

# CHOICES

A report, mapping and analysing the current housing and support options available for women and families experiencing domestic abuse/violence in Cornwall.

This report was commissioned by Cornwall Supporting People

SUE PENNA  
ASSOCIATES

*With thanks to all those who contributed -  
but particularly to the 26 women who eloquently  
and graciously shared their experiences so that  
future services can be improved.*

Thanks also to:  
Victoria Howard *Occupational Psychologist*  
Mark Pugh *Senior Researcher*  
Dave Mynne *Design*

# INDEX

p5 **Executive summary of key findings**

p6 **CHAPTER 1 Introduction**

- Methodology of study
- Definition of domestic violence
- Women living in Cornwall affected by domestic violence
- Domestic violence and the Housing Act
- Accommodation and support needs of individuals experiencing domestic violence
- The effect of domestic violence on children
- Best practice and policy

p11 **CHAPTER 2 Steps to seeking help**

- Where do women go for help
- Staying with family and friends

p14 **CHAPTER 3 Homelessness and temporary accommodation**

- Local Authority responsibility
- Households homeless due to domestic violence in Cornwall
- Housing Associations
- Temporary accommodation
- Refuges
- Children in temporary accommodation

p22 **CHAPTER 4 Resettlement and support**

- Policy
- Support agencies
- Provision of resettlement services
- Support available while in temporary accommodation
- Provision of outreach support

p31 **CHAPTER 5 Staying put**

- Increasing safety
- Women's views about staying put

p34 **CHAPTER 6 Move on accommodation**

p36 **CHAPTER 7 Eviction of perpetrators**

p38 **CHAPTER 8 Interagency working**

- Publicity in homeless and housing departments
- Women's views
- Local Authority funding of domestic violence services

p41 **CHAPTER 9 Recommendations**

p43 **CHAPTER 10 Conclusions**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Seeking help

Women experiencing domestic violence in Cornwall are seeking help from a range of agencies and often turning to friends and family for support. While housing agencies across the county are providing a large range of support and help it does vary from Local Authority to Local Authority. Service users would benefit from a consistent approach and the formation of a county multi-agency housing panel would be one option to consider. Women still find it difficult to access information on support, this information must be highly visible within agencies and also in safe place i.e. women's toilets.

### Homelessness and temporary accommodation

There does appear to be some difficulty in accessing the information on numbers of women and children homeless as a result of domestic violence. In conducting the research it was difficult to find an individual in some agencies who felt confident in completing the questionnaire or discussing the issues. There is also an issue about the statistics that are collected for Central Government which focus on numbers who approach, are accepted and then rehoused by homeless departments rather than the cause of homelessness. This makes it difficult for Local Authorities to access information pertaining to domestic violence.

One model that could be emulated in Cornwall is the practice of having a specialist domestic violence worker in the homeless department, so that the needs of households experiencing domestic violence are appropriately acknowledged and responded to sensitively.

### Resettlement and support

A large percentage of the resettlement and support is provided by refuges and women's support services. However this suggests that the prevailing belief is that the first option for women experiencing domestic violence is that they must move to a refuge. This also suggests that women living in other forms of temporary accommodation fair less well. Formation of a county multi-agency panel specifically to look at the resettlement and support needs of these households would be recommended.

### Staying put

What is vital is that any housing option is initially based on safety but there may be ways of enabling women to stay in their own homes.

This approach has been successful in areas where Local Authorities ensure that households are given appropriate practical help, such as good security and safety devices and support and advice. This support is often provided by a range of agencies.

### Move on

A theme, arising from discussion with the women in this study is that it is vital to provide adequate support once households experiencing domestic violence have been rehoused into permanent accommodation. When households resettle into a new area and a new community, the initial period is a critical one, when many women will return to their violent partner if they are not given/do not find adequate support. At the moment in Cornwall this support is patchy and women do feel they are spending too long in temporary accommodation without knowing where they will end up.

### Eviction of perpetrators

Increasingly the Police are focusing on the criminal offence that has been committed by the perpetrators of domestic violence. For Local Authorities and Housing Associations notifying tenants that perpetrators of domestic violence will be evicted demonstrates their commitment to multi-agency working. It also reinforces to the perpetrator that the responsibility for the violence rests firmly with the person committing the violence.

### Interagency working

Authorities that deal most effectively with accommodation and support issues around domestic violence, are those that develop a coordinated approach, which involves different Local Authority departments, other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector. Interagency work in Cornwall is variable and is no doubt dependant on pressure of work within individual agencies. A multi-agency group would be in a position to devise a county wide policy and best practice guidelines.

Lack of appropriate knowledge about domestic violence remains an issue according to the women interviewed. Training for homeless and housing staff is a high priority.

# CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This paper has been commissioned by Cornwall Supporting People and was carried out from January 2005 to March 2005.

### The Supporting People programme

To successfully deliver this programme Supporting People has four objectives to provide

- A programme that delivers quality of life and promotes independence
- Services that are of a high quality, strategically planned, cost effective and complement existing care services
- The planning and development of services is needs-led
- A working partnership of Local Government, Probation, Health, Voluntary Sector Organisations, Housing Associations, Support Agencies and Service Users

### METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

To understand the housing needs of families experiencing domestic violence and the service provided to them this study has used a variety of research methods and has been based on the 2002 study produced by the Office of The Deputy Prime Minister

- Representatives, nominated by Cornwall Supporting People, from Local Authorities and Housing Associations were asked to complete a questionnaire either over the phone or in person*
- Women who have experienced domestic violence and are living in refuges were invited to take part in focus groups with the option of individual consultation if required*
- Women who had experienced domestic violence and were attending a local support group (run by Victims Support) or being supported by an outreach worker were invited to take part in a focus group with the option of individual consultation if required*
- Staff working in refuges were interviewed in groups with the option of individual consultation if required*
- Staff working in women's support services were interviewed*
- Phone research was conducted with housing services within and outside of Cornwall*

### DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic Violence is defined by the Housing Act 1996 as

*'Violence from a person with whom s/he is associated, or threats of violence from such a person which are likely to be carried out.'*<sup>1</sup>

Generally this refers to any individuals who have been or who are in an intimate relationship. Traditionally and statistically domestic violence is commonly perpetrated by male offenders against female victims

1 in 3 women experience domestic abuse from a male partner<sup>2</sup>

However men can also be victims of domestic abuse in either heterosexual or gay relationships, lesbian women, bi sexual and transgender individuals are also at risk and this research attempted to be as inclusive as possible.

- *Domestic Violence accounts for around a quarter of all violent crime.*
- *Each week two women in this country die as a result of domestic violence.*
- *According to the British Crime survey 2004, 48% of women have experienced domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault in their lifetime.*
- *Women are likely to have been assaulted on average 35 times before they report it to the police.*
- *Domestic violence often starts or escalates in pregnancy.*
- *The most dangerous time (when she and the children are most likely to be murdered) is when she attempts to leave.*

Domestic abuse is fundamentally about the misuse of power and control. It involves one person using fear, intimidation, threats of violence and actual violence to an individual, their children, family and pets.

### WOMEN LIVING IN CORNWALL AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE/VIOLENCE

Using the most recent Home Office research which suggests 1 in 3 women will experience some form of domestic abuse/ violence of the type described above, we can calculate how many women in Cornwall may be victims at some point.

