



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Domestic Abuse Services

Future Delivery of Support to Victims and their Children in
Accommodation-Based Domestic Abuse Services



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Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation:	This paper seeks views on the Government's proposals for a new approach to delivering support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England.
Scope of this consultation:	This consultation relates to support for all victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services.
Geographical scope:	These proposals relate to England only. The UK Government will be discussing these issues with devolved administrations.
Impact Assessment:	The purpose of the consultation is to gather evidence and seek views on the delivery of support services to victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services. Any policy changes brought forward as a result of the consultation would be subject to appropriate assessment.

Basic Information

Duration:	This consultation will last for 12 weeks from 13 May to 2 August 2019
Enquiries:	For any enquiries about the consultation please contact: DomesticAbuse.Review@communities.gov.uk
How to respond:	We encourage you to respond by completing an online survey at: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MHCLG-DAAccomodationServicesConsultation If for exceptional reasons you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it to: Domestic Abuse Team 3 rd Floor Fry Building Home Office 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF DomesticAbuse.ReviewAudit@communities.gov.uk

Ministerial Foreword

Two million adults are victims of domestic abuse each year, with women twice as likely to be victims. But its effects on our society can be more pernicious still – abuse in the home can have an impact on children’s long-term health and behaviour.

No one should have to suffer the pain of this abhorrent crime. It is why this Government has made tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims a priority; it is a challenge we are determined to meet on a number of fronts. Our Domestic Abuse Bill, published in January this year, is the most comprehensive package ever to tackle domestic abuse.

But this is one part of a wider effort across government. My department – with our central role in housing and local government – has an essential part to play in tackling the scourge of domestic abuse. Our efforts are particularly focused on ensuring victims and their children live in safe accommodation and receive the support they need. Since 2014 we have invested over £55 million to that end.

With our support, this important work is succeeding at the local level. For example, we have seen how Adur and Worthing Council are supporting marginalised and BAME victims, and how Norfolk County Council’s ANCHOR initiative is ensuring tailored individual support for domestic abuse survivors’ recovery. There are many such projects, and all are a real credit to local leadership. But significantly, they also demonstrate the success of accommodation-based services.

But it is clear there is much more we can be doing in this regard and we are determined that survivors and their families will be able to get the support they need. We have reviewed the current system and listened to the views of expert stakeholders and we are for the first time proposing, through this consultation, a new legal duty on local authorities to deliver support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services. This will be supported by statutory guidance. This meets our manifesto commitment to review funding for refuges and continues our work on the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy.

It is our duty to ensure that victims and survivors can receive help and we look forward to hearing from a wide range of people on our proposals. As well as the victims themselves, we are also keen to hear from key professionals, service providers, local authorities, police and crime commissioners and other relevant public agencies. At the same time, we want all local areas to have an opportunity to learn from one another, and we have attached a call for evidence to enable this.

Safe accommodation and support continue to play a critical role in how we respond to domestic abuse. But we must also focus on the individual needs and circumstances of victims and their children, such as families who need to stay close to their support networks, or the children who need to remain in their existing schools. It means that, regardless of whether accommodation is emergency, temporary or dispersed, we must do all we can to make the right support services available.

We would like to express my gratitude to all of the organisations and individuals who work so tirelessly to ensure that victims and their children have access to the support they

need every day. Their excellent work has left me convinced that, working together, we will transform through these important measures the future provision of support. Ultimately, this will help ensure more victims and their families better overcome their experiences and move on to live full and independent lives.

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Mrs Heather Wheeler MP

**Minister for Housing and Homelessness
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**

Introduction

1. This paper seeks views on the Government's proposals for a new approach to delivering support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England. Through this consultation, we would like to hear from victims and survivors, service providers, local authorities and other public agencies, as well as other professionals who support victims and their children every day.
2. We know how important high-quality support is to helping victims and their children to recover from the trauma of abuse and move on with their lives. We know that there are dedicated professionals working across England to provide this support, whether this is through managing a refuge, helping children through play therapy, providing counselling or supporting victims with complex needs. But we know that there is more to do to ensure all victims and their children receive the support they need, when they need it. This includes supporting BAME, LGBT and disabled victims who may currently struggle to access support, and we have specifically considered the support needs of victims with protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act.
3. We understand that the funding and commissioning of this support is a vital accompaniment to providing a safe place to live. Our proposals focus both on the future provision of support to victims and their children in accommodation-based services such as refuges and dispersed accommodation. We use the term 'accommodation-based services' throughout this paper to cover all forms of safe accommodation in which victims and their children may live.
4. We have worked closely with specialist domestic abuse organisations, local authorities and other bodies which support victims of domestic abuse, drawing on their experience, expertise and data as we developed these proposals. We believe our proposals will deliver more sustainable support services, improved national coverage and greater accountability for provision of support.
5. Local government plays an important leadership role in delivering domestic abuse services. Our proposed approach places local authorities at the heart of future commissioning of support for victims and their children. However, we also know that local authorities cannot do this alone and need to draw on the expertise of a wide range of partners to ensure their response to domestic abuse is as robust, collaborative and effective as it can be.
6. Our proposals would place a new, statutory duty on Tier 1 local authorities (in this instance, County Councils, Metropolitan and Unitary Authorities and the Greater London Authority) to convene a Local Partnership Board for domestic abuse accommodation support services. This Board should include representation from Police and Crime Commissioners, health bodies, children's services and housing providers, along with specialist domestic abuse service providers. The Board would be required to assess need for domestic abuse services, develop and publish domestic abuse strategies, decide what support services are required and commission these accordingly and report progress back to MHCLG.

7. Tier 2 local authorities in two-tier areas (District, City and Borough Councils) will have an important role to play in contributing to needs assessments, strategy development and reporting on progress on outcomes. In some cases, it will be Tier 2 authorities which commission the support services in line with the wider strategy for the area. Tier 2 authorities would be subject to a statutory duty to co-operate with the Local Partnership Board.
8. We want to help local authorities and Local Partnership Boards to meet these new requirements and transform the provision of support to victims of this devastating crime. We are therefore proposing that Government should produce statutory guidance making our expectations clear.
9. Through this paper, we are seeking views on the following areas:
 - **Defining accommodation-based services and support**
 - **Leadership and responsibilities**
 - **Local and national accountability**
 - **Guidance**
 - **Supporting all victims of domestic abuse**

PART 1: A Review of Domestic Abuse Services

Chapter 1: Background

10. At the 2017 General Election, the Prime Minister made a Manifesto commitment to review funding for refuges.¹ MHCLG also committed in the 2016 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy² to review the locally-led approach to commissioning of domestic abuse services. To meet these commitments, MHCLG began a full review of the funding and commissioning of domestic abuse services in England in January 2018. This review complements wider Government work on a new Domestic Abuse Bill and supporting non-legislative package as well as an update of the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy.
11. The VAWG Strategy was published in March 2016 and has since been updated with the publication of the VAWG Strategy refresh on 6 March 2019³. The Strategy makes clear commitments to ensure no woman is turned away from the support she needs and that all victims get the right support at the right time. It seeks to drive a local transformation of service provision and to provide support to local commissioners so that all areas rise to the level of the best. The VAWG National Statement of Expectations⁴ sets out what local areas need to put in place in response to wider violence against women and girls.
12. Tackling domestic abuse is a vital part of the Government response to VAWG. MHCLG, as the lead for Government on housing, has a critical role to play in the provision of refuge and safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse, along with support for local authorities to improve the commissioning of all domestic abuse accommodation-based services. MHCLG has worked closely with other Government departments to develop these proposals for consultation, recognising that tackling domestic abuse is a cross-Government responsibility. Domestic abuse cannot be considered in isolation from the wider Violence Against Women and Girls agenda, work to support victims of crime, educate young people about healthy relationships and support victims with substance misuse and mental health issues. We will ensure that our approach is joined-up with other key Government strategies.
13. The Home Office and the Ministry of Justice recently consulted on the Government's approach to dealing with wider impacts of domestic abuse, addressing it at every stage from prevention to rehabilitation, reinforcing the aim to make domestic abuse everyone's

