England	1.6	1.8
England	2.7	2.1

Source: Mapping exercise and ONS population projections.

## **OVERVIEW OF SERVICE PROVISION FOR BLACK, ASIAN, MINORITY ETHNIC AND REFUGEE GROUPS IN ENGLAND**

- 7.12 Table 7.4 summarises the level of overall service provision for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups by region. The average rate of provision of these services was two household places per 10,000 people with an ethnic minority origin. Relative provision was at its highest, in terms of household places per 10,000 people with an ethnic minority origin, in the Yorkshire and Humberside (4.2), followed by the Midlands (3.2, East and 2.5, West), and London (2.4). There was evidence of variation in the level of service provision, with some regions, despite having quite large ethnic minority populations, reporting lower relative levels of service provision.

**Table 7.4: Relative levels of places in all floating support and specialist accommodation based services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee women and women with children at risk of domestic violence**

Region	Total household places in floating support and specialist accommodation services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups	Average places per ten thousand of ethnic minority population
Yorkshire & Humber	204	4.2
East Midlands	129	3.2
West Midlands	187	2.5
London	570	2.4
North West	57	1.1
South East	57	0.9
North East	4	0.3
East of England	4	0.1
South West	0	0
<b>Total</b>	1,212	2.0

**Source:** Mapping exercise and ONS Experimental projections of ethnic population (2007)

### The range of support provided

- 7.13 The research showed that a wide range of support was provided by specialist accommodation based services and by floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence. Welfare advice, help with securing and sustaining suitable housing and help with safety planning, were all prominent. Some forms of support, such as parenting advice were provided at slightly lower rates by floating support services than specialist accommodation services (85% compared to 93%, see Table 7.5). However, most floating support services and specialist accommodation services provided extensive support, including counselling and safety planning.
- 7.14 Table 7.5 shows that there was evidence that accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function provided some forms of support at a lower rate than specialist services. These services appeared to be primarily designed for homelessness, rather than domestic violence, and focused on resettlement and tenancy sustainment. They were less likely to offer services like counselling, safety planning, parenting and legal advice.
- 7.15 Specialist accommodation services were the most likely to offer education, training and employment services (81%), followed by floating support services

for households at risk of domestic violence (70%) and accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function (53%) (Table 7.5).

**Table 7.5: Commonly provided support offered by housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence**

Type of support	Specialist accommodation services	Floating support services	Accommodation based services with a secondary domestic violence function
Welfare advice	96%	91%	69%
Help with homelessness applications	96%	88%	69%
Other help with accessing housing <sup>1</sup>	94%	94%	69%
Safety planning	94%	96%	53%
Parenting advice	93%	85%	56%
Help setting up a new home	93%	88%	63%
Support with health needs	91%	84%	59%
Counselling	83%	85%	41%
Debt management advice	83%	81%	56%
Social activities	83%	60%	44%
Education, Training and employment support	81%	70%	53%
Substance misuse support	78%	74%	56%
Legal advice	67%	70%	34%

Source: Survey 2 <sup>1</sup> All forms of assistance with accessing or sustaining social rented, private rented and/or owner occupation

7.16 The (Supporting People) Outcomes Data for 2008-09 show the kinds of support women at risk of domestic violence had received while they were using housing support services<sup>75</sup>. Help with developing self confidence and with exercising choice and control in their lives was the most commonly recorded form of support that services reported delivering (75%). This was very closely followed by support in avoiding harm from others (74%). Other prominent forms of support were with maximising income (including ensuring all the benefits for which a household was eligible were being claimed) and with social support and external services. This latter category included help both with accessing social support from friends and family, but also included help with linking up with external services where needed (59%). There were close parallels between what the 2008-09 Outcomes Data reported and the findings of Survey 2.

<sup>75</sup> The (Supporting People) Outcomes Data are a generic, administrative, dataset that is intended to be equally applicable to any form of housing support service working with any group of people. This means the data collection is mainly designed to focus on shared core activities by services and not reflect their particular specialism.