These figures are taken from the 2001 census

District	Number in population 16+	Number of women affected (1 in 3)
Penwith	25911	8663
Kerrier	37028	12342
Carrick	36257	12085
Restormel	36707	12235
North Cornwall	31384	12464
Caradon	31986	10662
Isles of Scilly	868	289
Total Cornwall	200230	66743

In 2003 reports to the Devon and Cornwall Police in Cornwall of domestic violence rose to 4556. Of these incidents, only 39% (1766) were recorded as crimes.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE HOUSING ACT 1996

The Department of the Environment and Department of Health 'Code of Guidance on parts VI and VII of the Housing Act 1996' stressed that there is a need to recognise the specific needs of households experiencing domestic violence when Local Authorities assess whether they have a duty to accept the household as statutorily homeless. Certain criteria must be met <sup>3</sup>

### REASONABLE TO OCCUPY

The Guidance defines 'reasonable to occupy' as follows

*The violence or threat of violence is not confined to instances within the home but extends to violence outside the home from a person with whom the applicant or a member of his/her household is associated. The fact that violence has not yet occurred does not, on its own, suggest that it is not likely to occur. Authorities should not base their assessment of a likely threat of violence solely on whether there has been actual violence in the past. Injunctions ordering people not to molest, or enter the home, or, the applicant will not necessarily deter people and the applicant should not necessarily be asked to return to her/his home in this instance. Authorities may inform applicants of the option to take out an injunction, but should make it clear that there is not an obligation to do so if s/he feels it would be ineffective <sup>4</sup>*

### PRIORITY NEED

*Local Authorities have to determine whether a household is in priority need for housing. The presence of children or if the woman is pregnant automatically make them a priority. However Local housing departments also have to assess whether a household is 'vulnerable'. The 1996 Code of Guidance indicates how domestic violence may result in a household being 'vulnerable'.*

*'Victims of violence or abuse of sexual and/ or racial harassment; authorities should consider whether men and women without children are vulnerable as a result of having suffered violence or abuse from persons with whom they are associated, or whether they are at risk of further violence or abuse if they return to those persons. They should also consider whether those who have suffered or are under threat or harassment or violence on account of their gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, or religion, are vulnerable – and therefore a priority need as a result <sup>5</sup>*

### THE HOMELESSNESS ACT 2002

This includes provision to

1. Strengthen the existing safety net for homeless people provided by Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
2. Require housing authorities to take a more strategic approach to preventing and tackling homelessness by adopting a new homelessness strategy, based on a review of homelessness in their district, at least every five years

## ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The accommodation and support needs of women and families who experience domestic violence are complex and varied. However they are inextricably linked.

Domestic abuse involves an escalating pattern of the misuse of power and control in a relationship. The perpetrator will use emotional, financial, sexual and physical abuse to maintain their power position and the sustaining of this pressure by the perpetrator results in

- *Psychological effects which may include guilt, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder*
- *Physical injury, cuts, burns, broken bones, internal injuries, miscarriages, stillbirths, chronic pain, disability and even death*
- *Social effects, isolation from family and friends, complete financial dependence, imprisoning in the house and denying appropriate medical care*

(these lists are not exhaustive but examples)

Women and families cope often for years in extremely traumatic situations before they approach anyone for help. The response of the organisation they initially turn to is crucially important for the long term outcomes.

Leaving the home can be the response to an immediate crisis or escalating violence, it may be because there are obvious signs of the children being involved, it is a point when the risk of violence and potential homicide to the family greatly increases.

For women who are financially dependant on the perpetrator making the decision to leave is further complicated by the anxiety about not being able to find alternative accommodation. These families are dependant on the statutory agencies for support.

The most important factor is that women have access to safe accommodation, somewhere where they are not in fear of being found by the perpetrator while they review their options.

It has been estimated that it takes around six attempts for abused women to leave their partner and this may be for a variety of reasons: he may appear genuinely contrite and promise it will never happen again, she worries about separating the children from their father, he finds the family and persuades them back, he finds the family and forces them back, she still loves him, the children love him, he threatens to kill them all if they don't go back and she has no reason to doubt him and so on. Organisations working with these families must maintain a non-judgemental, supportive approach so that whatever the outcome the family can approach for support in the future.

Due to necessity services have developed that focus on the woman leaving for her and the children's safety. When Erin Pizzey opened the first Refuge in Chiswick in the 1970s she opened a floodgate by acknowledging the horrors that were going on behind closed doors.<sup>6</sup>

For some women and children the only safe option is to seek temporary accommodation in a refuge. Others may turn to family and friends and yet others to the Local Authority where they may end up in a range of temporary accommodation. Less frequently women are supported to stay in their own homes, with a range of practical and emotional measures to support them.

We know that experiencing domestic abuse over a sustained period of time leaves women with few social networks, poverty of money and possessions and ongoing stress with children and ex- partners, which can contribute to a difficulty in settling in new environments and can contribute to a cycle of homelessness.

Women and children need a range of housing and support according to their needs to enable them to move forward positively and make safe secure lives in the future.

## THE EFFECT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ON CHILDREN

Children are affected by domestic violence whether they are witnessing the violence, overhearing it or directly involved. 1 in 3 child protection cases show a history of domestic violence to the mother.<sup>7</sup> Research sponsored by the National Children's Home in the UK found that in 25% of cases the male partner had also been violent to the children. The study further detailed how 75% of the mothers said their children had witnessed domestic violence, 33% had seen their mothers beaten up and 10% had witnessed sexual violence. Children express their distress in a variety of ways, some become withdrawn and exhibit 'internalised' stress mechanisms, some display more 'externalised' behaviour and become disruptive and angry themselves. Domestic Violence is a child protection issue and a multi-agency model of work must always be in place to ensure households experiencing domestic abuse with children are safe.

*Factors that may have a bearing on the most appropriate accommodation for households include:*

- *The extent of risk to the household from the perpetrator (i.e. when determining whether or not it is safe to remain in the property or locality)*
- *The presence/absence of children and child protection issues*
- *The wishes of the person experiencing the violence*
- *Whether the household has special needs (e.g. mental health problems, physical disabilities, learning difficulties, drug and/ or alcohol problems)*
- *The gender of the person experiencing violence*
- *Existing support networks<sup>8</sup>*

## BEST PRACTICE AND POLICY

"Domestic Violence; Break the chain multi-agency guidance for addressing domestic violence" published by the Home Office recognises the importance Local Authority homelessness and housing allocation officers have, in giving women who are fleeing or experiencing domestic violence, alternative accommodation. They recommend that officers have a detailed knowledge of housing legislation, statutory guidance and how this applies to women experiencing domestic abuse. They also state that it is essential that officers have a good knowledge of what information and help is available to domestic violence survivors, locally and nationally.

*This Home Office document recommends that Local housing policies should provide that:*

- *psychological abuse is recognised as potentially leading to statutory homelessness where it would not be reasonable for someone to continue living at home*
- *(as required by law) applicants who are homeless because of domestic violence and who apply to an authority in an area where they do not live or have a local connection must not be referred back to the authority in their home area (or any other area) if they would be at risk of domestic violence there*
- *women fleeing domestic violence who do not have dependant children and/or are not pregnant may be vulnerable and have a priority need for accommodation*
- *women fleeing domestic violence who decline to return to their home under the protection of a non-molestation order or other court order should not be considered to be either, not homeless nor intentionally homeless on the basis that it is safe for them to return*
- *positive consideration is given to accepting the referral of homelessness cases from other authorities where the applicant needs to move away from the home area to escape domestic violence*
- *eviction action should be taken against local tenants whose partner has fled the home because of domestic violence perpetrated by the tenant*
- *sympathetic treatment is given to victims of domestic violence, for example, where there are rent arrears or a need to fit new locks*

## CHAPTER 2

Steps in Seeking Help

### WHERE DO WOMEN GO FOR HELP

Women experiencing domestic violence may go to a range of agencies over a period of time seeking support and help that may facilitate making changes in their lives.

Statutory agencies that may be approached are

- *The Police*
- *Health care professionals*
- *Social services*
- *Housing departments*
- *Probation*
- *Voluntary agencies*
- *Women's Aid*
- *Refuges*
- *Citizens Advice Bureau*
- *Victim Support*
- *Other voluntary groups*
- *Other groups*
- *Lawyers*
- *Families/Friends*

However women frequently comment that they have spent years unaware that support was available. They may have been able to change their situation if they had known about possible support structures earlier.

*It has been estimated that it takes around 6 attempts for abused women to leave their partners* <sup>9</sup>

It is also worth noting that women find it extremely difficult to volunteer information about domestic abuse/violence. This is for a range of reasons, shame, guilt, fear of reprisals, fear of losing the children amongst others. Domestic abuse is a complex issue. At the time that she is most low, the expectation still exists that, not only must she initiate help, but it is likely that it is she and the children who will have to make huge changes in accommodation, finances, schools, employment and social contacts, rather than the perpetrator of the violence.

During this survey 26 women who have been victims of domestic violence were consulted about a range of housing and homeless issues. 13 of these women were currently living in a refuge and 13 were living in the community but attending a support group for women who have experienced domestic abuse.

### 2:1 They were asked; have you received any support/help from a list with a range of agencies other than housing departments.