¹ <https://www.conervatives.com/manifesto>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/783596/VAWG%20Strategy%20Refresh%20Web%20Accessible.pdf

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-national-statement-of-expectations>

business.⁵ The consultation sought views on both the legislative proposals for the forthcoming landmark Domestic Abuse Bill and a package of practical action. The Government has been clear that having the right services to protect and support victims of domestic abuse will make individuals and families safe, sooner. **This includes having a safe place to stay and the support for victims and their children to rebuild their lives.**

14. There is significant demand for domestic abuse services. An estimated 1.9 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales for the year ending March 2017.⁶
15. Domestic abuse can have a devastating, long term impact on children. Research suggests that between a quarter and a third of children in the UK have been exposed to domestic abuse, and the Children's Commissioner estimates that roughly 6-7% of children in England live with an adult who has experienced domestic abuse in the past year.⁷ Exposure to domestic abuse in the home has been found to have an impact on long term health and behavioural outcomes.⁸
16. Government recognises the critical importance of safe accommodation and support for victims and their children as they rebuild their lives after the trauma of domestic abuse. Since 2014, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has invested £33.5 million in domestic abuse services and safe accommodation to support victims and their families. An additional £22 million has recently been awarded to projects across the country to help to create more than 2,200 bed spaces and give support to over 25,000 victims and their children. MHCLG has also provided funding for Women's Aid's 'Routes to Support' work, supporting a database and staffing to provide support to victims who need to access refuges, and the 'No Women Turned Away' project, which provides a better understanding of the barriers faced by victims in accessing services, and gives additional support to women facing difficulties accessing a refuge space.
17. MHCLG published Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services in 2016 and updated these in July 2018.⁹ Harnessing learning from local authorities and domestic abuse sector partners, these set out our expectations of what local areas should be putting into place to ensure their response to domestic abuse is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be. The Priorities are clear that local areas should respond to the needs of all domestic abuse victims, including those from isolated and/or marginalised communities, those with complex needs, BAME, LGBT, disabled and male victims and older people.
18. However, we know that there is more to do to provide victims and their children with the support they need to move from danger and abuse to safety and independence.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-bill-consultation>

⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/crimeinenglandandwalesyearendingmarch2018>

⁷ The Children's Commissioner (2018) Estimating the Prevalence of the Toxic Trio, available at <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Vulnerability-Technical-Report-2-Estimating-the-prevalence-of-the-toxic-trio.pdf>

⁸ Safelives Insights National Dataset Briefing 2017 - Children

<http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Insights%20National%20Dataset%20Briefing%202017%20-%20children.pdf>

⁹ See annex B

Government has listened to concerns that the current approach to domestic abuse service provision is not working fairly across England. We accept that change is needed, including in the way in which accommodation-based support services are commissioned.

19. At the same time, we know some local authorities and partnerships have excellent practices in place and are ensuring that victims and their children are provided with the support they need at the time of need. **We want all local areas to have an opportunity to learn from best practice and to enable this we are attaching a Call for Evidence for Best Practice to this Consultation at Annex A**
20. Our Review of Domestic Abuse Services has focused on the provision of accommodation-based support services to victims and their children, in line with MHCLG's housing responsibilities. The Review covers the provision of critical support to victims and their children, rather than housing costs. This is because in many cases the costs of rent and eligible services charges will be met through Welfare Benefits.

Chapter 2: Informing our approach

21. We have worked with external independent researchers, Government analysts and stakeholders to extract data on the need for and provision of domestic abuse services from a range of sources. This includes existing information available from service providers (e.g. annual reports) and the National Crime Survey¹⁰, and information collected from bids submitted by Local Authorities for MHCLG funding for their domestic abuse services. Further evidence was gathered from Routes to Support, run by Women's Aid. We have also collected valuable information through engagement with and information from service providers and local authorities.
22. In September and October this year, we held a series of Domestic Abuse Services events across the country with local authorities, the Local Government Association and London Councils and key domestic abuse sector partners. We also sought views from Police and Crime Commissioners, and other organisations which support victims, including those with protected characteristics. These events and conversations were an opportunity for Government to listen, draw on experience and gather insight on what currently works well and where challenges prevent victims and their children accessing the right support when needed.
23. **Our research and engagement showed the importance of having support accessible from a range of accommodation-based services** in ensuring victims and their children have a safe and secure place to live. This is in recognition of the diversity of housing in which victims and their children may live, from refuges to dispersed accommodation.
24. It also revealed that **funding for domestic abuse services comes from a wide range of sources** including Central Government grants, Public Health, Police/Police and Crime Commissioners, Local Government and charitable funding. This investment in services can create savings for other public services, including housing, health and criminal

¹⁰ Collected by the Office for National Statistics:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice>

justice¹¹. It also demonstrates the range of partners that can come together to plan and deliver services.

25. We have heard that commissioners and service providers would value **stronger requirements and clearer expectations on how the need for support is assessed and met**. We believe the approach set out in this document will address this need. In particular, we know that more is needed to ensure **support for all victims and children**. This includes BAME, LGBT, disabled, male, young (aged 16-18) and older victims, offenders, people of faith who are victims of DA, victims with more than one child, those moving local areas to remain safe, presenting with complex needs (including those with mental health and/or substance misuse needs), insecure immigration status, or from isolated and/or marginalised communities, as well as their children (including adolescent male children).
26. We are committed to listening to providers and their representative bodies, local authorities and others with an interest in the delivery of support to victims and their children in shaping a new approach to delivering support to victims and their children in accommodation-based services across England.

Chapter 3: Key definitions

27. Domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of their age, gender, race, religion, class, sexual orientation and marital status.¹² It is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexual orientation.¹³
28. Government published on 21 January 2019 its Response to the Domestic Abuse Bill Consultation and its draft Domestic Abuse Bill¹⁴, introducing the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse. The proposed definition expanded on the existing Government non-statutory definition by including the concept of economic abuse rather than simply financial abuse. Throughout this paper we have used the definition of domestic abuse from the draft Bill.
29. Because victims and their children experience domestic abuse differently and have diverse needs, we believe a range of services is needed. We have engaged widely across the domestic abuse sector and local and central government to come to an understanding of what 'accommodation-based services' and 'support' look like across England.

¹¹ Sylvia Walby (2009) The Cost of Domestic Violence

¹² Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) data indicate that the majority of victims are women. This is why our approach is framed around violence against women and girls.

¹³ In line with evidence in Crime Survey data: Office for National Statistics (2017). Domestic Abuse in England and Wales; Crown Prosecution Service (2016-17). Violence against women and girls report, 10th edition

¹⁴

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772202/CS1218158068-Web_Accessible.pdf

'Accommodation-based services'

30. We understand that victims and their children will live in a variety of different forms of accommodation. Some will need outreach support to remain safe in properties with enhanced security measures, some will be in emergency or temporary accommodation, and some will live in dispersed accommodation or refuges. While we acknowledge the critical role of refuge in providing safety and support to those victims at high risk of serious harm, we have kept our definition of 'accommodation-based' wide to include a fuller range of accommodation in which victims and their children may require support. This will help local areas meet the support needs of diverse groups of victims and their children and those at lower and medium risk to prevent their needs from escalating. For this consultation and the wider review, MHCLG defines 'accommodation-based services' as:

- **Specialist refuge accommodation, including refuges which provide dedicated support to victims with protected characteristics and/or complex needs. These may include refuges for BAME, LGBT, and disabled victims and their children.**
- **Dispersed accommodation.**
- **Properties with Sanctuary Schemes or other enhanced security measures.**
- **Other forms of emergency accommodation – e.g. respite accommodation or temporary accommodation.**
- **Move-on and second stage accommodation.**

Q1. Do you agree with our definition of 'accommodation-based services' for victims and their children?