## **The adequacy of service provision in England relative to need**

### **DIFFICULTIES IN ESTIMATING NEED**

7.17 There are two sets of reasons as to why it is difficult to model and understand the level of need for accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence in England:

- A specific set of individual needs, characteristics and experiences can often be met with a variety of service responses. A household at immediate direct risk of physical harm might be best served by a specialist accommodation service that can provide both security and support quickly (providing a place is available). However, where the threat is less immediate, a sanctuary scheme, floating support services or specialist accommodation service could all provide necessary supports. Ascribing a particular housing support response to a specific set of needs is problematic. Coupled to this, local authorities exercise control over what service mix they choose to commission. Authorities legitimately opt to respond to local need in different ways, prioritising different service mixes. Attempting to recommend or impose a standardised service mix, or level of provision, is problematic in this context.
- The available detailed data on services are entirely administrative. These data have two key limitations, the first is these data only cover need expressed through direct service contact, which is not the same as all need. The second is that these data apply only to State funded services. There is no survey data and no reliable basis on which to project the likely level of need for services in the general population. It is known that the level of domestic violence exceeds service provision by some considerable margin (see Chapter 1), but there is no robust basis on which to estimate the level of unexpressed need within this population.

7.18 In this research we attempted to derive information on the extent to which local needs were being met by asking key national stakeholders, service providers and local authority respondents for their views (see Chapter 6).

### **VIEWS ON THE NEED FOR SERVICES**

7.19 Local authorities did not report extensive plans to commission or re-commission services. Importantly, there was no statistically demonstrable relationship between absolute or relative levels of service provision and an expressed need to commission new services (Chapter 6). This suggested that local authorities were not using comparative analysis, for example comparing themselves with similar authorities, to determine whether there

might be a need for additional accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence in England.

- 7.20 Service providers and local authorities tended to be close to one another in their assessment of the need for specialist services for specific groups of people at risk of domestic violence. This may be particularly the case in respect of services for people with no recourse to public funds and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and services for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups. Urban authorities were, however, generally closer to the service providers in this respect than rural local authorities (see Chapter 6).
- 7.21 There was more of a distance between local authorities and service providers in terms of the perceived need for floating support services and specialist accommodation services that were available to any household at risk of domestic violence. Generally, local authorities saw less need for services than service providers (see Chapter 6), although both expressed a need for some expansion in these two areas.

### **Conclusions**

- 7.22 This research has explored the extent, nature and need for accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence. The mapping exercise has provided a detailed picture of the extent, coverage and broad nature of service provision in England. The two surveys have, respectively, allowed exploration of local authority commissioning plans and a more detailed understanding of what services provide and what the perceptions of service providers and local authorities are. The qualitative work has also provided a more detailed understanding of the role of services and areas that need improving.
- 7.23 The research found that although there are no service ‘deserts’ in terms of provision, some areas in England appear to have a more extensive range of accommodation and housing related services for households at risk of domestic violence than others. There is some provision of accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence almost everywhere in England. However, the relative level of that service provision is variable, at both regional and local level. Views on the extent to which specialist accommodation and floating support services need to be expanded differs between local authorities and service providers, although the need for some expansion of both is indicated. There is greater consensus about there being a need to increase specialised services for specific subgroups at risk of domestic violence, such as black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee groups. Finally, it is interesting to note that there is presently no statistically demonstrable relationship between local, relative, levels of service provision and local authority commissioning strategies.

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## Appendix 1: Research methods

### Introduction

A.1 This appendix outlines the methodology used for the study. The research utilised a mixed method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative work. There were five main methods used in the study:

- a mapping exercise covering all accommodation and housing related support services for people at risk of domestic violence in England
- a survey of local authorities (Survey 1)
- a survey of service providers (Survey 2)
- a programme of qualitative interviews and consultation events, and
- analysis of other key national data on accommodation and support services for households at risk of domestic violence

### The mapping exercise

A.2 The central aim of the study was to identify the full range of accommodation and housing related support options available to households at risk of domestic violence. The mapping exercise was based on direct data collection and analysis of administrative data. Each service mapped was verified by at least two data sources. The mapping exercise involved five specific stages:

1. Extraction of data on services for people at risk of domestic violence from the Supporting People Local System. The Supporting People Local System is a centrally held database of all housing support services funded through the Supporting People programme which is periodically updated by local authorities. The Supporting People Local System is designed to record the size, function and distribution of accommodation based services and floating housing support services in England. Details are also collected on services that identify 'women escaping domestic violence' as a secondary client group. The database from the first quarter of 2009 was employed.
2. The Supporting People Local System was cross checked against the 'UK Gold Book' 2009/10. The UK Gold Book is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and Comic Relief, and is produced by the Women's Aid Federation of England. The information is collected through the UKrefugesonline project which is run in partnership by the leading domestic violence agencies across the UK: Women's Aid Federation of England, Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland, Scottish Women's Aid and Welsh Women's Aid. The UK Gold Book is a directory for refuge and domestic abuse services with over 450 entries, and is used

as a reference tool for professionals and agencies working with survivors of domestic violence.