Agency	Community	Refuge
Health professional	5	10
Police	6	6
Voluntary sector	9	2
Social services	7	3
Education	1	6
Other non specified	2	1
Youth service	1	0
CADA	0	1
Probation	0	0

#### Discussion of data

*Note that the women are using a range of professionals for support and help interestingly this result mirrors national research which suggests the majority of women are likely to approach a health professional first.*

### 2:2 Have you ever stayed with family or friends while escaping from domestic abuse?

	Yes	No
Living in Refuge	11	2
Living in Community	8	5
Total	19	7

#### Discussion of data

*Staying with friends or family seems a common choice for households experiencing violence. However it would seem fair to assume that while this leaves opportunity for a brief respite it is not really a satisfactory option for long term stability.*

### 2:3 If you had easy access to suitable temporary accommodation while you were experiencing DV would it have influenced your decision to leave/stay?

	Yes	No
Living in Refuge	11	2
Living in Community	10	3
Total	21	5

#### Discussion of data

*A high percentage of women believe they would have made different decisions if they had felt a range of suitable temporary accommodation was available to them.*

**2:4 Broken Rainbow Cornwall, who offer support to individuals from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in Cornwall, were also asked whether they know of individuals from the LGBT community who have had difficulty in being accepted as homeless due to domestic violence. They responded that they had and reasons given for non acceptance on the homeless register were that the applicant was, a single women without children, a single man without children, no reason was given or that did not disclose the abuse.**

#### Discussion of data

*This illustrates the added difficulty that individuals from this community may experience. Reasons given by Broken Rainbow Cornwall for this were:*

- *Reluctance to reveal sexuality and/or domestic abuse*
- *Discrimination in accessing housing due to sexuality/ homophobic response*
- *Staff lacking in knowledge and/or understanding the needs of LGBT people and/or domestic violence in same gender relationships*
- *Lack of knowledge/understanding of needs of young LGBT people homeless due to parental/family abuse due to sexuality*
- *Need for housing where harassment from landlord/neighbours due to their sexuality will not be an issue*
- *Refuges in Cornwall are available only to lesbians/post operative transsexuals. No provision for gay men*
- *There is potential for abuse within refuges from other residents, staff and access by abusive partners*

#### LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY Best Practice

Population 295,532

Social Housing in Bromley is provided by 22 different Housing Associations on behalf of the council. All of the Housing Associations are members of the Bromley Domestic Violence Forum and have signed a Protocol in which they agree to implement certain minimum standards agreed by the Forum in respect of housing. This includes providing special services for these tenants to help them to stay safely in their homes by providing increased practical security measures. This includes the changing of locks on doors and windows, reinforcing doors, fitting fireproof letterboxes and other measures required to ensure that they can stay safely in their homes.

The Housing Associations also receive regular staff training on Domestic Violence to ensure that their staff are fully up to date with current Domestic Violence practice and to help them to deal properly with tenants who are suffering from DV.

A fact sheet entitled 'Domestic Violence Housing Advice' has been written by Dave Gaywood, Bromley Domestic Violence Coordinator. This fact sheet clearly explains what victims of Domestic Violence are entitled to in respect of housing and various options available to them.

There is also a fact sheet available on 'Legal advice for DV victims'. This explains the legal options available to sufferers and the availability of 'Non-Molestation' and 'Residential' injunctions and how to obtain them.

Bromley also provides a Domestic Violence One-Stop Shop which is a free and confidential drop-in centre to give practical help & advice to those suffering from Domestic Violence. They hold two sessions a week in different locations within the borough. The One Stop Shop is staffed by representatives from Bromley Police Community Safety Unit, a local solicitor who specializes in family law, Bromley Homeless Persons Unit, Bromley Women's Aid and Bromley Victim Support. No appointments are required.

In 2004, a total of 388 clients used this service. About 20% of the clients come from other boroughs to use the service because very few such advice centres exist; they have even recently had a woman come all the way from Southampton because she did not know of any other place where she could get this advice! The aim of the service is to offer women practical advice and support and outline the options available to her at this most vulnerable time. If she is considering ending the violent relationship, the staff can help her plan this to ensure the safety of both her and her children by arranging safe emergency housing or hostel accommodation.

They have also prepared a fact sheet on a 'Domestic Violence Escape Plan' to help them leave a violent relationship safely and being aware that at the time of separation, she is in serious danger of being further assaulted.

Leaflets are available from the Bromley website.

## CHAPTER 3

Homelessness and temporary accommodation

#### LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSIBILITY

The Housing Act 1996 and the accompanying Code of Guidance recognised the special position of households fleeing domestic violence applying as homeless to a Local Authority.

The code of Guidance also advised Local Authorities about how to approach evidence from applicants fleeing domestic violence

'If the applicant reports violence or the threat of violence, the authority should not normally seek proof directly from the alleged perpetrator, since doing so may delay the assessment and may generate further violence'

#### 3:1 Women in the survey were asked: Have you ever approached a housing department for help in rehousing?

	Yes	No
Living in refuge	11	2
Living in community	8	5
Total	19	7

##### Discussion of data

*73% of women surveyed had approached a housing department for help, as this represents women in refuges and the community it could be assumed, assuming this cohort is a fair sample of women who experience domestic abuse, that because this is a high percentage many women are turning to homeless and housing departments for help.*

#### 3:2 Women were asked, have you ever made a homeless application?

	Yes	No
Living in refuge	11	5
Living in community	8	5
Total	19	7

##### Discussion of data

*73% of women surveyed had approached housing departments to make homeless applications which validates the importance of the responses from these organisations as we know that the initial response a women receives may affect her future decisions.*

HOUSEHOLDS HOMELESS DUE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE IN CORNWALL - 31st DECEMBER 2004

**3:3 Local Authorities were asked how many households were homeless due to domestic violence –living in temporary accommodation- in your district as at 31st December 2004.**

	Isles Of Scilly	Penwith	Kerrier	Carrick	Restormel	N. C'wall	Caradon	All
Refuges				5	4	1	1	11
Hostels								
PRS					3			3
B&B					3			3
LA/HA					3			3
Friends Relatives								
Other					1			1

**Discussion of data**

*The numbers in this response seem extremely low. There also seemed to be uncertainty about numbers indicated by respondents completing the questionnaire with question marks, or leaving blank.*

*Most authorities know how many women are in Refuges, but data concerning households in other types of accommodation is generally lacking. Another commented that they did not know how many individuals they may have in hostel accommodation as they were 'Unable to split the cause of homelessness from other categories'*

*An interpretation of these results is that the majority of Local Authorities do not keep data on either the numbers or destinations of families approaching or being accepted as homeless due to domestic abuse. This has implications in the future service planning and provision as service development becomes anecdotal rather than evidence based. Without the data it is difficult to see how the majority of Local Authority housing departments can plan future services for this client group.*

*On retrospect it may have been more suitable to have asked how many households approached the department citing domestic violence as the cause of their homelessness or housing difficulty.*

*Subsequent discussions with a Homeless Officer led to several interesting points.*

*There is often an increase in the number of applications following national campaigns highlighting domestic violence as an issue. It was also suggested that maybe women are finding alternative avenues of support. Further in this report it is highlighted by the women interviewed that there is a lack of information available as to how homeless and housing departments may help women experiencing domestic violence. This may be a reason for the low numbers.*

**3:3 Recommendations**

*Further research would be useful on how information is collated.*

*Local Authorities could choose to undertake some case load analysis of households presenting with domestic violence, as a mechanism for reviewing their practice, and to see which areas are successful in supporting this client group.*

Shelter in Cornwall report much higher figures of women reporting homelessness as a result of domestic violence

**2003/04 41 Women**  
**2004/05 50 Women**

These women came from across the whole of the county and were made via phone contact and visiting the Shelter office

**3:4 Local Authorities were asked to supply data concerning the number of families housed temporarily by them and in what type of accommodation they were placed.**

18 families were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. According to a later question, they could be in this type of accommodation from 2 weeks to a year. However, on the whole, agencies were attempting not to use bed and breakfast accommodation. 5 households were placed in refuges, 5 families in the private rented sector, 3 in LA or HA temporary accommodation and 5 in other.

**HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS**

**3:5 A postal survey was carried out with 11 Housing Associations who have property in Cornwall. 9 replied.**

**Discussion of data**

Several Housing Associations commented that, due to confidentiality, they were not informed of the reason for individuals' homelessness. As a result, they may not be in a position to offer the best support available. This can also result in Hostel staff making inappropriate comments and giving inappropriate advice.

**3:5 Recommendations**

An information sharing protocol be developed with Local Authorities and Housing Associations which focus on the safety of women and children.

**TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

The survey looked at a range of temporary accommodation options and whether support was available for households experiencing domestic abuse/violence.

**3:6 Housing Associations and Local Authorities were asked whether they identified a problem in addressing the temporary accommodation needs of households experiencing domestic abuse.**

These figures are from the eleven Housing Associations that responded and the five Local Authorities.