Q2. Are there any other services, other than those listed, that you would define as an accommodation-based service?

If 'Yes', what is this accommodation-based service?

'Support'

31. We understand from our work on the review that support is the expert help provided to victims and their children by the specialist staff in domestic abuse support services. We know that some support is directly provided within accommodation-based services such as refuges, and that outreach support will be provided to victims in other types of safe accommodation. We are therefore defining this support as the work of:

- Service managers

- Refuge staff
- Key workers, including those which provide dedicated support or counselling/therapy to victims with protected characteristics and/or complex needs
- Children's support workers
- Outreach workers providing housing-related support in safe accommodation
- Advice services
- Translators and interpreters
- Counsellors and therapists (for both adults and children)

32. We have also kept our definition of 'support' broad to help local areas ensure that victims and their children receive the accommodation-based support they need throughout their journey to recovery and in recognition of the fact that refuges will often provide a range of support to victims in the wider local community.

Q3. Do you agree with our definition of 'support'?

Q4. Do you define an accommodation-based service not listed here as support?

If 'Yes', what is this support service?

PART 2: Future Delivery of Support in Accommodation-Based Domestic Abuse Services

Chapter 1: Leadership and Responsibilities

33. Our vision of successful delivery of support in domestic abuse accommodation-based services is one which will:

- **Require local partnerships of relevant agencies to develop a strategic approach to the provision of support and drive progress on delivery**
- **Develop local strategies, based on robust assessment of need for support for all victims**
- **Meet the support needs of all victims including children, as they too are victims of domestic abuse**
- **Include a national accountability framework, with reporting on outcomes**
- **Provide clear guidance for commissioners on Government's expectations**
- **Offer more sustainable funding for domestic abuse services**

Local Authority Leadership

34. We believe that local authorities are best placed to lead the commissioning of support for victims and their children. This is because:

- **They are already responsible for related issues such as homelessness, wider housing strategy and children's and adults' social services**
- **They have existing relationships with service providers and key agencies and can draw on their experience of funding and commissioning domestic abuse services**
- **They know their areas and are in the best position to understand and assess need for services from both within and beyond their local areas**

35. However, we also know that local authorities need to work closely with a range of partners to achieve the best outcomes for victims and their children, to ensure that services are commissioned efficiently, and budgets pooled wherever possible. These partners include Police and Crime Commissioners, health bodies, housing providers and specialist domestic abuse service providers. These organisations hold experience and expertise in supporting victims and their children and will have a valuable part to play in a joined-up, strategic response in local areas. We believe a multi-agency approach to the commissioning of support is essential.

A Statutory Duty

36. Through our review, we have heard of the critical importance of support to victims and their children and the need to have a clear, national framework in place for needs assessment, commissioning, funding and reporting on outcomes so that everyone has a chance of accessing the support they need in safe accommodation.
37. We believe that there should be a statutory duty framing the delivery of support. Such a duty would safeguard provision of support, clarify governance and accountability, ensure needs assessments were undertaken, and enhance our understanding of service provision across England through monitoring and reporting.
38. We are proposing a duty which requires a partnership approach to supporting victims and their children based on a robust understanding of local need for support.
39. We are suggesting a four-part duty:
- I. a duty on lead authorities to convene a multi-agency Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, (which must perform certain specified functions, as outlined and explained in statutory guidance. These are to:
 - a. **Assess the need and demand for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross-border support.**
 - b. **Develop and publish strategies for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims.**
 - c. **Make commissioning / de-commissioning decisions.**
 - d. **Meet the support needs of victims and their children.**
 - e. **Monitor and evaluate local delivery**
 - f. **Report back to central Government**
 - II. a duty for lead authorities to have regard to statutory guidance in exercising these functions;
 - III. a duty on the Secretary of State to produce the statutory guidance; and
 - IV. a duty on Tier 2 district, borough and city councils and London Boroughs to co-operate with the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards.
40. We propose that the 'lead authorities' should be Tier 1 local authorities – County Councils, Metropolitan Councils, Unitary Authorities and, in the case of London, the Greater London Authority. The duty would require these lead authorities to convene a **Local Partnership Board**, which would be responsible for assessing need for support for victims and their children in accommodation-based services, developing, agreeing and publishing an area-wide Domestic Abuse Strategy, ensuring local commissioning of support services in line with this to meet the support needs of victims and their children and reporting to central Government on progress.

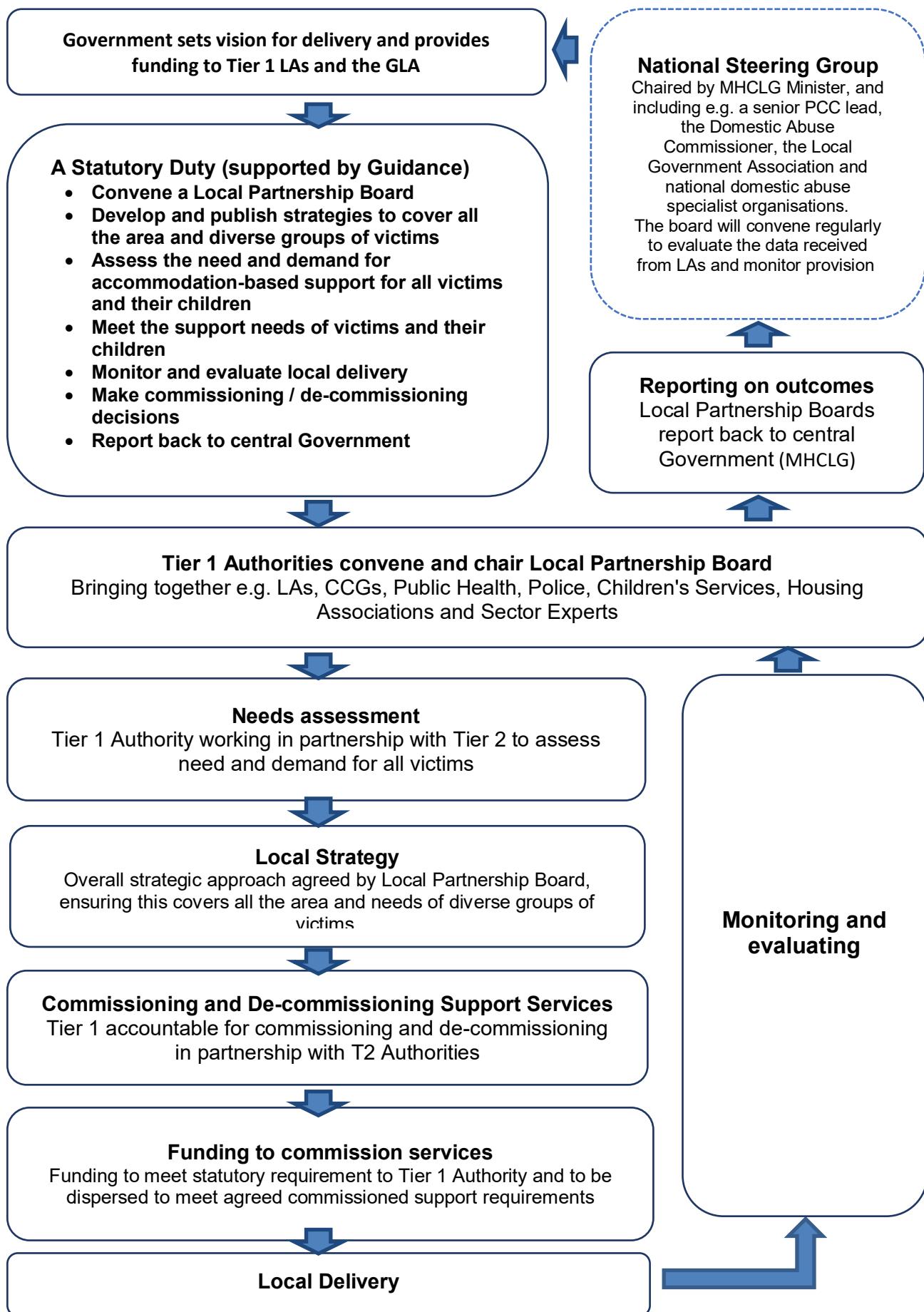
41. We believe that Tier 1 local authorities are best placed to lead this work across their areas. They have the larger geographic footprint and, often, similar footprints to those of key partners, such as Police and Crime Commissioners, which supports planning of services. Providing support across these wider areas may also help some victims move across the area to stay safe. Tier 1 authorities also have related responsibilities and governance arrangements to draw on in leading this work, including their work on social care and convening of Health and Wellbeing Boards and Community Safety Partnerships and Children's Services.
42. We are also proposing that in exercising their functions, the Local Partnership Boards (or equivalents if a Board already exists which could perform these functions) would need to have regard to statutory guidance to be produced by Government which will clearly set out the expectations Government has of Local Partnership Boards in performing these functions.
43. Support from Tier 2 authorities in two-tier areas and London Boroughs will be critical to the success of a future system, not least given their responsibilities for housing and their experience of commissioning domestic abuse services. Tier 2 authorities and London Boroughs will be expected to provide data to help inform needs assessments, contribute to the development of local area strategies, commission services and report on outcomes.
44. We therefore propose placing a duty on Tier 2 authorities and London Boroughs to co-operate with the work led by Tier 1 authorities and the Greater London Authority. Our approach would allow partnerships flexibility to decide at what level services are commissioned locally.