3. The data from Supporting People Local System/Gold Book were cross checked by a survey of local authorities (Survey 1, see below for more details). Survey 1 was based on sending each authority the Supporting People Local System data on the domestic violence accommodation and housing related services in its administrative area and asking if it were correct. If the data were out of date, incomplete or otherwise incorrect, local authorities were asked to update it. Initially, homelessness lead officers in local housing authorities were surveyed. If was no response from homelessness lead officers after they had been contacted for a second time, independent domestic violence advisors or Supporting People teams (were present) were instead sent Survey 1. Authorities that still did not respond to Survey 1 at this point were then asked just to provide a list of accommodation related domestic violence services, which the research team then crossed checked against the Supporting People Local System/Gold Book data. Authorities were also asked to provide PO Box numbers or email addresses for the services in their area.
  4. If an authority reported that it did not know some details of the services in its area, web based searches were focused on that area to attempt to complete the information. Where no response was received from Survey 1, web based searches were employed to attempt to verify if the Supporting People Local System data were correct.
  5. Using the details provided by local authorities, and with the direct assistance of Women's Aid and Refuge, a survey of service providers was conducted (Survey 2, see below for more details). Survey 2 sought to investigate the nature of service delivery in the sector, but was also intended as a further cross check on the details of service provision as reported in the Supporting People Local System, Survey 1 and the UK Gold Book and from web searches.
- A.3 In relation to sanctuary scheme provision, an additional stage was added to the mapping exercise. The results were cross checked against newly collected data on homelessness prevention collected by housing authorities in England for 2008-09, specifically the number of instances where homelessness was prevented by a housing authority through the use of a sanctuary scheme. These data are collected as part of the P1E, the quarterly return on the implementation of the statutory homelessness system completed by local housing authorities in England.
- A.4 The mapping exercise therefore involved the use of up to five data collection exercises to verify the existence, function, size and nature of each accommodation related domestic violence service in England. As noted above, each service mapped was verified by at least two data sources.

- A.5 The mapping exercise was based on commissioning level authorities, as the administrative data are collated at that level. This means the data were collected, analysed and are reported at the level of county councils in two tier areas, unitary authorities in single tier areas and at the level of individual boroughs in London. All analysis was according to the local government boundaries established in the 2009 reorganisation<sup>76</sup>.
- A.6 The mapping exercise suggested that the Supporting People Local System database was quite often incomplete or inaccurate. The reasons for these errors are not entirely clear as they were not directly investigated by the current research. However, one factor is that not all services received Supporting People funding and therefore were not included on the database (see Chapter 6). Table A1 provides a summary of the primary source of information used to map services in England. The Supporting People Local System/Gold Book accurately mapped 65 per cent of services across England, but an additional 17 per cent of services were mapped by Survey 1, 16 per cent by Survey 2 and 3 per cent from web searches.

**Table A1: Summary of sources of information used to map services by region**

Region	Sources of information used to map the services (as percentage of all services)				Total	Total services mapped
	Service mapped by cross checking SPLS with Gold Book	Service mapped by cross checking SPLS/ Gold Book with Survey 1	Service mapped by cross checking SPLS/Gold Book/Survey 1 with Survey 2	Service mapped by cross checking SPLS/Gold Book/Survey 1 & 2 with web searches		
North East	71%	19%	7%	3%	100%	59
North West	68%	23%	10%	0%	100%	145
Yorkshire & Humber	69%	10%	19%	3%	100%	112
East Midlands	61%	16%	20%	3%	100%	145
West Midlands	66%	12%	19%	3%	100%	95
East of England	60%	19%	19%	2%	100%	94
London	71%	11%	14%	4%	100%	188
South East	55%	26%	17%	2%	100%	155
South West	71%	11%	17%	1%	100%	88
England	65%	17%	16%	3%	100%	1,081

Sources: SPLS (2009), UK Gold Book, Survey 1, Survey 2, Web searches (Mapping Exercise).

## Survey 1

- A.7 Homelessness and 'housing options' sections in all local housing authorities (N=343) were surveyed to identify the full range of accommodation and housing related support provision at a local level accessible to households at

<sup>76</sup> <http://neighborhood.statistics.gov.uk/>



risk of domestic violence. Local housing authorities were approached as they have strategic responsibility for the delivery of a housing and homelessness strategy at a local level and would be familiar with the sector due to their statutory duties to women at risk of domestic violence who are owed the main homelessness duty.