	Housing Associations	Local Authorities
General refuge accommodation within Cornwall	1	3
Non-specialist hostel accommodation	1	1
Specialist accommodation for people with mental health problems	3	2
Specialist accommodation for people with learning difficulties	1	2
Transitional accommodation	1	3
Specialist accommodation for people from ethnic groups		2
Specialist accommodation for people with a physical disability		2
General refuge accommodation outside Cornwall		1
Specialist accommodation for single women		1
Specialist accommodation for men		1
Specialist accommodation for people from the LGBT community		3
Specialist accommodation for specific age groups		2
Specialist accommodation for women with male children over a certain age		2

**Discussion of data**

While both experienced some difficulty it is not surprising that the Local Authorities who deal with the homeless applications have most of the problems. While the refuges in the area accommodate individuals and households who have particular special needs, as the list indicates they are not specialist services in dealing with clients with multiple problems.

There were comments that

'Particularly difficult to access accommodation for people experiencing domestic abuse and mental health or learning difficulties'

'We have difficulty securing funding to develop more services to meet needs identified by others'

**3:7 HA's and LA's were asked whether they considered housing in a refuge as temporary**

Six Housing Authorities answered in the affirmative  
 Two did not answer  
 One misread the question  
 All Local Authorities answered in the affirmative

**3:8 Both LA and HA were asked whether a person fleeing domestic violence from outside the district with no local connections has the same priority as a local person.**

Four Housing Associations say they are treated with the same priority. One Housing Association treats those from outside the district differently. Ultimately this is decided by the Local Authority.  
 All the District Councils treated households coming to the county the same as those already here.

**REFUGES**

There are three Refuges in Cornwall. Two are affiliated to Women's Aid Federation England; one is managed by a Housing Association.

In total they have facilities for 25 women and 30 children. While it is understood that the refuges should not run at full occupancy (as they need emergency beds) staff at all three commented that the number of calls asking for space outstrips the capacity. Indeed in her seminal research 'A day to count' Betsy Stanko (2000) discovered 2104 women and 2745 children in 400 safe houses. Another 200 women asked for safe housing in England but could not be accommodated.

**3:9 They were asked could your refuge provide:**

	Yes	No
Specialist accommodation for people from ethnic groups		3
Specialist accommodation for people with a physical disability	1	2
Specialist accommodation for people with mental health problems	2	1
Specialist accommodation for people with learning difficulties	2	1
Specialist accommodation for single women	2	1
Specialist accommodation for men		3
Specialist accommodation for gay, bisexual, lesbian or transgender individuals	2*	1
Specialist accommodation for specific age groups	2	1
Specialist accommodation for women with male children over a certain age	2**	1
Transitional accommodation	1	2

\* Only Lesbian or bisexual women  
 \*\* One refuge took boys to age 16, one to age 18

**Discussion of data**

*To be experiencing domestic violence is the only criteria for acceptance in a refuge and all three refuges will try and accommodate all women and children. However all acknowledged that this can be impossible when there are added problems such as mental health issues or substance abuse.*

**3:10 The survey asked the 26 women: What have been the most positive aspects of coming to the refuge/women's support group/outreach/counselling?**

Those in the community group:

Nine women spoke of "shared experience, knowing they were not alone and gaining confidence"

AND...

*"It made me realize I can be on my own and I am able to look after myself and my children. There is some help out there".*

*"It gets things out into the open which is the only way to make sure it doesn't happen again, helps you see there is a way out and things can get better".*

*"The refuge was good when I was there, but I could do with outreach to help with moving and getting settled into a new home".*

Those in the refuge:

*For all the women there was a sense of feeling safe with lots of emotional support plus*

*"Having my own room, space and privacy"*

*"Advice on housing and benefits"*

*"Being able to have a chance of being myself"*

AND...

*"Being able to choose what I wear, what I do, where I go. Being able to live in peace without fear of physical and verbal abuse. Getting back my self-esteem and confidence. Learning how to laugh and be happy. This house is the best thing since sliced bread"*

**3:11 The women were asked; what have been the most difficult /negative aspects of coming to a refuge/women’s support group/outreach/counselling?**

Community	Refuge
Should be x 2 a week instead of x1	Leaving work, friends behind
I had to leave my home, my family (mum,dad,auntie etc)	Loneliness no friends or family support, fear of being found, leaving everything and everyone that you hold close behind
No space at refuge, had to stay at mum’s but not safe as he could find me there	No privacy, living to their strict rules
Walking through the door. Very nervous didn’t know what to expect	Not being able to have relatives or friends to visit, having had a bad experience at a refuge in Wales was put off for a lot of years
Hard at first	Before coming here I feared the counselling sessions from previous experience I have had in other women’s aid
The distance I have to travel and having to rely on drivers as I don’t drive. Also knowing my violent ex is now living in the same town as the support group	Sharing bathroom and facilities can be a pain, you just take the rough with the smooth
Violence from other women, seven members of the family living in one house with crowding, stress	Waiting for a year to be rehoused, lack of privacy
No follow on support after leaving refuge and living on my own again	Not knowing what the other people are like, not knowing how long you will be alone for in property
	Having to live with mentally ill people in the same house, it has made me and my child very ill, there’s lots of bullying
	Nothing negative
	Been here for such a long time (16 MONTHS)
	Leaving everyone behind as it is unsafe to contact them, missing family and friends, loneliness, people don’t know about your past experiences and life and it’s hard to join in conversations with groups of people

**CHILDREN IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

Children make up over half the residents in Refuges. These young people may have witnessed the most extreme violence and as a result are often traumatised when they arrive.

**3:12 Housing Associations and Local Authorities were asked: what facilities are there for children in the temporary accommodation you provide?**

Four Housing Associations provide a play area for children in their hostels and two provide space for older children and teenagers.

The Local Authorities provide some space for children in their hostels and are aware that refuges provide space. However space for older children and teenagers in any temporary accommodation is generally lacking.

**Discussion of data**

*There is often acknowledgement that small children need space to run around in and play. Most organisations bear this in mind when placing families with small children in temporary accommodation. However the need of the older children and teenagers is no less. These young people are likely to have had disruptive schooling and may have had to change school several times. It is therefore paramount that they have space in which to study to keep up with their age group.*

**3:12 Recommendations**

When placing families with older children and teenagers, who have experienced domestic violence in temporary accommodation, consideration must be given to the need for this age group to have access to private space.

**3:13 The refuges were asked what services they were able to provide to children.**

This data pertains to only two of the three refuges. One refuge has no capacity to work with children at present

Children's service	Only for children living at the refuge	For children that have previously lived at the refuge	For children who have never lived at the refuge
One to one play with staff	2	1	
One to one support sessions	2	1	
One to one counselling			
One to one therapy e.g. art			
Group play sessions with pre-school children	2	1	
Group play sessions for school age children	2	1	
Youth work with older children	1	1	
Group therapy, e.g. play			
Other groups for children			
Advocacy on behalf of children, e.g. schools or social service	2	2	
Work with mother on children's adjustment/behaviour/health	2	1	
Children's meetings	1		
Children's welcome pack or leaflets	2	1	
Other children's support or information leaflets or packs	2	1	
After school club	1	1	
Holiday play schemes	1	1	
Outings and social events	2	2	
Family holiday	1		
Educational activities	2	1	
Minibus/group transport available	1	1	
Other			
SPECIFIC WORK WITH			
Children from specific ethnic minority groups			
Girls			
Boys			
Disabled children			
Children who has been sexually abused	1*		
Children showing aggression or uncontrollable behaviour	1*		
Other children whose needs require specialised work	1*		

\* The refuge stressed that this would be in collaboration with specialist agencies

#### **Discussion of data**

*As we have seen previously (page 20) children make up more than half the residents in refuges. Funding for children's workers comes from a variety of sources and both refuges that are affiliated to Women's Aid actively seek funding and resources for this much needed work. Children can have a powerful influence on their mother's decisions to stay away or return to the perpetrator. Without some independent support and help in dealing with their reactions to the violence, children can become inappropriately involved in decision making.*

*One voluntary sector provider commented that there are no services for young people outside of two of the refuges unless they go to social services*

## CHAPTER 4

Resettlement and Support

POLICIES

**4:1 Both Housing Associations and Local Authorities were asked about their policies for housing register and transfer applications for households experiencing domestic violence**

	Housing Registers HA YES	Housing Reg NO	Transfer Lists HA YES	Trans. Lists NO	LA Housing Reg. YES	LA Housing Reg NO	LA Transfer List YES	LA Transfer List NO
Applicants experiencing domestic violence are treated as a priority group	4		3		3		2	1
Additional points are awarded to applicants experiencing domestic violence	2		2		2	1	2	1
Quotas for applicants experiencing domestic violence	1	2		3		2		1
Rank order system for applicants experiencing domestic violence	1	1		2		1		1
Applicants experiencing domestic violence are assessed and accommodated as homeless	2	1	1	2	3*		1	
Combination of the above/ other	3		1		2		1	
None of the above	1	1	1	1				

### Discussion of data

Several Housing Associations pointed out that the Local Authority held the data and so it was the latter's decisions and the latter's policies that were adhered to.