Q5. Do you agree with our approach of introducing a statutory duty underpinned by statutory guidance?

Q6. Do you agree with placing the statutory duty on Tier 1 Authorities (County Councils, Metropolitan Councils, Unitary Authorities and the Greater London Authority) as 'Lead Authorities'?

Q7. Do you agree that a duty to co-operate should be placed on Tier2 Authorities and London Boroughs?

An overview of our proposed approach:



Chapter 2: Accountability

A Multi-agency Local Partnership Board (Our review has highlighted the benefits of effective multi-agency working in responding to the needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children. We have seen good examples of local partners coming together to meet local need for domestic abuse services in bids for the recent MHCLG £20 million and £22 million funds. We want to see these approaches applied further and more consistently across England.

45. Our research also highlights the value of close partnerships between local authorities and a variety of agencies (notably Police and Crime Commissioners) and service providers. These may extend to the pooling of budgets to get the most effective services and best value for money. Partnerships take many forms but often include join up between local authorities or groups of local authorities, service providers, police, health and community representatives.
46. We expect the Local Partnership Board to consist of key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims and their children. These partners should reflect the range of skills, experience and expertise different organisations have in supporting victims and their children, and are likely to include, but not be limited to: Tier 2 Local Authorities and London Boroughs, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), and senior representatives of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), Public Health, Adults and Children's Services, Specialist Domestic Abuse Service Providers, and Housing Associations. Membership should also reflect the specific needs of a local area. For example, in an area with a high population of military service personnel, membership could include representation by relevant service welfare representatives. Tier 1 authorities should consider the need for representation of specialist domestic abuse service providers which meet the support needs of victims and their children with protected characteristics, including BAME, LGBT and disabled victims.
47. We appreciate that there may be existing Boards in local authorities which could exercise these functions (such as Community Safety Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding Boards and existing Domestic Abuse or Violence Against Women and Girls Boards) and we propose allowing Tier 1 local authorities and the Greater London Authority to decide on the best approach to meeting the requirement of the duty locally. We would encourage them to make use of existing structures where helpful and practical.
48. We also appreciate that expertise in commissioning domestic abuse services sits at both levels of local authority within two tier areas, and with Boroughs in London. We are proposing to allow Local Partnership Boards the flexibility to decide at which level support in accommodation-based services should be commissioned, and to provide funding to facilitate this. Local Partnership Boards can also consider the merits of pooling funding to enable effective and strategic commissioning of support across the Board's footprint.

49. In some areas, it may not be practical for all Tier 2 authorities to attend Local Partnership Boards. We suggest that in these circumstances, a nominated Tier 2 authority represent the views of all the Tier 2 authorities in an area at the Local Partnership Board. In larger areas such as London, more than one Borough may need to sit on the Local Partnership Board to reflect the views of their neighbouring local authorities and draw on existing cross local authority structures for the commissioning of support services. Structures for ensuring full representation of Tier 2 authority interests on the Local Partnership Boards would be for local areas to decide.

Q8. Do you agree with the proposed representation on Local Partnership Boards?

Q9. Do you believe your local authority has an existing governance structure in place which could meet the proposed role of the Board?

Q10. If you believe your local authority has an existing governance structure in place that could meet the proposed role of the Board

a. What is the structure of the Board?

b. Who are the Board members?

Q11. Do you agree with a duty to convene a Local Partnership Board?

Q12. Do you agree with the role and remit of Local Partnership Boards?

Q13. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards assessing need for services?

Q14. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards developing local strategies?

Q15. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards commissioning DA services with Tier 2 Authorities?

Strategies

50. Our research showed a strong correlation between local authorities with a domestic abuse strategy and those providing domestic abuse services, particularly specialist refuge provision. Having a strategy informed by partnership working and a robust assessment of need for support services from both within and beyond the local area supports delivery and focuses on delivering the best possible outcomes for victims and their children.

51. The proposed statutory duty will require Tier 1 local authorities, through the Local Partnership Boards to develop and publish strategies for the delivery of domestic abuse accommodation-based support services. In developing these strategies, the Local Partnership Board should ensure decisions are based on a robust assessment of needs, including for all victims and their children from within and outside the local area. These should ensure a range of accommodation options and related support services are considered.

52. We recognise that local areas understand the needs of their area best, and we know that some areas may already have strategies that are already in place and working well. We want Local Partnership Boards to build on these and ensure they are embedded within their local areas. Where local areas do not have current strategies or governance structures, we expect them to be introduced in line with the statutory duty.

53. We would encourage local authorities to pool budgets wherever possible to enable efficient commissioning of support services which deliver value for money. It is also important that local authorities do not formulate their domestic abuse strategies in isolation from wider areas of work which link to transforming outcomes for victims of domestic abuse and their children. We expect to see strategies work alongside and join-up with other relevant areas, such as: Violence Against Women and Girls, Modern Slavery, Community Safety, Victims Strategy, Homelessness Reduction, Safeguarding, and Troubled Families.

Q16. Local authority/ providers: What would be the practical implications of meeting the proposed requirements of the statutory duty?

Q17. Local Authority: What would be the financial implications of meeting the proposed requirements of the statutory duty?

Needs Assessments

54. We expect domestic abuse strategies produced by Local Partnership Boards to be informed by a robust assessment of need for support in accommodation-based services. A lack of robust and reliable data on need makes it difficult to assess demand for and plan services. While there are a variety of sources of data Local Partnership Boards can draw on in assessing need, we propose introducing a standardised needs assessment to help them carry out this task.