A.8 Authorities were sent a list of accommodation related domestic violence services from the Supporting People Local System/Gold Book for this administrative area and asked to check, correct and amend this list accordingly. Authorities were asked to include the following range of services:

- emergency and/or temporary accommodation that may be used for households at risk of domestic violence including refuges, hostels or supported housing (which may or may not have a specialist focus on domestic violence)
- outreach or floating support services where specialist support workers visit and support people in temporary accommodation or the community
- services that provide help for households at risk of domestic violence to stay in their own homes, including 'Sanctuary' schemes
- advice services that can help households at risk of domestic violence find new housing if they need to do so
- resettlement/floating support services that enable and support households at risk of domestic violence with setting up a new home or managing a tenancy
- any transitional or move-on accommodation used for this client group, and
- any other specialist services or workers that support households at risk of domestic violence with accommodation related issues, for example independent domestic violence advisors or victim support services where they are providing housing related support as part of their role

A.9 Authorities were also asked a series of questions to explore their views on the adequacy of different types of services and the overall appropriateness of the service mix in their area including:

- types of temporary accommodation used for statutorily homeless households
- ability to discharge the homelessness main duty
- any specific allocation policies for households at risk of domestic violence
- information on services at a local level
- need for any new types of accommodation or housing related support, or expansion/contraction of existing provision

- commissioning of services and factors facilitating or acting as a barrier to service development, and
  - joint working arrangements
- A.10 As detailed above, after a second reminder had been issued to homelessness sections, the researchers also contacted independent domestic violence advisors for those areas from which there had been either no response or, in the case of rural counties containing several district councils, a response had been received from less than 75 per cent of districts approached. As independent domestic violence advisors tend to be found at county level in rural/mixed areas this meant that a different tier of local government was approached in some rural areas. Finally, Supporting People teams at county level in these areas were also contacted (as well as independent domestic violence advisors sometimes referring the questionnaire to those teams). In a few cases, this meant that responses were eventually received from some district council homelessness sections and from the independent domestic violence advisor or Supporting People team at county level in the same area. Non-responding authorities each received at least three separate requests for information. The third reminder asked authorities to provide a list of services in their areas, even if they were unable also to complete the full questionnaire, which the research team then cross-checked with Supporting People Local System.
- A.11 The survey of local authorities coincided with a period of local government reorganisation. One consequence of this was that there were a small number of responses from authorities that were about to undergo administrative change. In two cases, district councils that were about to be replaced by new unitary authorities responded to the questionnaire. There were also difficulties in securing responses from a couple of the areas that were in the midst of reorganisation.
- A.12 Full responses were received from 185 authorities with an additional 67 authorities providing a list of accommodation related services used by households at risk of domestic violence in their area. Attaching a rate of response to this questionnaire is slightly more complex than is usually the case because the questionnaire was sent to more than one survey sample in order to maximise information on services across England. The extent to which different regions were represented in the responses is shown in Table A2. As can be seen, overall coverage was generally quite good for each of the government office regions in England except the North East. However, the mapping exercise also included the use of the Supporting People Local System database, UK Gold Book and Survey 2 and web searches, so we still expect accurate service mapping for the North East (see above).
- A.13 The overall response rate for full questionnaires was 54 per cent, rising to 73 per cent for partial responses. The response rate exceeded 50 per cent in

most regions, with only one region (North East) returning a poor response rate of 22 per cent. The lower response rate for the North East, while not a particular concern in respect of service mapping, is more of a concern in terms of accurately representing the perceptions of authorities in this region. The lower response rate does mean the confidence with which responses from this region can be viewed is more limited than that for other regions.

**Table A2: Responses to Survey 1 by Government Office Region**

Area	Authorities approached	Full response	Partial response <sup>1</sup>	Full responses as %	All responses as %
North East	23	5	4	22%	39%
North West	43	25	6	58%	72%
Yorkshire and Humber	21	14	3	67%	81%
East Midlands	39	18	6	46%	62%
West Midlands	30	17	5	57%	73%
East of England	47	24	11	51%	74%
London	33	20	7	61%	82%
South East	67	40	19	60%	88%
South West	40	22	6	55%	70%
<b>All</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>73%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Local authority only provided a list of accommodation related services for households at risk of domestic violence within its administrative area.