Two of the Local Authorities replied 'only if the client approached' and 'sometimes' to the question are 'applicants experiencing domestic violence assessed and accommodated as homeless.

Several answers were left blank and have not been recorded.

What is interesting about this table is the huge variation across the County. There appear to be different systems in place in all the Local Authorities and although in some cases they may be similar, nevertheless there is distinct difference. One authority awards points for applicants experiencing domestic violence and one doesn't. While this may not affect the service that the family receive it can potentially lead to confusion and misinformation amongst clients. In one authority clients are 'sometimes' assessed as homeless due to domestic violence. How is this decision reached? What rationale is used to decide? It would be clearer across the County if Local Authorities had agreement about policies for housing registers and tenancy transfers.

### 4:1 Recommendations

Local Authorities should look at the possibility of having a county wide policy concerning domestic violence and these policy issues.

This will make information sharing to clients and support agencies much simpler

### 4:2 Both Local Authority and Housing Associations were asked whether they felt there is a problem addressing the permanent accommodation needs of households experiencing domestic violence

#### Results

Five Housing Associations believe there are problems; three disagree

Four of the Local Authorities felt there was a problem; one did not

#### Discussion of data

Comments from both agencies reflected the general difficulty of lack of resources in Cornwall to re house all client groups. This difficulty is not going to be resolved in the foreseeable future. However this reinforces the potential to look at alternative ways to support households experiencing domestic violence. While there will always be a need for some families to either flee the violence or move, increasingly, Local Authorities around the country are using variations of the 'Sanctuary' model to enable women and children to stay in their own homes while the perpetrator is removed.

### 4:2 Recommendations

A panel of representatives from the Local Authorities and Supporting People be convened to explore how a 'Sanctuary' scheme could be implemented across the county.

### Signpost Care Domestic Violence Project - Best practice

This scheme is designed for women and children who are in crisis and fleeing domestic abuse and in need of immediate, supportive and safe accommodation. It will be utilised for those considered to be most "at risk" from the perpetrator. It is a partnership scheme between Signpost Care, Plymouth Women's Refuge, Plymouth Community Safety Partnership and Supporting People.

Four 2 bedroom properties have been purchased and care has been taken to ensure access to the properties is limited, e.g. no back lane access/back-to-back gardens.

The locations have been chosen with easy access to local services in mind, e.g. local schools, nurseries, GP surgeries, shops, and bus stops.

They have been substantially upgraded to provide high quality accommodation. They are fully furnished/ equipped but will also allow families to bring their own belongings, including pets. Within each house a "safe room" has been created. These rooms have outward opening doors, strengthened surrounds, discreet shutters that can be pulled across windows, smoke detectors, high specification alarms linked to Call24's Control Room. The purpose of these rooms is to allow the victim time to call for assistance in the event of the perpetrator attempting to gain access to the property. It is not necessary for her to speak. Call24's system will have a "flagging" icon, which will alert the call handler to the fact that the caller is "high risk" and an immediate 999 call will be made. The alarm equipment also records everything that is happening and can be, and has been, used successfully in any subsequent Court case. Other security measures include strengthened glass in downstairs windows and doors, strong locks/bolts on front and rear doors, window locks, strengthened doors front and rear. Letterboxes have been removed and replaced with "mailable" boxes fixed to the outside wall. Security lighting will be installed, triggered by movement.

A multi-agency panel made up of representatives from local domestic violence agencies will decide on the most appropriate allocation of these properties: Women's Refuge, Women's Aid, Police, Domestic Violence Unit, City Council Homeless Unit, Signpost Care Partnership, Plymouth Community Safety Unit. The panel will assess cases and those felt to be most "at risk" will be considered for vacancies.

Once an allocation has been made, a support worker from the Women's Refuge will contact the woman.

Each tenancy will be for a period of 6 months and will be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. Within the first 3-6 weeks, support will be intensive but this would reduce as confidence and independence are regained and the needs of the clients change.

At the end of the six month tenancy, and subject to the woman being ready to move on, suitable permanent accommodation will be sought either through the Local Authority, a local Registered Social Landlord or other landlord as appropriate, with care being taken to ensure that, if required, any allocation will be sensitive to the needs of the family - e.g. allowing to remain in the area where support networks have been created, children settled at local schools etc. Negotiations are currently taking place with the Housing Department to put in place an "early warning" system to ensure there is no delay in identifying a suitable property well in advance of the expiry of the 6 months period. Extensive consultation will take place between housing providers, client and support worker before an allocation is made.

**4:3 Both Local Authorities and Housing Authorities were asked whether resettlement support is available within their area to households experiencing domestic violence living in their own home or other independent accommodation**

**Results**

Four Housing Associations said it was available; four said not  
Three Local Authorities said it was available; two didn't answer

**Discussion of data**

Generally this suggests some confusion about what is on offer. As noted it is recommended by ODPM that local housing and homeless organisations should have good knowledge of local support structures.

**4:3 Recommendations**

Frontline staff and managers need to be regularly updated on local support provision for this client group

An identified member of staff should be responsible for coordinating this information

**RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT AGENCIES**

**4:4 Housing Associations and Local Authorities were then asked who provided resettlement support**

	No. of HA's answering Yes	No. of LA's answering YES
Women's aid/refuge groups	3	1
Domestic violence forum	1	1
Housing department	1	2
Victim support	2	2
Police/DVO	2	3
Alarm Systems	1	2
Ethnic Minority organizations		1
Social services	2	2
Other	1	1

**Discussion of data**

Comments were also added

Housing association provide support and resettlement Service, Support provided by Housing Association, Local Authority offer floating support.

One Housing Association commented 'We have not had anyone experiencing domestic violence'

The omissions in the answers illustrate the lack of knowledge that exists about the services that are offered in the community and with partner agencies.

**4:4 Recommendations**

That a multi-agency group representing housing agencies and service providers convene a meeting to ascertain how this information can best be disseminated to promote multi-agency working

**4:5 The refuges were asked whether resettlement support is available within the area to households experiencing domestic violence living in their own homes or other independent accommodation**

Yes	2
No	
Don't know	1

Examples of agencies that might provide the support were DiVA, Domestic Violence Support workers and Victims Support

**4:6 The refuges were asked whether there is a problem addressing the resettlement needs of households experiencing domestic violence**

Yes	2
No	1

**Discussion of data**

Comments following this question raised concerns about the lack of resettlement workers which leaves women vulnerable and at risk from either the next perpetrator or going back to their abusive partner. There was also concern about the lack of suitable volunteers and poor sustainability in disparate communities. This illustrates the refuges expert knowledge at recognising that putting a roof over the head of a family that has experienced domestic violence and abuse is only part of the solution. If the aim is to maintain the women and children's safety and enable them to rebuild their lives and so avoid the opportunity for homelessness in the future there is also a need to support them in all aspect of daily living until they gain confidence, economic stability and emotional wellbeing.

**4:6 Recommendations**

That housing and homeless departments consider the appointment of designated Domestic Violence Advocates/Specialists who are able to support and monitor the individual's needs from initial presentation, at the homelessness department, to their subsequent return to safe accommodation or rehousing.

#### 4:7 The refuges were asked who provides the resettlement support

The list was somewhat short, Women's Aid, Victims Support, Domestic Violence Officers and Social Services

##### Discussion of data

*Of these organisations, two are charities who have a year on year struggle with funding. The Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre in Bodmin which provides specialist domestic violence workers, is funded from charitable trusts. One of the difficulties for charities is that they receive little or no core funding and grant making bodies constantly request that new projects are funded not existing successful ones. The refuges receive funding, from Supporting People, for housing; but other support that families in refuges require, (counselling, children's services etc.) has to be funded from other sources.*

*Social Services suffer its own financial restraints. While they are able to support in a crisis or Child Protection Issue they are limited in the amount of actual practical resettlement support they can offer. Domestic Violence Officers again are stretched dealing with the High Risk category.*

##### 4:7 Recommendations

A multi-agency group of housing and service providers should meet bi-annually to discuss housing and resettlement issues within the county.