55. This needs assessment could include information on how many people have previously presented and are currently presenting to services with a support need. As well as the level of need more broadly, it could include an assessment of the level of need for specialist support services. It should draw on the expertise of local service providers. In line with our existing Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services, it is important that any needs assessment considers the requirements of *all* victims, including those with protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act (see chapter 4 on 'ensuring protection for all victims and their children'). It is vital that needs assessments should capture the support needs of children.

56. We recognise that in some cases, an appropriate response to supporting a victim and their children will be to help them move to another local area to access services and rebuild their lives. This will particularly be the case for victims who need access to accommodation in a location away from the perpetrator, victims with protected characteristics or complex needs who require dedicated support from services which serve a national, rather than local, need and are located outside their local area, and victims who need crisis support which is not immediately available in their local area. We

believe a standardised needs assessment would require local authorities to build consideration of these groups into their strategies and commissioning plans, on the understanding that all areas will need to offer reciprocal support for victims and their children who must move to stay safe.

57. While some areas' services are open to victims from within and outside their local area, we have heard that this is not a consistent experience for victims across England. Our statutory guidance will make clear the need for all areas to provide support to victims and their children from outside of their local area and to work with other local authorities to allow victims easy movement from one area to another whilst ensuring their safety.
58. We know that there are some services that serve a national need, for example, dedicated services that support the needs of BAME and LGBT victims and people of faith. Our statutory guidance will make clear that local area needs assessments should take these vital services into account.
59. We recognise that this assessment process takes time to complete and in determining the regularity of reporting, we would balance this consideration against the need for up to date information.

Q18. Do you think that Government should develop a standardised needs assessment form for local areas to use in assessing need for domestic abuse support services?

Q19. How often should the needs assessment be conducted?

Commissioning Support Services

60. Tier 1 local authorities, in their leadership of Local Partnership Boards, would be accountable for commissioning (and de-commissioning) support in accommodation-based support services to meet the needs of victims and their children in line with their strategies and informed by their needs assessments.
61. Commissioning and de-commissioning decisions which relate to the provision of support services funded by the money Government will pass down to lead authorities should be made with reference to a needs assessment informed strategy. However, it will not be appropriate for all members of the Local Partnership Board to be involved in commissioning decisions where there are conflicts of interest. For example, service providers and housing associations may choose to bid for contracts to deliver support services and could not, therefore, be part of the Board during discussions directly relating to this purpose.
62. We know that many commissioning and de-commissioning decisions are currently made by Tier 2 local authorities and believe the flexibility to commission services at both tiers within two-tier structures should remain. In some cases, this would also allow Tier 2 local authorities to manage relationships directly with service providers and collaborate with them as required to assess local need. However, there must be clear accountability for

decisions on the provision of support services funded through dedicated funding from central Government, and under our proposed approach responsibility for these commissioning and de- commissioning decisions would remain with the lead Tier 1 local authorities.

63. In line with the possible delegation of commissioning and de-commissioning decisions below Tier 1 level, there would also be flexibility within the approach outlined here for Local Partnership Boards to fund support provided by Tier 2 authorities based on the needs assessment and strategy.
64. Our intention is that our proposals would form part of the Domestic Abuse Bill and would not come into effect until after the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament. We acknowledge that local authorities will be at different points of their commissioning cycles when these proposals take effect and that any evaluation would need to take account of existing contracts.

Q20. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards making commissioning decisions in partnership with Tier 2 Authorities?

Reporting on Outcomes

65. It is important that there is clear accountability and transparency in the commissioning and delivery of domestic abuse services at both a local and national level. This will help to ensure that all victims and their children across the country in accommodation-based services receive the support they need, and any gaps in provision can be identified. It will also enable Government to monitor how the system is working, where the challenges are, how funding is being used, learn about best practice, and ensure local authorities are accountable where the needs of victims and their children are not being met.
66. All strategies and governance structures should allow for a two-way flow of information sharing between the Board and their local areas. Not all local authorities will have lower tiers, but in those that do, each Tier 2 local authority will have a duty to co-operate with the Local Partnership Board and will be expected to meet the standards and criteria as set, and as appropriate to them, within the Statutory Duty and Guidance.
67. The information collected by the Local Partnership Board should be used to monitor and evaluate local delivery, determine future funding allocations for the commissioning of domestic abuse support services across the local area and report back to MHCLG.
68. To complement our proposed standardised needs assessment, we are proposing to introduce a standardised reporting structure. We believe this will ensure that we have a consistent picture of local provision across England.
69. This could include:
 - **Evidence that local strategies are in place and working effectively**
 - **Evidence that adequate needs assessments have been undertaken**

- **Evidence that commissioning decisions have been informed by needs assessments**
- **An evaluation of the impact of decisions locally i.e. the number of victims supported and service delivery outcomes**
- **Evidence that there is adequate provision for all victims, including BAME, LGBT and disabled victims, as well as those from outside the local area**

Q21. Do you agree that standardised reporting would promote accountability and transparency?

Q22. Do you agree with the reporting themes suggested?

National Oversight

70. Once we have collected the data from local authorities, we propose that a Ministerial-led National Steering Group will meet to evaluate progress and understand how delivery of support to victims and their children in accommodation-based services is working across England.

71. Membership of this group could include representatives from Local Government, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Health Bodies, Specialist Domestic Abuse Service Providers, and Housing Associations. We envisage that the proposed Domestic Abuse Commissioner, when in place, would be a member of the National Steering Group. Although we envisage that this would be chaired by an MHCLG Minister, we would ensure that other parts of Government are represented to ensure a coherent, strategic response to tackling domestic abuse.

72. We propose that in monitoring outcomes, the National Steering Group will specifically consider as a standing agenda item whether the support needs of all victims and their children are being met through the provision of accommodation-based support services that serve both a national and local need, including for BAME, LGBT victims or people of faith, and their children.

Q23. Do you agree with the role and remit of the National Steering Group?

Q24. Do you agree with the proposed representation on National Steering Group?

Chapter 3: Guidance

73. MHCLG propose offering a package of support to help local areas meet their statutory duty and fulfil the expectations outlined in this guidance. We also want to set a clear vision for the delivery of these services and our Priorities for Domestic Abuse play a key part in this. As noted earlier in this document, these should also be read in the context of the wider response to VAWG and the National Statement of Expectations.

74. As part of this, underpinning the statutory duty, we propose **statutory guidance** for Tier 1 and Tier 2 local authorities that would explain how proposed delivery would work in practice and clearly outline the expectations Government has for local authorities in delivering their duty. This includes outlining:

- How the statutory guidance fits in with other guidance and legislation related to the provision of housing and support for victims and their children. This will help local authorities understand the place of this guidance in developing local strategies, and commissioning and delivering support services for victims and their children.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, including expectations of membership.
- Recommended Terms of Reference for the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.
- Expectations of the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board in exercising their functions outlined in statutory duty.
- Expectations of local delivery, including providing services that meet recognised quality standards, and ensuring local areas deliver on commitments made in partnership agreements.
- Specific consideration of the support needs of diverse groups of victims, including BAME, LGBT, disabled, male, young (aged 16-18) and older victims, offenders, people of faith, those presenting with complex needs (including those with mental health and/or substance misuse needs), those with no recourse to public funds, insecure immigration status or from isolated and/or marginalised communities, as well as their children (including adolescent male children).
- The role of national oversight through the National Steering Group.

Q25. Do you agree with the overall approach of the statutory guidance?

Q26. What else would you like to have set out within the Guidance?

Q27. What support would you find most useful to meet the requirements of the statutory duty and guidance?