**Note:** There are 352 authorities in England (district, county and unitary) but nine county councils were not surveyed as more than 75% of the district councils in their administrative area responded to the survey.

## Survey 2

- A.14 Although Survey 1 allowed the collection of some email addresses and PO box addresses for services, it did not provide a comprehensive means of contacting services, partly because not all local authorities had the contact details of services and partly because not all authorities responded. In discussion with the Department for Communities and Local Government and Women's Aid, it was decided that the most effective way of conducting a survey of service providers would be via the assistance of Women's Aid. Women's Aid's mailing list of providers was therefore used to distribute this second survey, with the process being handled by Women's Aid to minimise any risk to the security of their contacts database. The Women's Aid list (name and type of service by local authority in which situated, but no other details) was checked against the CHP mapping database as the Women's Aid list did not always include services provided by statutory bodies and/or non-women only services. These additional providers were contacted directly by CHP, usually by email (a Web search or telephone call was usually required to identify a contact name and/or PO box).

- A.15 Survey 2 gathered more detailed information on services than Survey 1. Many service providers deliver several types of service at once. To reflect this, the survey was split into a number of sections allowing providers to record a range of services<sup>77</sup> including:
- women’s refuges
  - specialist accommodation for men at risk of domestic violence
  - non-specialist temporary accommodation (such as hostels and supported housing which is routinely/ frequently used for households at risk of domestic violence but is also used to accommodate other groups)
  - sanctuary scheme services
  - floating support and outreach services
  - specialist domestic violence housing advice services
- A.16 Within each section, a number of questions were asked about the nature of the services including:
- type of provision
  - location of operation
  - sources of referral
  - capacity (maximum number of households that could be accommodated and/or supported)
  - target client groups and any exclusions
  - provision of any additional/ follow-on support
  - type of support provided for households, including children
  - demand for the service, and
  - overall assessment of extent to which meet demand and needs
- A.17 A final section asked about issues relevant to all providers including funding, development plans, joint working and the overall need for expansion or contraction of services for households at risk of domestic violence.
- A.18 The providers range in size from national level agencies, such as Refuge, down to small individual projects within one local authority area. In addition, there are also umbrella organisations encompassing varying numbers of quasi-independent services. Overall, 257 agencies responded.
- A.19 The response rate for Survey 2 can be expressed in terms of the proportion of services that were identified in the finalised mapping exercise for England

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<sup>77</sup> See Glossary for full definitions of the different types of services.

(incorporating changes made as a result of the survey of local authorities). On this basis, the responses to Survey 2 accounted for:

- Three hundred and twenty-one refuges and specialist accommodation based services for households at risk of domestic violence managed by 156 agencies (72% of the total of 445 services of this sort mapped in England).
- Two hundred and twenty-six floating support services for households at risk of domestic violence managed by 129 service providers (75% of the total of 301 such services mapped in England).
- Sixty-five sanctuary schemes provided by 63 service providers (26% of the 251 local housing authorities that reported they provided, or had access to, a sanctuary scheme service in England).

### **Qualitative research**

A.20 A programme of qualitative research was undertaken, involving a total of 30 agency representatives and 44 service users, across three areas:

- telephone interviews with key national stakeholders
- focus groups with service users
- national consultation events

#### **TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH KEY NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS**

A.21 Detailed interviews were conducted with eight national experts to explore the overall patterns of service provision and possible areas of unmet need at the outset of the project. This included representatives within government departments, specialist domestic violence organisations and a national homelessness organisation. The key themes and issues that emerged from the interviews informed the development of the survey of local authorities and service providers.

#### **FOCUS GROUPS WITH SERVICE USERS**

A.22 Five focus groups (three in London, one in the Midlands and one in the North East) were conducted with service users involving a total of 44 women who had experienced domestic violence and were utilising refuge provision (the majority of people), floating support or sanctuary provision. One group was held in a refuge that accepted women from all over the country, and all participants were living in the refuge at that time. Two groups were held in Women's Centres and participants were in contact with these services, and living in a range of different settings. Finally two groups were held with women from different black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities: almost all the participants in these groups were living in refuges. The youngest participant was 18 years and the oldest 67. Most women had children.