Membership of this group should include designated officers from Housing who work on the frontline and managers with authority to move issues to the necessary level i.e. Policy and Operational Group of the CDRP or LSP.

#### 4:8 The Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre provides outreach and resettlement support.

Support Groups	For young women who have accompanying drug and alcohol problems
One to one support	From DV support worker
Support by phone	From helpline
Support/advocacy with statutory agencies	From DV support worker
Support for particular groups of women	As above for young women with accompanying drug and alcohol problems
Other	Provide women's support worker for women who's partners are on the community violent men's programme and the probation programme

#### PROVISION OF RESETTLEMENT SERVICES

##### 4:9 How the outreach and resettlement is provided by the refuges

Service	Outreach Project	General Refuge Service
Support groups		1
One to one support	1	2
Support by phone	1	2
Formal Counselling	1	1
Support/advocacy with stat agencies	1	2
	1	1
Support in accessing legal system and court attendance		
Educational/vocational activities	1	1
Support for specific groups of women		
Other services		

##### Discussion of data

*As indicated this chart demonstrates that one of the refuges has also developed a stand alone outreach service which women previously residing at the refuge or any women in the catchment area experiencing domestic violence can access.*

#### 4:10 Eligibility for outreach and resettlement provided by the refuge

	Women experiencing domestic violence	Ex-residents of refuge	Adult family and friends	Anyone requesting the service
Support groups	2	1		
One to one support	2	1		
Support by phone	2	3		2
Formal Counselling	2	2		
Support/advocacy with stat agencies	2	2		1
Support in accessing legal system and court attendance	2	1		
Educational/vocational activities	2	1		
Support for specific groups of women	1	1		
Other services	1	1		

#### Discussion of data

*This chart speaks for itself. The refuges are providing a wide range of support to residents and ex-residents. However women who are not in a refuge will be reliant on other agencies either from the statutory or voluntary sector.*

*One voluntary sector provider commented that apart from the service from their agency and the police women get very little support*

#### SUPPORT AVAILABLE WHILE IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

#### 4:11 The Housing Associations and Local Authorities were asked; Who is providing the support to households homeless due to domestic violence living in hostels?

Support Provided by	Housing Association	Refuge Group	Other Vol. Org	Other
Individual one to one support	7	4	2	1
Support groups	3	2	3	1
One to one counselling	3	2	2	1
Benefits advice	6	2	2	1
Support/advocacy with stat agencies	4	2	2	1
Basic legal information	4	2	2	1
Support with court proceedings	2	1	1	2
Support for special needs		2	1	2
Support with childcare		2	1	1
Liaison with school		3	1	3
Support in accessing facilities	5	3	1	2
Children's work		3	1	1
Other			1	

#### Discussion of data

Housing Associations are providing a good range of support to households experiencing domestic abuse alongside the specific refuge support

#### 4:12 The survey asked women, what support have you received from the refuge?

One to one support	13
Referral to more appropriate or safer accommodation	8
Benefits and housing advice	13
Confidentiality/safety measures	13
Advocacy and support from statutory agencies	11
Basic legal information and help in accessing the service	12
Help in accessing other local facilities	11
Help with child contact arrangements	7
Child minding	5
Social events	13
Health visitor/community nurse sessions	12
Resettlement help	10
Emergency food, toiletries and clothing	13
Help with immigration process	0
Evening or 24 hour on call service	12
Support group (see note)	0
Other non-specified	3

#### Discussion of data

100% of the women received emergency food, toiletries and clothing when entering the refuge. This tragically illustrates the reality for women and children fleeing for their lives.

100% of women also received benefits and housing advice, information on safety issues and social events.

This table backs up the data from the refuges and validates the work being undertaken by them.

**4:13 What community support is available to people from the LGBT community experiencing domestic abuse/violence**

	Yes	No
One to one support	1	
Benefits and housing advice	1	
Advocacy and support from the statutory agencies		1
Resettlement help		1
Emergency food, toiletries and clothing		1
Evening or 24 hour telephone support	1	
Basic legal information	1	
Support with court proceedings	1	
Support with childcare		1
Support groups		1
Specialist support	1	
Other, please specify		

Broken Rainbow Cornwall was asked how the housing needs of individuals from the LGBT community could be better met in Cornwall. They responded

**Discussion of data**

*Greater knowledge/understanding of specific housing needs of LGBT community is required by housing organisations and their staff*

*They would like provision of safe, non-discriminatory emergency and longer-term housing for LGBT people needing to relocate due to abusive partners/family*

*Equal opportunities policies subscribed to by housing organisations their staff and landlord*

**4:13 Recommendations**

That these issues be addressed by a multi-agency housing and service provider panel

**PROVISION OF OUTREACH SERVICE**

**4:15 Who provides outreach services for households living in private rented sector, housing association or RSL temporary accommodation, or staying with friends and family?**

Providers	No. of HA's answering Yes	No. of LA's answering Yes
Women's aid/refuge groups	5	1
Domestic violence forum	2	3
Housing department	6	2
Victim support	5	2
Police/DVO	6	4
Alarm systems	4	3
Ethnic minority organisations	1	
LGBT organisations	1	1
Social services	6	2
Other	2	3

**Discussion of data**

*As illustrated also by the response to section 4:4 there is a range of knowledge and the responses are not without their inaccuracies. There was anecdotal comment that floating support is offered to some households by Housing Associations*

**4:16** The survey asked those women in the community group what sort of support they had received from the community support group.

One to one support	11
Referral to more appropriate or safer accommodation	5
Benefits and housing advice	5
Confidentiality/safety measures	9
Advocacy and support from statutory agencies	6
Basic legal information and help in accessing the service	8
Help in accessing other local facilities	3
Help with child contact arrangements	4
Child minding	2
Social events	3
Health visitor/community nurse sessions	2
Resettlement help	1
Emergency food, toiletries and clothing	2
Help with immigration process	0
Evening or 24 hour on call service	7
Support group (see note)	3
Other non-specified	0
Other specified counselling, art group, time	0

#### Discussion of data

*This table illustrates the wide range of support given to women by the community groups*

**4:17** Both Local Authority and Housing Associations were asked: What support is available to households homeless due to domestic violence living in a typical hostel used but not managed by your housing association?

	HA Yes	LA Yes
Individual one to one support	2	2
Support groups	2	
One to one counselling	1	1
Benefits advice	1	2
Support/advocacy with stat agencies	1	2
Basic legal information	1	1
Support with court proceedings	1	
Support for special needs	2	1
Support with childcare	2	
Liaison with school	1	1
Support in accessing facilities	1	2
Children's work	1	
Other	1	

#### Discussion of data

*Again there is a range of support offered by those that answered.*

# CHAPTER 5

Staying Put

## INCREASING SAFETY

### 5:1 Both Local Authority and Housing Associations were asked if a family stays in their own housing association homes and the perpetrator leaves, what extra support is provided by their organisation

	HA Yes	HA No	LA Yes	LA No
Additional locks for doors and windows	5	1	3	1
Panic alarms		4	3	
Mobile phones	1	4	2	1
Assistance with tenancy transfer	6	4	1	
If responsibility for rent arrears with perpetrator they remain accountable (so no debt transfer)	4			
Clear lines of liaison with other agencies i.e. police	5		5	
Multi-agency risk assessment	4		5	
Other	1		1	

#### Discussion of data

The majority of responses to this question denote that most agencies who responded were willing to add extra support to individuals to assist them to stay in their own home. Responses varied from 'assisting with the eviction of the perpetrator', "changing the tenancy from joint to sole" and "offering floating support". Locks are changed and ODPM money can be used for rent arrears. However some areas investigate and make case by case decisions as to what they can provide or can only add additional locks if it is not a joint tenancy.

#### 5:1 Recommendations

Further exploration of the 'sanctuary' model across the county may offer a more uniform response and give opportunity to capitalise on good practice which is already happening

### 5:2 The women were asked; if a family stay in their own home and the perpetrator leaves what extra support is provided?