Chapter 4: Providing support to all victims and their children

75. Government recognises that both women and men can be victims of domestic abuse, however we know that a disproportionate number of victims are women, especially in the most severe cases. We also recognise that the experience of domestic abuse for victims and their children often results in multiple and overlapping areas of need, and often reveals wider experiences of gendered violence. We are determined that everyone should receive the support they need, and our Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services are clear that local areas should respond to and meet the needs of all victims and their children, and ensure that support is targeted, flexible, accessible, and gender-informed. We also expect local authorities to exercise their public sector equality duty in section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure provision of domestic abuse support services reaches victims and their children with protected characteristics.
76. Local Authorities should also assess need and consider the provision of support in accommodation-based services for victims with insecure immigration status. The Government is clear that it is equally as unacceptable for any individual to abuse their partner by exploiting the fact that their partner's immigration status is dependent on them, as it is for any individual to exploit the fact that their partner may be financially dependent on them. There are already measures in place to support eligible migrants who are subjected to domestic abuse to access accommodation services. The Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) provides eligible individuals with a period of three months' leave outside the immigration rules, allowing them to apply for access to public funds, which may help fund alternative accommodation away from their abuser.¹⁵ The Government also provides analogous support to asylum seekers if they are destitute; there are systems that enable accommodation providers to quickly move victims of domestic abuse to safety. It is vital that Commissioners and sector partners are aware of and access the existing measures and provide the necessary accommodation services to individuals with insecure immigration status.
77. MHCLG also committed within the VAWG Strategy to deliver a better response for victims of domestic abuse with complex needs (including poor mental health and substance misuse). This was a result of a Home Office / DCLG 2015 Review of Domestic Abuse Services, which found that victims with complex needs were being turned away from services as these services were not able to offer the specialist support needed, leaving vulnerable victims with unmet needs. We have taken the support needs of victims of domestic abuse with complex needs into account throughout our work on the review.
78. The VAWG Strategy also acknowledges the multiple barriers to accessing support experienced by some victims, including BAME and LGBT victims. The VAWG Strategy made a clear commitment to address violence against BAME, LGBT women and girls and other marginalised groups. Our statutory guidance will make clear that local areas should ensure that the needs of isolated and marginalised communities including BAME,

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-benefits-for-visa-holder-domestic-violence>

LGBT victims and people of faith are taken into account in assessing need and commissioning support for domestic abuse, including services that serve both a local and national need.

79. Learning from Local Authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners, specialist providers, and our sector partners, and working across Government, we believe our proposed approach will help local areas ensure that all victims and their children will be able to access and receive the support they need when they need it. This includes:

- **responding to the needs of diverse groups, including BAME, LGBT, disabled, male, young (aged 16-18) and older victims, offenders, people of faith, those presenting with complex needs (including those with mental health and/or substance misuse needs), those with no recourse to public funds, insecure immigration status, or from isolated and/or marginalised communities, as well as their children (including adolescent male children).**
- **helping ensure the provision of support in accommodation-based domestic abuse services that serve both local and national need. For example, we know that some services for victims from marginalised communities, people of faith, BAME, and LGBT victims provide critical support to victims from across the country.**
- **helping ensure that victims and their children who have no choice but to move away from their local areas, communities and friends to escape their perpetrator to stay safe receive the support they need.**

Q28. Do you think that the proposed policy will help local areas ensure the needs of all victims and their children can be met?

Q29. What more could the Government do to ensure the needs of victims and their children with protected characteristics are supported?

Questionnaire

About you

Are you answering the consultation as?

- a. An individual with personal interest
- b. An individual as a member of an organisation
- c. An Upper Tier Local Authority
- d. A Lower Tier Local Authority
- e. Other

From the list below, where are you or your organisation based?

- a. London
- b. South East
- c. North West
- d. East of England
- e. West Midlands
- f. South West
- g. Yorkshire and the Humber
- h. East Midlands
- i. North East
- j. National

Accommodation-based services

Q1. Do you agree with our definition of ‘accommodation-based services’ for victims and their children?

- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neither Agree or Disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- Comments

Q2. Are there any other services, other than those listed, that you would define as an accommodation-based service?

- a. Yes, this accommodation-based service is...
- b. No
- c. Don’t Know / No Opinion

Support

Q3. Do you agree with our definition of ‘support’?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree

- d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- Comments

Q4. Do you define an accommodation-based service not listed here as support?

- a. Yes, This Support Service is...
- b. No
- c. Don't Know / No Opinion

Statutory Duty

Q5. Do you agree with our approach of introducing a statutory duty underpinned by statutory guidance?

- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neither Agree or Disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- Comments

Q6 Do you agree with placing the statutory duty on Tier 1 Authorities (County Councils, Metropolitan Councils, Unitary Authorities and the Greater London Authority) as 'Lead Authorities'?

- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neither Agree or Disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- Comments

Q7. Do you agree that a duty to co-operate should be placed on Tier2 Authorities and London Boroughs?

- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neither Agree or Disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- Comment

Accountability

Q8. Do you agree with the proposed representation on Local Partnership Boards?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments...

Q9. Do you believe your local authority has an existing governance structure in place which could meet the proposed role of the Board?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't Know / No Opinion

Comment

Q10. If you believe your local authority has an existing governance structure in place that could meet the proposed role of the Board...

- a. what is the structure of the Board?
- b. Who are the Board members?

Q11. Do you agree with a duty to convene a Local Partnership Board?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q12. Do you agree with the role and remit of Local Partnership Boards?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q13. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards assessing need for services?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q14. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards developing local strategies?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q15. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards commissioning domestic abuse services in partnership with Tier 2 Authorities?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q16. Local authority/ providers: What would be the practical implications of meeting the proposed requirements of the statutory duty?

Comments...

Q17. Local Authority: What would be the financial implications of meeting the proposed requirements of the statutory duty?

Comments...

Needs Assessment

Q18: Do you think that Government should develop a standardised needs assessment form for local areas to use in assessing need for domestic abuse support services?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't Know / No Opinion

Comments

Q19. How often should the needs assessment be conducted?

- a. annually
- b. every 2 years
- c. every 3 years
- d. every 5 years
- e. other...

Reporting on Outcomes

Q20. Do you agree with Local Partnership Boards making commissioning decisions in partnership with Tier 2 Authorities?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q21. Do you agree that standardised reporting would promote accountability and transparency?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comment

Q22. Do you agree with the reporting themes suggested?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q23. Do you agree with the role and remit of the National Steering Group?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q24. Do you agree with the proposed representation on National Steering Group?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Guidance

Q25. Do you agree with the overall approach of the statutory guidance?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Comments

Q26. What else would you like to have set out within the Guidance?

Comments...

Q27. What support would you find most useful to meet the requirements of the statutory duty and guidance?

Comments...

Q28. Do you think that the proposed policy will help local areas ensure the needs of all victims and their children can be met?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't Know / No Opinion

Comments

Q29. What more could the Government do to ensure the needs of victims and their children with protected characteristics are supported?

Comments..

Contact details

Please respond using the online system available at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MHCLG-DAAccomodationServicesConsultation>

Please submit your response by 2 August 2019

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it to:

Domestic Abuse Team
3rd Floor Fry Building
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Email: Email: Domesticabuse.reviewaudit@communities.gov.uk

Complaints or Comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government at the above address.

About this consultation

This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Please be aware that, as a public authority, the Department is bound by information rights legislation (including the Freedom of Information Act (2000), the Environmental Information Regulations (2004), the Data Protection Act (2018) and the General Data Protection Regulation); the Department may, therefore, be obliged to, in the event of an information request, release information provided in response to this consultation.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you believe that should be the case. If we receive a request for disclosure of information we will take into account, your explanation and where appropriate apply all relevant exemptions to withhold from disclosure the information. As each information request is judged on its own merits, we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality will be maintained in all circumstances. We will process your personal data in accordance with the law and in most circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed. A full privacy notice is included on page 38.