- A.23 It was also intended to include a focus group with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered and one with men but this did not prove possible.
- A.24 With regard to conducting a group with people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community, discussions with one of the main providers of specialist housing services suggested that such an approach was unlikely to be viable, as there were very different issues and experiences of domestic violence within different sectors of the community, and it was felt that few if any individuals would be willing to participate in a group or be willing to be interviewed by a researcher. In order to gain some insights into the particular housing and support needs of people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community, it was decided to undertake a small number of telephone interviews with representatives of provider organisations. Three interviews with key service providers were undertaken.
- A.25 Groups with men proved difficult to organise. Experts from the sector felt that there are so few services for men in any one place that it would be difficult to find an area where there would be sufficient potential participants. Agencies also advised the researchers that men's experiences and needs for services are quite different from those of women, and they are often seeking advice over legal and financial matters rather than accommodation. Moreover the experience of providers suggested that men are more reluctant than women to participate in group discussions. There were also concerns that some men who present as victims of domestic violence can be the primary aggressors in their situation, and may report as victims for a variety of reasons – perhaps to cause trouble for their partner or in some cases in the hope of gaining quicker access to housing. Instead, contact was made with a national organisation providing a help line telephone service for male victims of domestic violence. The workers taking calls were asked to recruit potential participants to the study from men who called the service with housing related issues over a given period of time, with the intention of carrying out a telephone interview with a member of the York research team. Unfortunately only one potential interviewee was recruited in this way and the research team was ultimately unable to make contact with this person. A national stakeholder with experience of delivering services to men experiencing domestic violence was however interviewed as part of the first round of telephone interviews (see above).
- A.26 A topic guide for the service user interviews was designed which covered the following broad themes:
- accessing services
  - help received from services (including for children)
  - adequacy of assistance
  - comparisons to any prior experience of services

- the impact of the service on people's lives, and
- housing options and move on possibilities

### **A NATIONAL CONSULTATION EXERCISE WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS**

- A.27 Two consultation exercises were undertaken with local service providers (one in London and one in York). Fifteen representatives attended the two groups. A balance of statutory and voluntary sector providers (specialist and generic) were invited but attendees were mainly specialist voluntary sector providers (N=12, with three statutory sector representatives).
- A.28 A further two telephone interviews were conducted with generic housing providers delivering domestic violence accommodation based services, and also two interviews with a specialist service providers in the North East.
- A.29 At each consultation event, the preliminary findings from the project were presented and discussed with the group. People were also asked to present their experiences and views on a number of emerging key topics including:
- the accommodation and support needs of households at risk of domestic violence
  - specific needs for any particular groups of people
  - the extent to which provision meets current needs
  - information and access to provision
  - strengths and weaknesses of different models of provision
  - access to housing, and
  - development priorities and commissioning structures

### **Key national data on accommodation and support services for households at risk of domestic violence**

- A.30 The Supporting People Client Record is a database of all housing support service delivery in England. The Client Record does not produce data on identifiable individuals or households but instead records the delivery of services (e.g. the total stays in refuges rather than the number of women staying in refuges). These data therefore do not represent a census of people using Supporting People funded services. In this report, these data were mainly employed to look at changing patterns of housing support service provision for households at risk of domestic violence (see Chapter 6).
- A.31 The Supporting People Outcomes Data comprises short exit interviews with people leaving housing support services. It is designed to determine their housing situations, their economic position and general well-being. For example, in relation to specialist accommodation based services for women at risk of domestic violence, the Outcomes Data records the proportion who exit

these services without a clear housing destination, alongside those who whose housing needs appear to have been met. There is also information on familial social support and social support from friends, alongside data on mental and physical health, including substance misuse. For this report, the main focus of this part of the data analysis was to look at emergent evidence on service outcomes (see Chapter 6).

- A.32 The CORE data record all new lets to almost all social housing in England. They include details on household composition, ethnicity, economic status, support needs and whether a household has been homeless. For this report, these data were used to look at the housing pathways of statutorily and non-statutorily homeless people at risk of domestic violence who had left their existing accommodation (see Chapter 5).
- A.33 P1E data records the discharge of duty towards homeless households under the statutory homelessness system by local housing authorities. Since 2008/9 this has included basic data on homelessness prevention. The data were used in this report in two ways. First, they were employed to look at how the statutory homelessness system assisted households at risk of domestic violence who were aimed the main homelessness duty (see Chapter 1 and 5). Second, the data were used to look at how sanctuary scheme provision is being used to prevent homelessness and to cross check the results of the mapping exercise in respect of sanctuary scheme provision.



Department for Communities and Local Government  
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**ISBN: 978 1 4098 2598 2**