	Community		Refuge	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Additional locks for doors and windows	1	10	9	2
Panic alarms	3	6	9	2
Mobile phones	2	8	7	2
Assistance with tenancy transfer		9	9	2
If responsibility with rent arrears with perpetrator they are then accountable	2	7	8	2
Clear lines of liaison with other agencies	5	5	10	1
Multi-risk assessment	1	9	7	3
Other	0	0	2	0

#### Discussion of data

This data, compared with the answer from the previous question, suggests that, while women in refuges were aware of the extra support that could be offered, women in the community were less aware which is noteworthy

#### 5:2 Recommendations

Information leaflets, held in homeless and housing departments, about what could be offered may clear up this discrepancy.

**5:3 The survey asked the 26 women the following:**

Were you aware that:	Yes	No
Some Local Authorities highlight the risk of eviction for those perpetrating DV when the tenancy is offered?	2	24
That section 145 of the housing act can be used to evict a perpetrator of domestic abuse?	2	24
That Local Authorities can issue a unilateral notice to quit on perpetrators of domestic abuse?	2	24

**Discussion of data**

*This demonstrates a difficulty in the dissemination of information as responses from the Housing Associations and Local Authorities ( section 7: 1) show that these options do exist and are used.*

**WOMEN'S VIEWS ABOUT STAYING PUT**

**5:4 The survey asked: What support do you feel you would require to stay put?**

Eleven women wanted more support from the police. This included proving the threat, installing surveillance, locks and alarms, arresting the perpetrators and assistance with injunctions.

Six wanted more support from housing e.g. tenancy transfers to victims, installing doors that cannot be kicked in, fixing broken windows, extra locks.

One specifically wanted the courts to listen to the facts and conduct fair trials.

One wanted more understanding from Social Services. She had to rely on her Health Visitor when she was feeling isolated.

“It would have been OK if I’d had help from any organisation, maybe cameras for surveillance to prove harassment, and help from a multi-agency risk assessor. I felt that I was made to look stupid and that it was normal to be treated this way. The police didn’t give a monkeys, I wanted him made to stay away”.

# CHAPTER 6

Move on accommodation

**6:1 Local Authorities and Housing Associations were asked whether they felt there was a problem with ‘move on’ accommodation**

Five of the Housing Associations and all of the Local Authorities felt there was a problem. Three of the Housing Associations did not.

**Discussion of data**

*The respondents who did feel there was a problem, commented that this issue was due to a general lack of housing stock throughout the County and was the same for all homeless households. Again this indicates that for this client group it may be time to examine how other options could be considered. Although the choices offered to women should always be based on the safety of the women and children there is sufficient evidence from other parts of the county (cited in this document) that various variations on the ‘sanctuary scheme’ could be developed.*

**6:1 Recommendations**

A multi-agency panel, similar to the scheme in Plymouth, be convened to look at how women could be supported to stay in their own homes rather than always having to leave.

**6:2 All three refuges thought that there was a problem with appropriate move on accommodation**

**Discussion of data**

*Comments that refuge staff made in relation to this question were:*

*If an individual is not happy with the service there is no clear mechanism for complaint or if one does exist clients are not being informed of it*

*Repeatedly evidence is being sought very proactively and it had been felt by the refuge and the client to be inappropriate*

*Temporary accommodation may be up to two years which is particularly difficult for this client group*

*Private sector accommodation has been good but Local Authority was described as ‘not nice’*

*Permanent accommodation is never offered straight away even though the women may have been housed temporarily ‘in the refuge for some time*

*Some women who had been evicted from the refuge had been housed in bed and breakfast. This included both single women and those with children*

**6:2 Recommendations**

Homeless and housing departments should have available local leaflets explaining the policies and procedure including the complaints procedure readily available for clients. These, where it is safe to do so, should be given to clients as a matter of routine.

A multi-agency group made up of homeless, housing and support services should meet bi-annually and as part of their terms of reference review cases where there has been contention or dispute.

**6:3 The refuges and the Women’s Rape and Sexual abuse centre were asked what difficulties their clients has experienced with move on accommodation**

	Yes	No
1. Inappropriate accommodation offered	2	2
2. Inappropriate location offered	4	0
3. Too long waiting for accommodation	4	0
4. Lack of financial support to enable them to secure private rented accommodation	2	2
5. other	1	

**Comments**

- 1. Not enough bedrooms, upstairs flat for mother with pram, Wardens with no domestic violence knowledge so therefore being inappropriate with client, lack of understanding about safety issues denoting lack of training*
- 2. Stay in same location as perpetrator, offered accommodation in flat opposite perpetrator, offered out of town location for client who can’t drive and has to get several children to school in different location*
- 3. Not being able to move when ready and so other issues such as dependency developing and newly gained self-confidence in ability to cope dropping again. Staying in a refuge past a certain time can then have as many negative effects as initially it had positive.*
- 4. Private rents won’t accept DSS and anyway its too expensive, not all areas offer top up to move*
- 5. Difficulties being accepted as homeless, being given inappropriate or contradictory information from different areas, evidence being sought*

*These issues are likely to apply to any homeless household. Local Authorities as already discussed are struggling to accommodate individuals in areas with limited accommodation.*

**6:3 Recommendations**

A multi agency panel similar to the one in Plymouth may enable a system where some system of prioritising could be implemented

## CHAPTER 7

Eviction of perpetrators

**7:1 Housing Associations and Local Authorities were asked whether they highlight the risk of eviction to those that are perpetrators of domestic violence.**

Five Housing Associations say they make this clear to tenants; three do not

Two Local Authorities say they make it clear to tenants, one does not and two do not think it is applicable

**Discussion of data**

*The criminality of domestic violence must not be ignored. It is nationally recognised across agencies that this violence must no longer be tolerated. This is illustrated by the Devon and Cornwall Police Proactive Arrest Policy, by the Crown Prosecution Service advocating victimless prosecutions and by a plethora of policies and protocols across the statutory sector. Housing and homeless departments have opportunities to play their part in a united multi agency response across Cornwall.*

**7:1 Recommendations**

All agencies involved in issuing tenancies of any description should include information explaining that all individuals perpetrating domestic abuse will be evicted.

**7:2 The survey asked the 26 women: What would have been helpful if you wanted to stay in your own home and he was refusing to go?**

**Results**

Fourteen women said they would have found more support from the police helpful e.g. removal and imprisonment of the perpetrator, police surveillance of the property, help with making the house safer, imposing a prison sentence if the perpetrator returned. One woman said *“the police removed him straightaway so that was OK”*.

Seven women would have wanted more support from their housing authority/association e.g. eviction of the perpetrator, making the house safer, ensuring the perpetrator was responsible for paying off rent arrears

Two felt nothing would have helped:

1. *“The law allows him to come back anytime”*
2. *“I wanted to leave and nothing would have taken the fear away”*

**Discussion of data**

These responses illustrate that women in Cornwall go to a range of agencies for help and support.

**7:2 Recommendations**

Employing a designated worker in homeless departments would facilitate effective multi-agency working between all agencies working with individuals experiencing domestic abuse.

*“The police shouldn’t leave a frightened woman when she’s alone with an abusive partner; because sometimes the woman is so scared she has to pretend everything’s all right (the abuser may be threatening to hurt the children)”*  
*“A camera would have meant he could do nothing through closed doors and get away with it. I feel that he would have felt that this would have deterred him from behaving like this”*

**The Sanctuary Project - Best Practice**

The London Borough of Harrow has set up a new scheme to provide additional security measures for domestic violence victims to prevent homelessness. The scheme works operates in conjunction with the local domestic violence forum and the police.

Police attending incidents offer the service to women where appropriate and also offer an outreach worker from women’s aid to talk through their options. Crime prevention officers make recommendations for appropriate safety measures. Crucial to the service is that works are carried out quickly to retain the client’s confidence. The scheme is voluntary and available to women living in any tenure.

In addition to the provision of new and extra locks and lighting, a ‘secure sanctuary’ is created in the home converting a bedroom into a safe room through reinforcing doors and placement of bolts. Personal alarms and the provision of police mobiles are also included as well as a help line for women to find out about the scheme

## CHAPTER 8

Interagency working

**8:1 Both Local Authority and Housing Associations were asked,  
Does your agency?**

	HA Yes	HA No	LA Yes	LA No
Employ specialist staff to deal with households experiencing Domestic Violence?	2	6	1	3
Have policies on Domestic Violence?	4	1	2	1
Have 'good practice guidelines'?	2	4	2	1
Have an interagency sharing protocol?	5		4	
Do staff receive Domestic Violence awareness training?	6	1	4	
Is there a domestic violence forum in your area?	4		5	

**Discussion of data**

*Most respondents do not employ specialist staff but nearly all provide training for their staff on domestic violence. There are examples across the country where Local Authorities are considering having designated staff within their departments to take responsibility for these issues.*

**8:2 Housing Associations and Local Authorities were asked about their attendance at the Local Domestic Violence Forum.**

**Discussion of data**

*There is some attendance by some areas and it is appreciated that staff time is of a premium and pressure of work can make it difficult to attend*

**8:2 Recommendations**

A designated county representative who also attends the multi-agency panel could feed back to other districts. This could be attended on a rotation basis so that all districts are able to have some input and meet other agencies providing services to this client group over a period of time.

### PUBLICISING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

#### 8:3 Women were asked do you feel the Local Authority or housing association publicise enough what they can do to help a family experiencing Domestic Violence?

	Yes	No
Living in refuge	0	13
Living in community	1	12
Total	1	25

#### Discussion of data

It can be seen that the majority of women sought help from the housing department but felt inadequate publicity was given to the help available for them.

#### 8:3 Recommendations

Homeless and housing departments should develop mechanisms in which this information is proactively highlighted. This may involve inclusion in authority and tenants newsletters, raising issues at tenants meetings, posters etc. Keeping leaflets and stickers in the women's toilets in all Local Authority departments enables the information to be seen in a safe environment.

### WOMEN'S VIEWS

Other issues raised from the focus groups after completion and discussing the questionnaire were:

*Relocating to a refuge is seen as the first option by Local Authority, but this was without any discussion about risk to women or children. Presumption seems to be 'Domestic Violence = must leave home.'*

*Interviewed by man at Housing department and given no choice about gender of interview. He subsequently asked*

*Why do you think he hit you?'*

*This individual was also asked for 5 points of proof including any paperwork.*

*Temporary accommodation given as furnished was extremely poor. 2 beds 1 chair and cost £135 per week. This women could not be told how long she may stay in it but it could be up to two years and the she could be rehoused anywhere in the district. She was extremely concerned about the effect this may have on her children, any support and therefore safety networks she may develop and just the uncertainty hanging over her head for two years.*

*'After leaving my violent partner I went to live with my pregnant mum and three siblings. I was offered my own property which was opposite my ex partners flat. I wasn't happy about this but was told if I turned it down I wouldn't be offered another property. So I took it and had been in the property about a month when the violence started again. I went to the council to see if they could help but I had none at all (they gave me a card for a police officer) and I was told to ride it out and it would all blow over. 6 months after I got my property I had to leave my home, family and friends and move to a refuge because they wouldn't help'. (This young woman and her child have now been living in a refuge waiting rehousing for 16 months)*

*Needs one stop shop?*

*Interviewed behind a glass window could be seen by all in reception*

*Not offered gender choice of interviewer*

*Asked to write very personal statement, how can a woman write about the rape and sexual humiliation to a stranger?*

*Staff appear not to be trained as they are inappropriate with knowledge and information they should have regular training or be specialists*

*Only offered refuge no other options*

*One woman felt that because she came from an affluent family she was not believed and ended up on private rented*

### LOCAL AUTHORITY FUNDING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

#### 9:1 All the Local Authorities make financial contribution to the County Crime and disorder partnership and a % of this is focused on Domestic Violence Services. The Domestic Violence Policy and Operational sub Group of the County group recommend priority areas for support.

## CHAPTER 9

Summary of recommendations

### Homelessness and temporary accommodation

- 3:3 Further research would be useful on how information is collated.  
Local Authorities could choose to undertake some case load analysis of households presenting with domestic violence, as a mechanism for reviewing their practice and to see which areas are successful in supporting this client group.
- 3:5 An information sharing protocol be developed with Local Authorities and Housing Associations which focus on the safety of women and children.
- 3:12 Older children and teenagers need access to private space. This needs to be considered when placing these individuals in temporary accommodation.

### Resettlement and support

- 4:1 A county wide policy for Local Authorities would make information sharing to clients and support agencies much simpler
- 4:2 A panel of representatives from the District Councils and Supporting People be convened to explore how a 'Sanctuary' scheme could be implemented across the county.  
Membership of this group should include designated Officers from housing who work on the frontline and managers with authority to move issues to the necessary level i.e. Policy and Operational Group of the CDRP or LSP and representative from women's services.
- 4:3 Frontline staff and managers need to be regularly updated as to the local support provision for this client group  
An identified member of staff should be responsible for coordinating this information
- 4:4 That a multi-agency group (see 4:2 ) ascertain how this information can best be disseminated to promote multi-agency working
- 4:6 That housing and homeless departments consider the appointment of designated Domestic Violence Advocates/specialists that are able to support and monitor the individual's needs from initial presentation at the homelessness department to their subsequent return to safe accommodation or rehousing.
- 4:7 A multi-agency group (see 4:2) meeting bi-annually discuss housing and resettlement issues within the county
- 4:13 That the concerns raised by Broken Rainbow Cornwall be addressed by the multi-agency panel

### Staying put

- 5:1 Further exploration of the 'sanctuary' model across the county may offer a more uniform response and provide opportunity to capitalise on good work that is already happening
- 5:2 Information leaflets, held in homeless and housing departments, about what could be offered may clear up this discrepancy. These should be available widely in departments and also in areas only women use i.e public toilets

### Move on

- 6:1 A multi-agency panel,(see 4:2) to look at how women could be supported to stay in their own homes rather than always having to leave.
- 6:2 Homeless and housing departments should have available local leaflets explaining the policies and procedure including the complaints procedure readily available for clients. This, where it is safe to do so, should be given to clients as a matter of routine.  
A multi-agency group ((see 4:2) to include as part of their terms of reference an agreement to review cases where there has been contention or dispute.
- 6:3 A multi agency panel (see 4:2) to adopt a system where some system of prioritising households experiencing domestic violence could be implemented

### Eviction of perpetrators

- 7:1 All agencies involved in issuing tenancies of any description should include information explaining that all individuals perpetrating domestic abuse will be evicted.
- 7; 2 Employing a designated worker in homeless departments would facilitate effective multi-agency working between all agencies working with individuals experiencing domestic abuse.

### Interagency working

- 8:1 A designated county representative who also attends the multi-agency panel could feed back to other districts. This could be attended on a rotation basis so that all districts are able to have some input and meet other agencies providing services to this client group over a period of time.
- 8:3 Homeless and housing departments should develop mechanisms in which this information is proactively highlighted. This may involve inclusion in authority and tenants newsletters, raising issues at tenants meetings, posters etc. Keeping leaflets and stickers in the women's toilets in all Local Authority departments enables the information to be seen in a safe environment.

### Funding of interagency working

- 9:1 Local Authorities continue to make financial contribution to the County Crime and Disorder partnership.

# CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

Implementing the recommendations of this report will require the 'buy in' and commitment of all partner agencies delivering or supporting women who are potentially or actually homeless due to domestic violence.

The level and quality of response to this research was varied. Domestic violence seems to fall between agencies at times and within agencies the response sometimes seemed to reflect individual's attitudes and views rather than being guided by policy and protocol.

This suggests that implementing some of the recommendations in the report may challenge existing service delivery and care needs to be taken to ensure that the changes are 'partnership' led, so as to enable all agencies to feel 'ownership' of any developments.

The formation of a multi-agency panel, comprising of all statutory homeless and housing agencies and the voluntary sector providers would enable the discussions to begin. Through this forum a consistent approach can be developed and implemented across the county when responding to families who are potentially or actually homeless due to domestic violence.

#### **First 'Sanctuary' project in Cornwall**

WPC Elaine Trethowan, domestic violence officer for Penwith recently submitted a proposal to Government Southwest for funding from their Excellence and Innovation grant to develop a 'Sanctuary' housing project in West Cornwall. She was successful with this bid and will be working with the West Cornwall Community Safety Partnership and local housing departments to take this work forward.

## REFERENCES

1. *Part 7, Housing act 1996*
2. *British Crime Survey 2004.*
3. *The provision of accommodation and support for households experiencing domestic violence in England ODPM 2002*
4. *Department of the Environment and Department of Health (1996) code of guidance on Parts VI and VII of the housing act 1996, paragraph 13.10*
5. *ibid paragraph 14.17*
6. *Scream quietly or the neighbours will hear. Pizzy E (1974) Nicholls and Company Ltd Great Britain*
7. *Hester and Pearson 1998*
8. *Homeless Statistics; September 2002 and Domestic violence Home Office*
9. *The Provision of accommodation and support for households experiencing domestic violence in England ODPM 2002 Pg 20*