An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed the Consultation Principles? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact us via the [complaints procedure](#).

Personal data

The following is to explain your rights and give you the information you are entitled to under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.

Note that this section only refers to your personal data (your name address and anything that could be used to identify you personally) not the content of your response to the consultation.

1. The identity of the data controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the data controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@communities.gov.uk

2. Why we are collecting your personal data

Your personal data is being collected as an essential part of the consultation process, so that we can contact you regarding your response and for statistical purposes. We may also use it to contact you about related matters.

3. Our legal basis for processing your personal data

The General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 states that, as a government department, MHCLG may process personal data as necessary for the effective performance of a task carried out in the public interest. i.e. a consultation.

4. With whom we will be sharing your personal data

We do not anticipate sharing personal data with any third party.

5. For how long we will keep your personal data, or criteria used to determine the retention period.

Your personal data will be held for two years from the closure of the consultation

6. Your rights, e.g. access, rectification, erasure

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have considerable say over what happens to it. You have the right:

- a. to see what data, we have about you
- b. to ask us to stop using your data, but keep it on record
- c. to ask to have all or some of your data deleted or corrected
- d. to lodge a complaint with the independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law. You can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/>, or telephone 0303 123 1113.

7. Data you provide directly will be stored by Survey Monkey on their servers in the United States. We have taken all necessary precautions to ensure that your rights in terms of data protection will not be compromised by this

8. Your personal data will not be used for any automated decision making.

9. After the consultation period has concluded your personal data will be moved from Survey Monkey servers and stored in a secure government IT system.

Annex A: Good practice of locally delivered support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation-based services: A call for evidence

This call for evidence seeks views on best practice of local delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation-based services. As with our consultation on the Government's new approach to delivering support for all victims, we would like to hear from victims and survivors, service providers, local authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners and other public agencies, as well as other professionals who support victims and their children every day.

Background

Our consultation has set out the Government's new approach to delivering support in accommodation-based services in England. Our proposals are clear that we would like to build on local governance structures and practices that are currently working well across England. We would like to strengthen our knowledge of what is working locally across the country as well as the evidence base on best practice in the following areas:

- **Effective partnership working.**
- **Local assessment of need and demand for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross-border support.**
- **Local domestic abuse strategies for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims.**
- **The pooling of budgets across local authorities and other key bodies to enable efficient commissioning of support services which delivers value for money.**
- **Monitoring and evaluating local delivery.**
- **Effective delivery of support to all victims and their children, including BAME, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, LGBT, disabled, male, young (aged 16-18) and older victims, offenders, people of faith, those presenting with complex needs (including those with mental health and/or substance misuse needs), those with no recourse to public funds, insecure immigration status, or from isolated and/or marginalised communities, as well as their children (including adolescent male children).**

We therefore welcome your evidence on the following questions in delivering support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation-based services across England.

Questions for consideration

Effective partnership working

Qi. What does good partnership working in the delivery of support in accommodation-based domestic abuse services look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

In your answer, where relevant please consider the following question:

- How do you ensure all interested stakeholders (including dedicated specialist domestic abuse providers) are involved in decision making?

Local assessment of need and demand for accommodation-based support

Qii. What does a good needs assessment for support for victims of domestic abuse and their children look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

In your answer, where relevant, please consider the following questions:

- How do you measure need and demand in your local area?
- How many people require support in your area, and how many of those require support for accommodation-based services?
- How do you share data across relevant agencies to ensure a robust needs assessment?
- How do you assess the needs of victims and their children from outside your local area?
- What is the administrative cost of needs assessments in your local area?

Local domestic abuse strategies

Qiii. What does a good local Domestic Abuse Strategy look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

In your answer, where relevant, please consider the following questions:

- How is your strategy working locally? What are the outcomes?
- Is the strategy a dedicated Domestic Abuse Strategy or part of a larger strategy (e.g. Violence Against Women and Girls or Community Safety, Homelessness, or Homelessness Reduction)?
- Is the strategy a whole local area strategy?
- How does the strategy align with wider strategies (e.g. Violence Against Women and Girls, Modern Slavery, Community Safety, Victims Strategy, Homelessness Reduction, Safeguarding, and Troubled Families)?
- What is the administrative cost of developing a robust local Domestic Abuse Strategy?

- What support services do you offer in your local area and what is the cost per person of each of the services?

Pooling budgets and value for money interventions

Qiv. In a wider financial context, how are you maximising your funding? Please provide examples from your local area.

In your answer, where relevant, please consider the following questions:

- In your local area, where does funding for support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services come from?
- How much of your existing budget is being spent on support for accommodation-based services in your local area?
- Are you pooling funding across agencies?
- Where has your intervention saved money further down the line?

Monitoring and evaluating local delivery

Qv. What does good monitoring and evaluation of support for victims of domestic abuse in accommodation-based services look like? Please provide examples from your local area.

In your answer, where relevant, please consider the following questions:

- What do you monitor, and how do you evaluate the local delivery of support in accommodation-based services?
- Is monitoring and evaluation outcomes focussed?
- How do you ensure victim satisfaction is considered in monitoring and evaluating support in accommodation-based services?

Qvi. What should a robust report on the delivery of support in accommodation-based services include? Please provide examples from your local area.

Effective delivery of support to all victims and their children

Qvii. What do we need to know to help local areas ensure that all victims and their children receive the support they need when they need it?

We are looking for examples of best practice in delivering support to diverse victims and their children, including those who are:

- BAME;
- Gypsy, Roma and Travellers;
- LGBT;
- disabled;
- male;
- young (aged 16-18);

- older victims;
- offenders;
- people of faith;
- those presenting with complex needs (including those with mental health and/or substance misuse needs);
- those with no recourse to public funds or insecure immigration status;
- from isolated and/or marginalised communities; and
- victims with children, including adolescent male children and larger families.

In your answer, where relevant, please consider the following questions:

- What dedicated specialist support (other than generalist mainstreamed support) in accommodation-based domestic abuse services do you provide for? Where does funding come from?
- What do local areas need to consider when delivering support to diverse groups of victims and their children (barriers, specific needs, outcomes, multi-agency working)?
- How do you share data to ensure joined-up support for victims and their children? How do you ensure referral duplication, or bouncing between services is reduced?

Annex B: Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services

Our Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services apply to Local Authorities as the lead accountable bodies working with local multi-agency partnerships in response to locally driven change and service reform and ensuring that all local partners are involved to ensure that victims of domestic abuse receive the support they need when they need it.

Context

Domestic abuse can be psychological, physical, sexual, economic and/or emotional. It has devastating impact, and can affect anyone regardless of their age, gender, race, religion, class, sexual orientation and marital status. We are determined that everyone should receive the support they need. We recognise that both women and men can be victims, however we know that a disproportionate number of victims are women, especially in the most severe cases¹⁶. In our 2016/20 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, we set out our ambition that service reform should go further and faster to meet the needs of women and girls suffering violence.

We know that there are real challenges to be overcome in achieving this ambition. Much domestic abuse is hidden, whilst many victims of domestic abuse need to flee from their local area to access services and stay safe. Domestic abuse often reveals wider experiences of gendered violence, and multiple disadvantage. A review of domestic abuse service provision in the summer of 2015 by the (then named) Department of Communities and Local Government and Home Office found that services struggle to meet the needs of some victims of domestic abuse, namely those (i) with additional complex needs¹⁷ (ii) from isolated and/or marginalised communities or (iii) BAME victims.

We are learning about the extent of these challenges from the sector, as well as wider challenges faced by local areas and providers including the sustainability of services, the need for effective partnership working, including across local boundaries, and for local specialist service provision to ensure every victim receives the support they need. However, we know that some local authorities and partnerships have excellent practice in taking on these challenges and we want all local areas to rise to the level of the best.

Our Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services were launched in November 2016 alongside our two-year fund for domestic abuse services, where 80 projects covering 258 local authorities in England received a share of our £20 million fund to support victims of domestic abuse.

¹⁶ Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) data indicate that the majority of victims are women. This is why our approach is framed around violence against women and girls

¹⁷ Complex needs include a range of often multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities and service use needs including mental ill-health, alcohol and substance misuse, homelessness, being part of a minority group or marginalised community (e.g. BAME, LGBT+, older and young (aged 16-18) victims of domestic abuse), having insecure immigration status, being part of an isolated community, living with a disability and/or involvement with the police and criminal justice system.

Learning from local authorities, experts and our sector partners, we have updated these Priorities to set out what local areas should be all putting in place to ensure their response to domestic abuse is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be. Our strategic vision remains ambitious, and we will only achieve it by working together with you to ensure change at a local level.

The Government is providing support to help local commissioners fulfil these expectations through a two-year fund for domestic abuse services, which includes refuges, to meet the Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services.

We expect local authorities to commission services that:

- Ensure that no victim is turned away from the support they need at the time they need it, including those with children, through understanding the risks they face and the full extent of their need to keep them safe and promote their long-term safety and wellbeing.
- Put the victim first, by providing flexible services that meet their needs, including enabling them to make their own choices and to live independently and safely as soon as possible.
- Respond to the needs of diverse groups, including those with complex needs, those from isolated and/or marginalised communities, BAME, LGBT, disabled, young (aged 16-18) and older victims, offenders, and children of victims.
- Meet the needs of victims from within and outside the local area, recognising that many victims move from their local area to be safe.
- Take a strategic approach to service commissioning, based on data about need and evidence of what works.
- Establish and continue effective, collaborative partnership working, including between commissioners and specialist domestic abuse services.
- Be led by clear, accountable local leadership, joining up across agencies and areas to provide better services and pooling budgets for maximum flexibility.

Here is a checklist of questions to clarify the steps to take in meeting these priorities.

Ensures that no victim is turned away from the support they need at the time they need it, including those with children, through understanding the risks they face and the full extent of their need to keep them safe and promote their long-term safety and wellbeing.

- Have you taken steps to raise local awareness of all forms of domestic abuse, and available services and support in the area, appropriately targeted towards diverse groups?
- Have you ensured services are provided in locations and ways which are accessible to victims e.g. translation services, British Sign Language interpreters, wheelchair access?
- Do all your local partners understand the full extent of the needs of diverse victims, including younger (aged 16-18), older, BAME, LGBT, disabled victims, offenders, those with multiple, complex needs, and those with children, and do you all share an ambitious goal of the immediate and long-term safety and wellbeing of victims?
- Have you sought advice and support from the independent, national second-tier ending Violence against Women and Girls Organisations?
- Do front line professionals in your area, including universal services as well as specialist providers, recognise when victims need help and provide them with support they need and offer them routes to appropriate, including (other) specialist support?
- Do you provide a forum for feedback and listen to what victims say they need to help them to be safe and to recover?

Puts the victim first, by providing flexible services that meet their needs, including enabling them to make their own choices and to live independently and safely as soon as possible.

- Are you providing clear but flexible pathways and choices for victims from danger to safety and independence?
- Does this include planning for and provision of stable, long-term, accommodation, or community-based support to enable victims who are safe to do so to stay in their own homes?
- Are you providing victims with routes back into the community, education and employment, such as life skills, access to training and other development opportunities to move towards independence?
- Do you draw on service user experience when you design and commission services?

Responds to the needs of diverse groups, including those with complex needs, those from isolated and/or marginalised communities, BAME, LGBT, disabled, young (aged 16-18) and older victims, offenders, and children of victims.

- Do you provide services that meet the needs of BAME, LGBT, disabled, young (aged 16-18) and older victims, offenders, and children of victims?
- Are the services you provide gender-informed?
- Do you understand the law under the Equality Act for single sex provisions¹⁸, how best to offer support to individual transgender victims who may seek support, and are you aware of services that you might refer a transgender victim onto if a service did not feel able to offer provision?
- Do you provide services which meet the needs of those with multiple and complex needs?
- Have you taken steps to understand the barriers that prevent victims from isolated and/or marginalised communities from accessing and using services? Do you know what they are? If not have you asked what the barriers are?
- Do you use the expertise and knowledge of specialist services/workers to deliver a multi-agency approach to identify and deal with barriers to access to services?
- Do you provide training for frontline workers to enable them to respond effectively to the needs of diverse groups, including by working with specialist providers?

Meets the needs of victims from within and outside the local area, recognising that many victims move from their local area to be safe

- Have you opened provision to victims from outside your local area, recognising that victims from your area are likely to be supported elsewhere?
- Do you make exemptions to local area restrictions or caps to support non-local victims within your funding and commissioning processes?
- Are you collaborating with other local authorities to allow victims easy movement from one area to another whilst ensuring their safety?

¹⁸ Some service providers offer trans inclusive services, while others ensure that if they are not able to do so, trans people are offered alternative provisions.

Under the Equality Act 2010, single or separate sex service providers are permitted to provide a different service for trans people or even exclude trans people from single and separate sex provisions where proportionate, for example if they can show that the trans person's presence would prevent effective delivery of the service to the rest of their customers or clients. These service providers can include domestic violence or rape crisis services.

Please see <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/notes/division/3/16/20/7> (points 739 and 740)

- Are you joining up with other areas to secure specialist services, looking at commissioning these in partnership, or on a sub-regional level?
- Are you working in partnership to deliver services in an integrated way with other specialist violence and sexual violence services?

Takes a strategic approach to service commissioning, based on data about need and evidence of what works

- Do you have robust, local data that gives an accurate picture of local need, drawing on data from specialist organisations and not solely rely on data from statutory agencies?
- Do you plan your local strategy to meet need on the basis of data, evidence of what works based on outcomes data from providers and outcomes of risk and needs assessments?
- Have you considered the Homelessness Code of Guidance, including guidance on providing homelessness services to people who have experienced, or are at risk of, domestic violence or abuse, and local VAWG strategies in developing your local domestic abuse strategy?
- Have you agreed an outcomes framework to measure how your strategy improves outcomes for victims, and do you use and share these outcomes when planning commissioning cycles?
- Is your commissioning informed by victims' voices and do you have a process for measuring victim satisfaction?
- Do you have a process for independent scrutiny, holding local decision making to account?
- Do you consider long-term sustainability of service providers in addition to funding cycles?
- Are you monitoring and evaluating the response to victims in your area to ensure the quality and safety of service provision and the outcomes for women and children?

Establishes and continues effective, collaborative partnership working, including between commissioners and specialist domestic abuse services.

- Do you consider smaller and/or specialist providers when commissioning services?
- Do you acknowledge different commissioning regions and tiers when commissioning services?
- Do you deliver on commitments made in partnership agreements, contracts and bids for funding?

- Do you have and maintain clear lines of communication with partner agencies?

Be led by clear, accountable local leadership, joining up across agencies and areas to provide better services, and pooling budgets for maximum flexibility

- Do you have a single accountable lead to bring together all local service partners to assess need and commission services to reflect this?
- Are you pooling funding streams across agencies to maximise the use of resources and outcomes for diverse victims?
- Are you ensuring an effective multi-agency response to domestic abuse to meet victims' needs and achieve positive outcomes as soon as possible?
- Have you got an open, inclusive and transparent decision-making process and an appeals process?
- Do you ensure that your own organisation has up to date domestic abuse policies, clear referral pathways and best practice in supporting staff who are victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse?